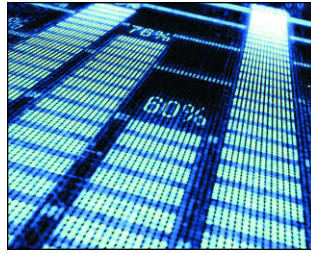




Ensuring Compliance in a Complex, Regulatory World

For industries such as health care, manufacturing, energy or pharma, the ability to ensure and report on compliance for tasks performed in the field can be extremely difficult. But technology solutions exist today that can help to automate what was once a paper-based, error-prone process.



Human resource executives and employers today face many challenges in the quest of keeping the workforce engaged, productivity up and the business profitable.

But as of late, an existing layer of complexities has been added – even more strict licensing, certification and regulatory requirements that can mean the difference between business success and failure.

The challenge, in a word, is compliance. Of course, compliance has always existed as a serious concern for employers. But after a relatively recent spate of more rules and regulations, employers and HR now must spend extraordinary amounts of time and capital to conform to a range of regulatory requirements. This includes Title VII, EEOC, Sarbanes-Oxley (SOX), the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA), the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), Joint Commission, Basel II, and many other internal regulatory compliance, environmental regulatory compliance or HR policies. It is an exhaustive list.

Even more, the ability to manage performance related to compliance in specific industries such as health care, manufacturing, energy or defense – to cite a few – can be an extremely difficult task, especially when it comes to roles where employee performance is best monitored in real time, out in the field in some cases, and in relation to a very specific set of skills or competencies.

But there is a solution – and it involves using today's talent management technology to stay one step ahead of the compliance conundrum.

Automating an Inefficient, Paper-Based Process

A good place to start is with what can be called a performance observation checklist – functionality that can be a component of a performance management module in a talent management suite of applications. A performance observation checklist offers a fresh approach to evaluating performance by enabling organizations to assess and record an employee's skills and competencies while directly observing specific activities in the field where the toughest aspect of ensuring compliance is taking place.

Basically, it's about automating what was once an inefficient, paper-based process and helping organizations reduce errors in tracking and reporting on proficiency in – and compliance with – specific skills. But even more, it can make it easier to gain insight into competency levels across an organization, and, when integrated with learning and development, assign training to address skill gaps.

For example, health care organizations make delivering

exceptional patient care a top priority. This includes heightening patient satisfaction, increasing patient safety and, on the back end, complying with standards for accreditation, HIPAA regulations, etc.

In this market segment, using a performance observation application as part of the training and development process will give administrators and managers an easy, accessible way to track and monitor care delivery across the hospitals and clinics in any network. It also can help to further standardize clinical competencies, so that nurses, for example, are able to migrate between facilities when needed.

Performance observation applications can be used across many industries if task performance must be observed and documented on the fly and in the field. In a manufacturing setting, it can help to ensure compliance with critical safety procedures. In the pharma industry, it can help ensure compliance with clinical trials. For oil and gas companies, there might be specific compliance safeguards at offshore oil drilling sites. These are all opportunities to put a performance observation checklist into place.

Ensuring Accurate, Timely Regulatory Reporting

Recognizing the adage that one size does not fit all, the performance observation concept must be flexible enough to match the specific workflows and regulatory necessities of organizations across multiple industries. Organizations wanting to either automate or employ a performance observation checklist strategy to meet compliance requirements should ensure their technology solution can provide the following:

- Accurate and timely regulatory reporting;
- The ability to align skills and performance to specific competencies;
- Flexibility to define observations ratings and methods specific to business needs;
- Insight for identifying skill gaps and areas in which additional training and support is needed; and,
- On-demand access to intelligence and reports on information such as completion data, upcoming deadlines, or specific competency achievement by roles or units.

Once compliance requirements are set and in place, a performance observation checklist helps deliver the ability to track status and progress against those regulatory requirements, both at the individual level and across the aggregated user population.

When it comes to compliance, past history says the world will only get more complex. Having the right tools in place to meet that challenge will not only make your organization better equipped to face the future, but will also show that HR is tuned into compliance and has its priorities in place.

About the Author

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