

Ethics organization learns important lessons at annual conference

Compassion and logic are two important traits for business conduct officers (BCO). That's because the situations that BCOs address usually involve confidential employee concerns and are rarely clear-cut. At this year's Ethics conference, held Aug. 19–21 in Washington, D.C., 28 BCOs from across the sector participated in a variety of programs designed to improve their effectiveness as company ethics officers. BCOs meet each year to learn valuable lessons from each other as well as from functional experts.

"The annual conference is an opportunity for us to learn as a group," said Donna Davis, director of Ethics for Electronic Systems. "BCOs all have full-time responsibilities in a variety of functions and departments across the enterprise. For example, Dave Salazar, our BCO in Woodland Hills, Calif., is the director of NSD Contracts, while Maureen Kalinski, our BCO at EOS in Garland, Texas, is a program manager.

"The annual workshop enables us to focus solely on ethics for a few days, and to share unique perspectives and lessons learned on a variety of subjects. Since each BCO resides at a different sector location, we meet monthly via teleconferences, but nothing can compare with face-to-face communication among colleagues with common interests and goals—something that's easily taken for granted in the typical office environment."

During the conference, BCOs participated in a customized program involving the U. S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Arlington National Cemetery, and the FDR Memorial in Washington D.C.

"Applying historical events to contemporary business scenarios facilitated critical thinking and lively



Ethics officers from across the sector met in Washington, D.C., last month to pilot a new leadership development-training program at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

discussion within the group," said newly appointed Remotec BCO Alex Sims. "It also opened our minds to fresh and sometimes opposing perspectives. Questions like, 'Is it OK to bend the rules?' and 'Is a company responsible for how their products are used?' don't have a single right or wrong answer. Most of the questions we (BCOs) are asked don't have clear-cut answers that can be found in a contract or company procedure. The issues aren't black or white—they're multiple levels of grayscale."

BCOs used historical case studies involving companies who transacted business during World World II.

The intent was to learn from past successes and mistakes to better control our future. Guest speakers for the conference included members of the sector's senior leadership team, Dr. Albert Pierce, director of the Center for the Study of Professional Military Ethics, Dan Napolitano of the Holocaust Museum staff, and professor Michael Allen from Georgia Tech's School of Engineering (who also teaches an undergraduate ethics course). BCOs also

received specialized training on current areas of interest from finance, export, audit, and law.

Most issues come to BCOs through the OpenLine reporting process, which is central to Northrop Grumman's self-governing and continuous improvement principles. Employees are encouraged to seek out information, "challenge up," and report concerns. The OpenLine is one of many ways to accomplish this.

"The majority of our OpenLine contacts are from employees seeking guidance prior to making a decision or taking an action," said Davis. "That's exactly what the OpenLine is intended to do—facilitate employees to make the right decision the first time."

The OpenLine also provides a mechanism for employees to report concerns confidentially or anonymously. "We make mistakes, forget something we should have remembered, and so on," added Davis. "It's important to remember that 99-plus percent of problems occur because we're human, not because we're unethical. We're extremely busy at work, plus we all have personal lives that can impact our performance on the job. When a problem occurs, we need to learn about it quickly."

The OpenLine process and site BCOs ensure reports are reviewed and problems are corrected, thoroughly and quickly. For more information about the ethics program, visit the web sites at: <http://w789900.md.essd.northgrum.com/>, or <http://sensor.northgrum.com/ethics/default.htm> via Internet.



Business conduct officers laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknowns on behalf of Northrop Grumman employees during their annual conference. Pictured from left to right are: Gerald Jackson, Advanced Naval Platforms—Ocean Springs, Miss., John Conmy, Defensive Systems—Rolling Meadows, Ill; and Bill Robbins, Norden Systems—Norwalk, Conn.