

Alison Parkes

CHIEF COMPLIANCE OFFICER SMITH & NEPHEW



MORE ABOUT ME

What is the most interesting thing about you?

I have lived in 3 different countries (UK, UAE and USA) and everyone always wants to know about our experiences of different cultures. I would strongly encourage anyone who has the chance to live and work in a different country.

Skydiving, sunbathing or sightseeing?

As a family we have discovered the joys of an RV trip!

What is one thing you could not go a day without? (Not including necessities)

Yorkshire Gold Tea. No matter how long I have lived outside the UK, I cannot start my day without an extra large mug of tea.

What would you love to learn to do?

My family wish I would learn to sing in key. I have been known to empty a room when I get hold of the karaoke machine!

Q&A

THE SECRET SAUCE OF COMPLIANCE

What is your secret sauce for compliance?

Diversity. Traditionally people tend to think of people in compliance as lawyers or auditors. To support the business and evolve the function we should be opening our recruitment to a wider group. I'm a scientist. My team includes linguists, data specialists, marketers and nurses as well as those with a more "traditional" compliance background. Everyone brings something unique to the team.

What unique compliance challenges are companies in your industry facing?

As with all medical device companies the major challenge relates to the fact that we need to work closely with the people who are our customers (i.e. healthcare professionals) in order to ensure that our products are being used safely and effectively and to continually develop improved products.

This can lead to perceptions that the relationship between the industry and customers is too close. So we have to be mindful and steer those relationships carefully.

What makes a GREAT compliance leader?

First and foremost we need to make sure our team knows the business. It might sound obvious but it is so critical to effective risk management and balanced decision making.

What is the work achievement that you're most proud of?

I am exceptionally proud to work for a healthcare company because what we do helps people, everyday. On a personal level I am proud of the amazing work our team have done to evolve our compliance program.

Why did you decide a career in compliance was right for you?

For a start, I get bored easily, and there is never a dull moment in a compliance career. But more importantly, compliance touches every part of the organization so I can get involved in a huge range of different issues and activities.

What does it mean to be an ethical company in 2022?

Well it seems like the world is changing at an unprecedented rate. So first and foremost companies need to focus on their people. If we put our people first in our decision making then I think we are off to a good start.

The challenges of a compliance officer are never-ending – how do you stay motivated?

I love working for a healthcare company. The fact that as an organization we help people regain their lives is really powerful for me.

Reading stories from patients who have been helped by our products is a great motivator.

Is technology and automation the answer to the understaffed compliance team?

Technology and automation are essential additions to our toolkit. They can help us build compliance "by design" into core processes and data can help detect "pink flags" before they become significant issues.

That said, we cannot rely on tech, automation and data alone. We need experienced compliance professionals to address developing and novel situations and to ensure we do not fall into the trap of generating data through automation that we do not action.

Share one not-so-secret trick to keeping a team motivated

Recognition. I learnt from a great boss just how important recognition is in keeping people motivated through what have been difficult times. Also engaging regularly, even on silly non-work related things. As my team will tell you, I like noting more than a silly Teams-call quiz!

What is your favorite question to ask people you interview?

I am always interested in people who like to challenge the status quo, so I usually ask people how they would redesign a compliance program.

THE RESULTS ARE IN

On LinkedIn we asked:

When considering a new opportunity in compliance, what is your preference?

Business As Usual	27%
Firefighting and Fixing	73%

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