

Mariia Polomoshnova

Chief Risk Officer

Ukranian Red Cross

MORE ABOUT ME

**If you had a one-way ticket in a time machine, would you go back in time or forward to the future?**  
Forward. Not out of impatience, but out of responsibility. I want to see whether the values we fought for — transparency, dignity, fairness — stood the test of time. I want to know whether we built institutions that truly served people, or simply digitized the same hierarchies with better language.

**If you could be any character in a book, TV show or movie, who would you be?**  
Olivia Pope from *Scandal*. Not because of the designer coats or dramatic soundtrack — but because she walks into moral chaos with clarity. She leads with intellect, intuition, and an unflinching sense of duty. She solves problems others are afraid to name, and she protects people — not only when it's convenient, but especially when it's not.

**Where would you most like to live when you retire?**  
In a quiet house near the Carpathian Mountains, nestled between pine trees, crisp air, and the kind of silence that's earned — not escaped to.



Asked & Answered

THE SECRET SAUCE OF COMPLIANCE

**What is your secret sauce for compliance?**  
I would describe it as a blend of strategic curiosity, empathetic leadership, and grounded pragmatism.

Strategic curiosity helps me look beyond symptoms. When something fails — a process, a safeguard, a policy — I don't stop at what happened. I ask why it was allowed to happen. What incentives, what habits, what blind spots enabled that failure? This mindset is essential when you're dealing with complex, layered risks that don't show up in spreadsheets.

Empathetic leadership is what allows compliance to be human. Our work is often associated with control, audits, and sanctions. But I've learned that the strongest cultures of integrity are not built through fear — they're built through connection. When someone speaks up in a difficult situation — a whistleblower, a staff member in distress — my job isn't just to “process” the case. It's to stand beside that person as a human being.

And pragmatism. That's a survival trait in a war zone. You rarely have complete information, resources are stretched thin and lives may be on the line. In those moments, theory steps aside. What remains are your principles — and your ability to apply them with clarity, urgency, and courage. That's the secret sauce: curiosity to understand, empathy to connect, and pragmatism to act with integrity under pressure.

**What is the biggest misconception about the role of a compliance function?**  
That it's just about control. In fact, compliance is a strategic function. We exist not to control, but to protect. Not to obstruct, but to enable. Done well, compliance creates clarity in complexity, trust under scrutiny, and speed with integrity. In high-risk environments like ours — with humanitarian funding, cross-border partnerships, and extreme operational pressure — you need systems that don't collapse when challenged. That's what compliance builds.

**What is the one question you wish your colleagues would ask you more often?**  
"What are we missing?"

This simple question is an invitation — to spot blind spots, hear quiet signals, and name risks that haven't yet materialized. Great compliance cultures aren't built on compliance checklists. They're built on psychological safety, where people are encouraged to speak up not just when things go wrong, but when things feel off.

This question signals humility and humility is the root of all learning.

**A code of ethics and conduct is one of the more gray areas of coverage that a compliance officer oversees – should the compliance officer's voice be most prominent? If not then who?**  
The compliance officer should guide and protect the integrity of the process, but not dominate it. A Code of Conduct must reflect the lived reality of the people it's meant to serve — not just the legal or ethical theory behind it. If it feels abstract or disconnected, it risks becoming a document that sits unread, rather than one that shapes behavior. The most effective codes are co-created with contributions from HR, legal, operational teams, field staff, and leadership. This inclusive approach builds both relevance and legitimacy. When people recognize their values, their challenges, and their language in the document, they are far more likely to act in alignment with it. Compliance brings the structure and standards, yes — but culture cannot be imposed. It must be invited, reflected, and sustained.

**What is one productivity hack that you love and others should try too?**  
I call it “Courage Appointments.” It's a simple idea with powerful impact. Each week, I block time in my calendar to face something I've been avoiding — a difficult conversation, a sensitive compliance report, a delayed feedback session, or a leadership issue that feels uncomfortable.

And I treat that time as non-negotiable. No rescheduling. No excuses. This practice helps me train my nervous system to deal with discomfort intentionally, rather than reactively. It also creates a rhythm of accountability within myself: I'm not just clearing tasks; I'm leaning into the work that builds credibility. In compliance, avoidance has a cost. Problems don't disappear — they grow in silence. By tackling tension early, I create space for clarity, repair, and ethical alignment. Courage isn't always loud. Sometimes, it looks like showing up to a calendar block that you'd rather skip — and doing the hard thing with care.

**Which Compliance book/podcast/blog/website would you recommend as a helpful resource?**  
Great Women in Compliance (Podcast): Smart, diverse, real. It brings global perspectives from women who lead with strength and humility in tough environments.

Thinking in Bets by Annie Duke (Book): A must-read for anyone working with uncertainty. It teaches how to think probabilistically — a key skill for risk and compliance professionals making decisions with limited data.

Ethical Systems (Website/Platform): Created by behavioral scientists, this resource helps connect theory to real-world ethics. It's full of evidence-based tools for building strong integrity cultures.

The Poll Results



HIRING A COMPLIANCE OR PRIVACY PROFESSIONAL,  
OR LOOKING FOR A COMPLIANCE OR PRIVACY JOB?

Please click on the links below:

HIRING IN COMPLIANCE OR PRIVACY

CURRENT JOB OPENINGS