

## Ethikos Volume 35, Number 2. March 25, 2021 On ethics: Richard Bistrong

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Richard Bistrong ([richard@richardbistrong.com](mailto:richard@richardbistrong.com)), CEO of Front-Line Anti-Bribery LLC, New York City

An interview by Adam Turteltaub ([adam.turteltaub@corporatecompliance.org](mailto:adam.turteltaub@corporatecompliance.org)), CHC, CCEP, Chief Engagement & Strategy Officer, SCCE & HCCA.

**AT: Richard, let's start by talking about your career before the troubles started. Can you give us a brief rundown of your professional experiences?**

**RB:** Adam, thank you for the invitation to share some of my experience with the *Ethikos* community. I spent the first half of my career as a sales vice president, focused on the US market, and the second half as an international sales vice president, spending 250 days a year overseas for a decade (1997–2007), and for part of that time, working and residing out of the United Kingdom. And while my career was in the defense sector, this is not a defense story. My operating environment was not at all unique. I worked in volatile and competitive markets, with technical and complex sales cycles. I had interaction with both the private and public sector, and in much of my work, I used channel partners as part of my going-to-market strategy. My product portfolio was globally recognized, and I operated in a public company environment, where I faced intense internal and external pressures to achieve objectives and maintain steady sales growth and profitability. Sound familiar?

**AT: During all those years, did you receive ethics training at work, and if so, what did you think you got out of it?**

**RB:** Before I took my first flight as an international sales vice president in 1997, I was presented with Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA) paperwork and was counseled how this anti-bribery law would govern my international conduct. And while my company offered resources to help me understand the act, I didn't have any questions. I understood that bribery was illegal, but that was much different than preparing me for the risks that I was about to face. And let's remember, as former SCCE CEO Roy Snell and I have agreed upon, "cheating is always a choice." This crucible is no one's fault or responsibility but my own; however, with that said, knowing the law was one thing, and operationalizing ethics and integrity, as I would come to find out the hard way, was another.

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