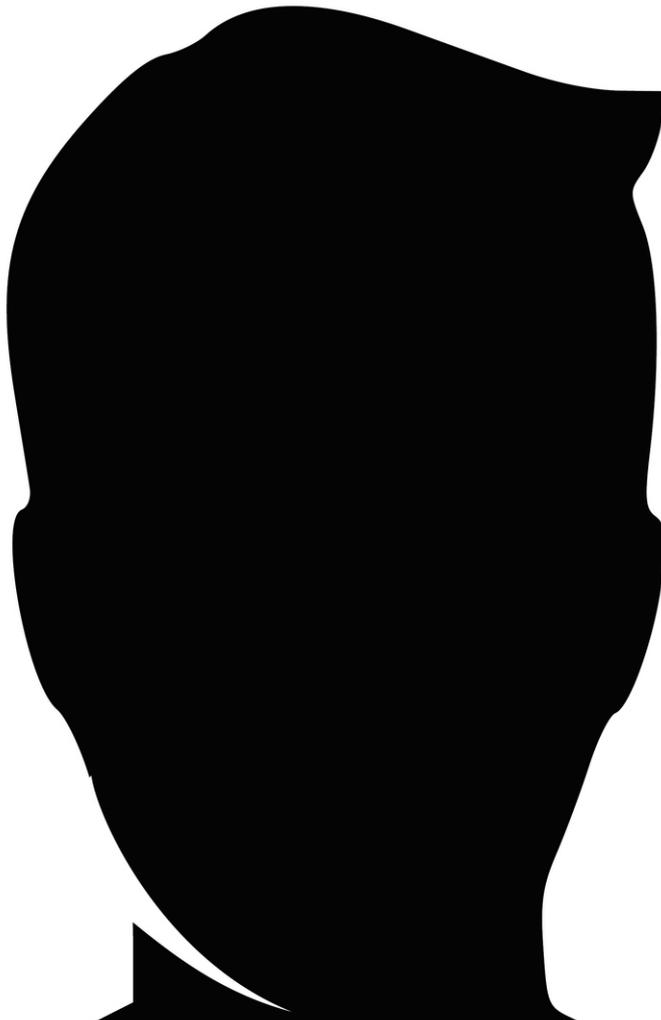


WHAT'S IN A NAME?



RECONSIDERING BITCOIN EXCHANGES

Dr Philippa Ryan addresses some of the misconceptions of Bitcoin Exchanges

CRIMINOLOGY AND COMPLIANCE

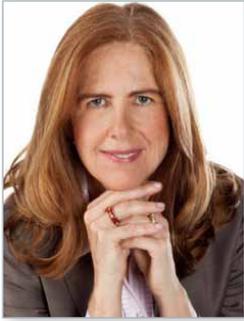
David Bartlett talks to the *GRC Professional* about the role of a corporate criminologist

SUSPICIOUS MATTER REPORTING

Julian Hunn Looks at the importance of SMR reporting

THE ZEN OF COMPLIANCE

Dr Alicia Fortinberry looks at the connection between compliance and mindfulness



Dr. Alicia Fortinberry
Principal, Fortinberry
Murray

THE ZEN OF COMPLIANCE

By Dr Alicia Fortinberry

IN THESE DAYS OF INCREASING uncertainty and stress many people are turning to mindfulness, meditation and Zen to help them cope. This is not new: in the 90's a series of books based on the best-seller *"The Zen and Art of Motorcycle Maintenance"* became a craze. I, of course was way too young to have been around at that time, have been giving some thought to the Zen of Compliance.

This isn't as silly as it first sounds. If ever there was a profession under stress it is compliance, as I know from talking to and coaching so many of you in different organisations and countries (and in Hong Kong and China going out drinking with you afterwards). You have to deal with internal stakeholders, clients or customers and regulators in an often chaotic business and regulatory environment.

Some form of mindfulness is extremely useful in decreasing stress and enhancing both mental and physical health (both of these of course being closely related). Keep in mind that about 30 percent of all employees suffer from a mood disorder such as depression or anxiety, and both are closely linked to stress.

But as most of you like to know why you are doing things, and many of you have a legal background, you are probably wondering what terms like mindfulness really mean, and what you really have to do to get the benefits. From looking at the research—and having spent a fair amount of time in ashrams and Buddhist temples from San Francisco to Pondicherry, Sri Lanka and Kyoto—it seems to me that at the core, these concepts are not that different. And the benefits may be far more profound than researchers previously thought—and more pertinent to GRC professionals (wait for it).

The idea is to clear the mind, calm the sympathetic (fight or flight) nervous system and refresh oneself with a better rest than even sleep. Pretty good so far, but there is often a secondary gain: accessing unconscious information, ideas and wisdom that enable us to be more effective and even lead a richer, more fulfilling life. In Zen teaching, it is the moment of awakening—the moment when you realise what you have always known. You have always been enlightened, your mind has always known all things, but at that moment you come to a realisation of your own enlightenment.

Part of Zen practice is to sit and just let your thoughts go where they will without judgment or attachment. Freud would've loved the idea since he and his followers thought self-knowledge would come through encouraging a free-association stream of consciousness. Other mindfulness practitioners will meditate on a single idea, mantra or even a line from a song, poem or book and allow the mind to examine it from a multitude of directions, including the emotions. Csikszentmihalyi spoke of being in a "flow" state in activities so engrossing that time seems to stop and achievement is effortless.

Besides being rejuvenating, all of these activities allow us to tap into the unconscious. Recent research shows why this is so important and might even explain the Zen sense of awakening to the inner self and core reality. What scientists are telling us is this: almost everything that we consciously know is wrong. Any memory, any "fact," any "path of reasoning" is overlaid almost as soon as we perceive it with fallacies and biases from our own belief and assumption system.



"Besides being rejuvenating, all of these activities allow us to tap into the unconscious."



We consciously know, or can access, far less than 1 percent of our stored knowledge. The 99 percent of unconscious knowledge resides in the head-brain's subconscious: the limbic system, the cerebellum, the orbitofrontal cortex, the posterior superior parietal cortex and the rest. It can also be found in the other brains that scientists have recently discovered. These are the gut brain (where perhaps the majority of our decisions are made), the heart brain (which, believe it or not, exercises a degree of control over our romantic involvements) and the newest discovery, the skin brain (where we store many contact memories). Added to all this is the knowledge and memories stored in our genes—in our DNA.

In meditative states we can tap into this wider knowledge. I often experience that when lost in a teaching moment or during serene reflection (usually at the hairdresser), I come up with my most novel and important ideas.

But the benefits are even greater. By loosening the hold on our conscious beliefs and assumptions we allow a far deeper knowledge to emerge. And it is this new, unfettered consciousness that is vital to finding new ways forward when the old systems—economic, social, regulatory and climatic—are frighteningly unpredictable and no longer working as we currently need them to.



“Some form of mindfulness is extremely useful in decreasing stress and enhancing both mental and physical health (both of these of course being closely related).”

It seems to us that we must release our obsession with information, fact and even laws and rules—the brain does not care about them anyway—in order to ponder who we really are as human beings and how we can find better ways of living and healing together. Science can help guide us, as scientists are coming to better understand what really moves us, including the role of DNA and even microbiota.

So perhaps one of the first things that a GRC professional seeking to instill a culture of compliance must come to is the realisation that compliance is not about knowledge that we have, or outcomes that we believe will come about. Both of these, modern science tells us, are almost bound to be wrong because they are based on assumptions. Even our rules and regulations may not always be the best, or lead to the outcomes their drafters want.

Rather, perhaps we could meditate on the proposition that by being true to our genetic drivers such as the need for belonging, trust and mutual support we could get people to release their innate altruism and find new ways of negotiating dependable ways of being and working and living together. •••

