



Meet the CCO – Saleem Chowdhery, Code Compliance Officer, Co-operative Group Limited

Question: Tell us something about yourself and your path to becoming a Code Compliance Officer.

I've spent most of my life in and around retail. I spent much of my childhood in my parent's newsagent's shop and since qualifying as a Chartered Accountant in the 1990s I've worked in fashion retail, duty free shopping and grocery both big box and convenience. I joined the Co-op as Director of Group Internal Audit reporting to the Chair of the Group's Risk & Audit Committee. The need to be independent, objective and focussed on governance, risk and control are useful traits for a Code Compliance Officer.

Question: What are the most challenging aspects of your CCO role?

Retail is a fast paced environment. People, products, supply chains, market conditions everything changes. I know that the negotiations between buyers and suppliers can have huge impacts on both parties. A big challenge for me, like any of the other CCOs, will be to take an evidence based view on any issue that arises and to reach a fair and balanced decision.

Question: If you could change one thing about the groceries market, what would it be?

Most grocers do a good job in attracting employees that reflect the communities that they operate in. However, I think that this diversity doesn't always continue up to senior leadership levels. It's better than many other industries but we can still do better. A change would improve business performance and help produce a fairer society, a win, win.

Question: What achievement as CCO are you most proud of?

At the time of answering this question I've only been in the role of CCO a matter weeks so I hope the best is still to come!

I'm proud to step into a role where the buyers I've met to date have all been clear on the importance of getting GSCOP right for suppliers and also importantly for our members who have always championed fair and ethical business behaviour.

Question: What 3 things do you want to achieve in the next 12 months?

1. Develop a continuing, open and transparent relationship with the GCA;
2. Get the Co-op's buyers recognised by suppliers as some of the most compliant in the market with the Code
3. Improve colleagues' and suppliers' awareness and understanding of the CCO's role

Question: Is there anything else you would like to share with readers of News from the Adjudicator?

The Co-op is a different way of doing business. We're founded on a set of values and principles describing a fairer and better way of doing business. We try to demonstrate our commitment to these values and principles in everything we do. This includes in our dealings with our suppliers and partners. If there's a time that you think that we've not lived up to these values then please get in touch and I will ensure it's looked at.