



Meet the CCO –Phil Willsmer, Code Compliance Officer, Co-operative Group Limited

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

I am an ex-Police officer who entered the retail sector in 1998. I have worked in a number of retailers prior to starting with the Co-operative Group in 2004. My role has grown considerably over the past five years when I was appointed as Director of Risk. In 2013 I took over responsibility for GSCOP when I became the Group's Code Compliance Officer. I work closely with both the Retail Operations and Legal teams to ensure we remain compliant with the Code.

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

I think my biggest challenge is getting my name recognised among our supplier base. Despite writing to them on a number of occasions and my details being on our supplier portal, for some reason they appear not to have this information. My second biggest challenge is to ensure that all our buyers have GSCOP in their DNA and that the Code is always considered in their day-to-day dealings with suppliers.

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

I guess this would be customer attitude and loyalty to British farmers. I feel that if this could be established and customers were prepared to pay a fair price for their goods then this would make the whole market more sustainable and allow clear pricing throughout the supply chain. It is very difficult for one retailer to make a stance when the rest of the market do not, which leads to the dilemma of doing the right thing v loss of sales.

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

The introduction of the GSCOP Governance Group comprising of all the senior buyers and the Commercial Director. This Group meets monthly and discusses all aspects of the code and how we can implement it successfully across the commercial team. This is a big step forward in our driving the cultural piece around the Code.

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

1. Really embed the culture of Code compliance across the Group
2. Receive regular positive feedback from our supplier base around our compliance to the Code
3. Achieve an improvement in our scoring at the next annual survey

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

Only two things: firstly, please remember who I am as every year suppliers complete the GCA survey to the effect that they don't know my name and secondly, I would encourage all suppliers to speak to either the senior commercial team or myself if they feel the Group isn't meeting its obligations under this Code. We need to know any issues if we are to put them right.