



KPMG SMART PRACTICE

Conference season: Which ones to attend and why?

In addition to warmer temperatures and sunnier skies, summer is conference season. Export compliance professionals are typically presented with a myriad of technically-focused conferences and networking events to attend. But knowing which conferences justify the time cost of being away from the office, as well as the fees the organization incurs, can be confusing. Defining your priorities ahead of time can help you target the events that most closely align with your goals.

Organization goals

When deciding which conferences to attend, a major consideration is the relevance to the organization. Industry groups often host conferences or networking events where the topics align to industry-wide issues. In taking a few days to attend, export compliance professionals will not only learn about the most topical issues, but will spend time with similarly situated professionals. In fact, many large organizations plan for their compliance professionals to attend annually.

Another facet to consider is whether

there is a significant business change on the horizon that will implicate export compliance management. Quickly getting up to speed is imperative if the

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company's export control profile has changed as a result of new product lines or acquisitions. Before implementing new policies and procedures, the export compliance team should understand industry-leading practices. Conferences are ideal opportunities for defining what peer companies are doing to mitigate risk. Similarly, if new automation is being implemented, spending some time learning about it from professionals as well as colleagues who are using it regularly can help export compliance teams more quickly get up to speed.

Regulatory changes

Over the last several years, the regulatory environment has become significantly more complicated. A large swathe of companies have been impacted to some extent – either as a result of revised military end-use/user requirements or the evolving Russia/Belarus sanctions. To effectively manage these regulations, export compliance teams must be able to assess business activity in real time to identify when authorizations are required.

Many government agencies will sponsor annual conferences that focus on the hottest issues export compliance professionals are facing. The government officials attending these events can provide important insight into the policy or application behind the regulations, and may also speak about common challenges. Further, in certain sessions they may take questions, which allows attendees to have unique insight into these evolving regulations. Not only will export compliance professionals leave with a better working knowledge of the controlling regulations but will also better understand the intangible considerations.

Professional goals

Finally, conferences can provide wonderful opportunities to help advance professional goals. Taking a few minutes to consider long-term career aspirations and then identifying the right events to attend can accelerate career growth. For example, sanctions management is a highly complex topic that spans multiple industries and is likely to remain critically important. Professionals with a grasp of sanctions regimes can set themselves apart. However, this is not the only topic where deep technical knowledge is a requirement to successful compliance programs. Conferences support rapid development of core skills.

There can be a number of calculations in determining which conferences to attend. However, articulating a clear reason for selecting an event can help attendees maximize productivity and apply the learnings. ■

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