

2026 Benchmarking for Modern Compliance Training

Industry & Organizational
Insights That Drive
Behavior Change





Executive Summary

Compliance training has undergone a profound evolution. Once positioned strictly as a regulatory requirement, training programs today serve as strategic drivers of culture, ethical behavior, and enterprise risk management. This benchmarking report analyzed thousands of learning activities across industries and company sizes to understand what organizations prioritize and how they deliver training today. Two clear patterns emerge:

1. Industry determines what must be taught

- Manufacturing emphasizes safety; financial services focuses on anti-money laundering and conduct; technology prioritizes privacy and cybersecurity.

2. Size determines how training is delivered

- Smaller organizations maximize microlearning efficiency, while large enterprises rely on multi-format reinforcement, customization, and localization.

Across all organizations, the most common topics include Respectful Workplace, Corporate Culture, Anti-Bribery & Corruption, Data Protection, and Information Security.

Current Outlook

While compliance training is becoming more sophisticated, many programs still struggle to move to more mature, behavior-driven training ecosystems. In 2026, leaders should prioritize:

- Greater personalization of learning by role, risk, and region.
- AI-driven localization and content updates.
- Extended reinforcement models beyond once-a-year events.
- Integrated culture and leadership training for managers.
- Real-time insights from culture and training analytics.

The sections that follow share benchmark findings and concrete recommendations to accelerate program maturity in 2026.

Why Organizations Benchmark:

- Identify coverage gaps across high-risk topics.
- Evaluate delivery effectiveness: frequency, formats, and learner reach.
- Align with regulatory expectations, which increasingly emphasize culture and effectiveness rather than policy existence alone.
- Support budget and roadmap justification, using external norms to support internal priorities.

There is also a growing body of research showing that effective ethics and compliance programs and training can strengthen ethical culture and reduce unethical behavior.¹

Why Benchmarking Matters More Than Ever

Benchmarking is essential not just for comparison, but for understanding whether a compliance program is modern, adaptive, and outcome-oriented.

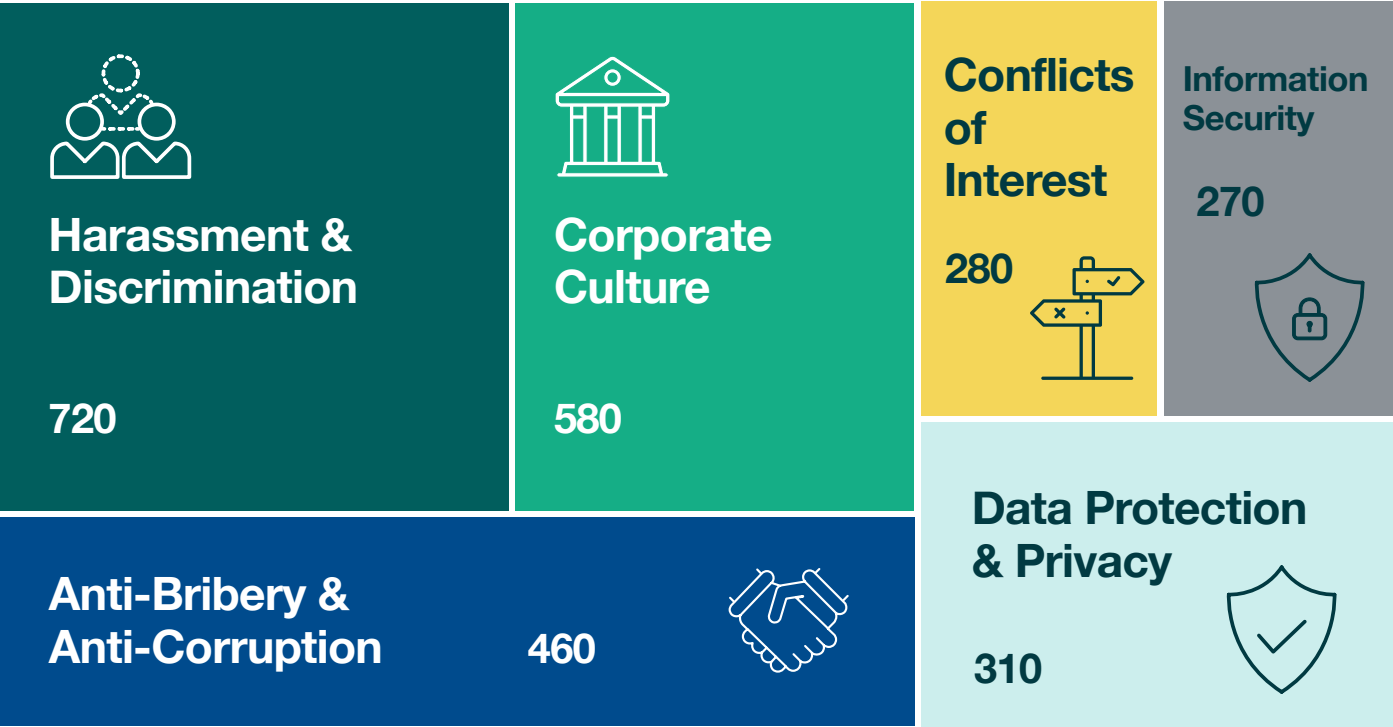
1. [\(PDF\) Benefits of effective ethics training](#)



Recommendations for Your Program

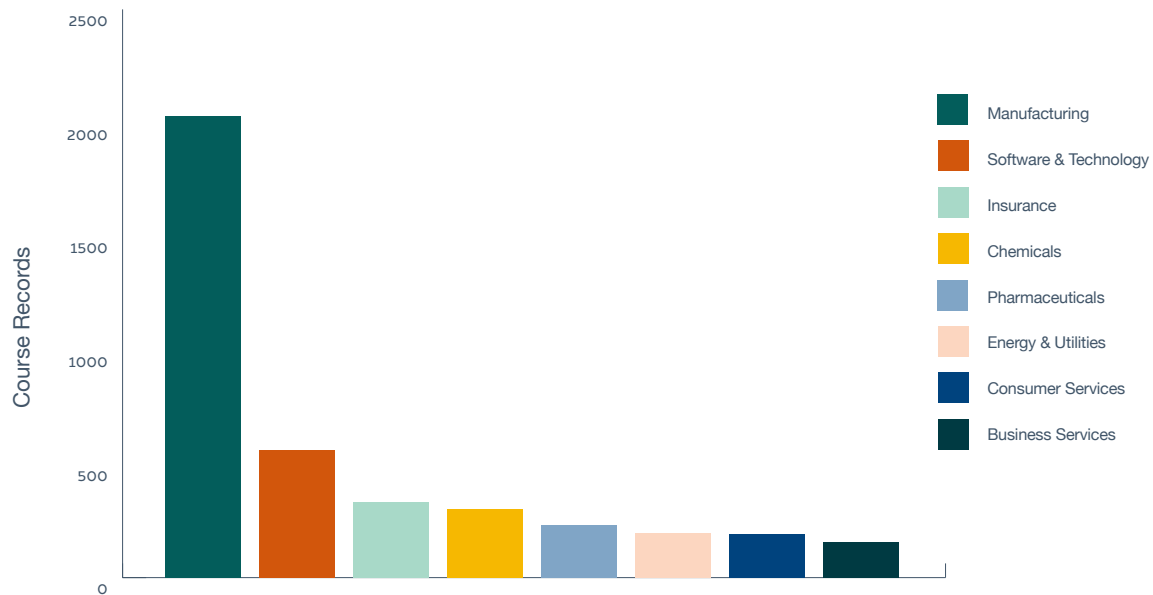
- 1. Score your program on topic coverage, format diversity, localization, speak-up culture, and analytics use.
- 2. Benchmark beyond your own industry. Look at adjacent sectors (e.g. tech vs. financial services) to identify practices that may soon be expected in your space.
- 3. Benchmark behavioral impact, not only completion. Incorporate pulse surveys, scenario-based knowledge checks, and manager feedback to understand whether training is changing decision-making.
- 4. Use AI-assisted analytics to spot risk patterns. Correlate training participation and assessment results with incident data, hotline trends, and culture survey scores.

Top Risks Categories (All Organizations)





Top Industries by Number of Course Records



Industry Benchmarking: What Different Sectors Prioritize

Different industries face unique risk exposures, which shape their training offerings. And the companies that consistently rank among the world's most ethical and best places to work share a commitment to building ethical cultures that go beyond policy adherence.

Manufacturing

- Strong emphasis on safety, anti-bribery and corruption, and corporate culture.
- Use of microlearning, short videos, and offline training materials to reach shift-based and frontline workers.

Recommendation for 2026

Adopt a mobile-first microlearning and Press-Play videos to reach deskless workers, embedding safety, respect, and integrity into daily operations.



Financial Services

- Leads in AML, fraud, conduct, and conflicts of interest training.
- Heavily reliant on customized content that reflects complex regulatory obligations.

Recommendation for 2026

Implement continuous regulatory intelligence in your content lifecycle so that regulatory changes automatically trigger updates to relevant training modules.

Technology & Telecommunications

- Dominated by data protection, privacy, AI ethics, and cybersecurity.
- Rapid pace of innovation makes annual training insufficient.

SEE SAI360'S 2026 COURSE CATALOG

Explore our completely redesigned 2026 catalog and find out how we make switching vendors painless.

Recommendation for 2026

Move to quarterly reinforcement cycles that are short, scenario-based interventions that follow major technology changes or security events.

Retail & Consumer Goods

- Heavy emphasis on respectful workplace, inclusion, and loss prevention.

Recommendation for 2026

Deploy gamified conflict-resolution and ethics scenarios for customer-facing employees to build practical skills in high-pressure situations.

Cross-Industry Recommendations for 2026

Regardless of sector, leading organizations in 2026 will:

- Integrate culture and ethics narratives into core learning journeys.
- Use AI-assisted authoring and translation to update content more frequently.²
- Blend courses with microlearning, video, and interactive experiences to keep attention and reinforce key messages.

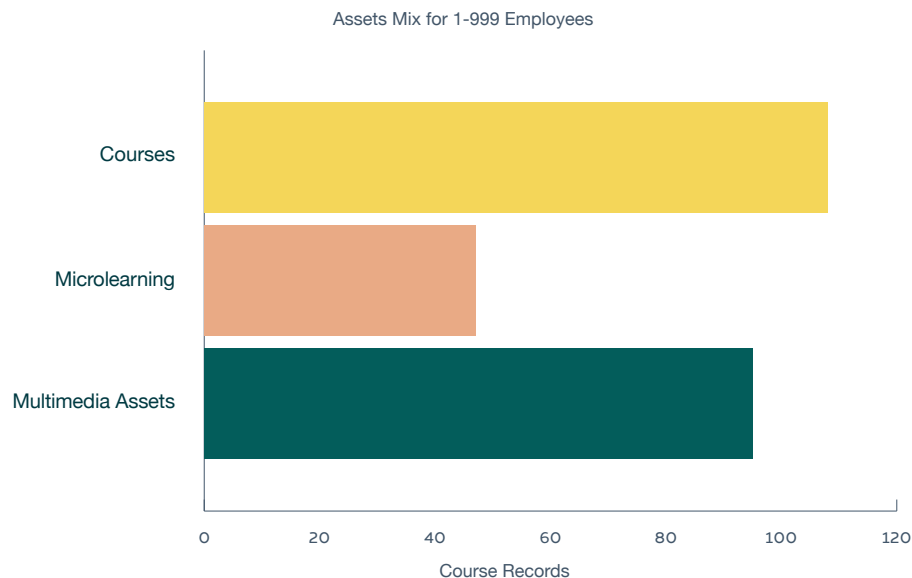
2. [How Training Cultivates Ethics and Boosts Business Performance](#)



Benchmarking by Company Size: How Learning is Delivered

Organizational size strongly influences customization, reinforcement strategy, and content diversity.

1-999 Employees	Key Trends • Focus on foundational topics: Code, anti-harassment, data privacy, basic cybersecurity. • High reliance on microlearning because teams are lean and time constrained.	Recommendation for 2026 Adopt a bundled core compliance curriculum with built-in LMS, automatic updates and ready-made microlearning to reduce administrative burden.
1,000-4,999 Employees	Key Trends • Increasing use of blended formats (courses, microlearnings, videos) • Beginning to centralize training analytics and reporting dashboards.	Recommendation for 2026 Implement role- and risk-based learning paths, differentiating content for managers, supervisors, and frontline workers.
5,000-9,999 Employees	Key Trends • Multi-regional operations drive the need for localization and flexible formats.	Recommendation for 2026 Leverage AI-supported translation and in-house content editing to roll out consistent but localized learning in many languages without multiplying costs.
10,000+ Employees	Key Trends • Most mature programs, with a large portion of custom assets. • Use dashboards to track consumption, completion, and risk indicators.	Recommendation for 2026 • Invest in advanced analytics to show value to stakeholders and track KPIs • Use reporting to tie learner data to near-misses, whistleblower and hotline case management data, and audit findings to identify where additional training or leadership intervention is needed.





Cross-Insights: Industry & Size Dynamics

When industry and size are viewed together, clearer patterns appear:

Regulated and Large (e.g., big banks, global energy companies)

- Complex, multi-format training portfolios.
- Frequent updates, localization, and targeted leadership modules.

• **Regulated and Small**

- Lean programs that must cover core risk areas efficiently.
- Heavy use of vendor libraries and out-of-the-box content.

• **Unregulated and Large** (e.g., global tech, retail)

- Emphasis on culture, inclusion, and leadership behavior.
- Extensive use of narrative video, scenario-based training, and storytelling.

• **Unregulated and Small**

- Essentials-focused portfolios.
- Microlearning used to cover a broad range of topics with minimal disruption.

Recommendation for 2026

Every organization should maintain a risk-based learning map that blends:

- Must-have compliance topics (regulatory and policy coverage).
- Culture and leadership content (tone at the top and middle).
- Reinforcement nudges and microlearning based on observed risks.

THE EU AI ACT

AI governance and AI literacy are emerging as major training priorities, particularly for multinational organizations and companies deploying AI across HR, operations, customer service, and compliance workflows.

RECOMMENDATION FOR 2026

Establish a baseline AI literacy program for all employees and deeper role-based training for teams building, deploying, overseeing, or approving AI-enabled processes. The focus should include responsible use, transparency, human oversight, bias awareness, and escalation when AI outputs create risk

<https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/regulatory-framework-ai>

What “Good” Looks Like in 2026

Across the dataset and external research, the most advanced programs share several defining characteristics:

Integrated Culture and Risk Training	Ethics, respect, and inclusion are not separate “HR topics.” They are threaded through leadership, risk, and operational modules.
Continuous Learning Journeys	Organizations move from once-a-year training to continuous programs with quarterly refreshers, monthly nudges, and just-in-time microlearning.
Localization & Inclusivity	High-maturity organizations offer training in multiple languages and adapt examples to local contexts, which helps learners connect training to reality. ³
Customization at Scale	Rather than copy-pasting generic content, leaders use course editing tools and scenario banks to tailor examples to their industry, values, and risk profile.
Measurement of Outcomes	The focus shifts from completion rates to metrics like changes in ethical culture survey scores, manager preparedness to handle concerns and reduction in repeated incidents and hotspots. ⁴

3. <https://www.greatplacetowork.com/resources/blog/elements-of-great-company-culture>

4. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10551-025-06115-5>



How Organizations Should Apply These Benchmarks in 2026



Trends and Predictions: Where Compliance Learning is Headed

Looking at industry benchmarks, external research, and market signals, several trends will shape compliance learning in 2026 and beyond:

Trend 1: From “Training Events” to Training Ecosystems

Organizations are moving from static courses to integrated ecosystems of content, communication, and analytics, drive in part by evidence that one-off compliance training is often ineffective at changing behavior.

Prediction: By the end of 2026, leading programs will offer always-on training experiences, with regular nudges and content delivered in the flow of work.

Trend 2: AI-Enabled Personalization and Localization

AI is increasingly used to translate, adapt, and personalize training content at scale, supporting high-trust and growth-oriented workplaces that emphasize development.

Prediction: Organizations that harness AI for translation, content recommendations, and risk-based targeting will reduce time-to-launch and improve learner relevance.

Trend 3: Focus on Managers as Culture Carriers

Managers are emerging as the most critical channel for culture, ethics, and speak-up behavior. Research shows that employees often prefer to raise concerns with their direct managers, and that manager behavior strongly influences culture.⁵

Prediction: This year, manager-specific ethics and misconduct training will be standard expectation, not a differentiator.

5. <https://ethisphere.com/managers-ethics-culture-trust-2025>



Trend 4: More Frequent Culture & Ethics Measurement

Top ethical companies increasingly use regular ethical culture assessments and pulse surveys. For example, 96% of honorees recognized among the World's Most Ethical Companies conduct some form of ethics culture survey at least every two years, and nearly half measure culture at least annually.⁶

Prediction: Annual or biannual culture and speak-up surveys will be considered baseline practice for credible ethics and compliance programs.

Trend 5: Linking Learning, Culture, and Performance

High-performing workplaces consistently show that strong culture correlates with lower turnover, higher productivity, and more innovation.

Prediction: Boards and executives will increasingly expect clear links between learning data, culture metrics, and business outcomes.

What The World's Most Ethical and Best Places to Work are Doing and How Platforms Help

Recognition programs like Ethisphere's World's Most Ethical Companies and Best Places to Work / Great Place to Work lists provide a view into what top performers do differently.

Evidence-Based Best Practices Among the World's Most Ethical Companies

According to Ethisphere data:

- 96% of World's Most Ethical Companies honorees perform an ethical culture survey at least every two years, and 49% do so annually.
- 99% provide ethics and misconduct training specifically to people managers, not just employees generally.⁷

These organizations also tend to:

- Integrate ethics into leadership development programs.
- Use targeted training for high-risk roles and geographies.
- Treat speak-up culture, investigations, and culture measurement as part of one continuous cycle.

What Best Places to Work Do

Research from Great Places to Work and other best-workplace lists highlights that outstanding employers typically:

- Create high-trust cultures based on fairness, inclusion, and shared purpose.
- Invest heavily in employee training and development, which boosts retention and engagement.⁸
- Emphasize inclusivity, support, and teamwork as defining cultural traits.

In other words, the world's most ethical and most admired workplaces treat learning not just as compliance, but as a mechanism to:

- Reinforce values.
- Support career growth.
- Strengthen trust and psychological safety.

6. <https://ethisphere.com/ethical-culture-assessment-frequency>

7. <https://www.greatplacetowork.com/resources/blog/elements-of-great-company-culture>

8. <https://www.greatplacetowork.com/resources/blog/employee-training-development-benefits-planning>



Conclusion

Modern compliance training is about building a durable culture of integrity and accountability.

Across industries and company sizes, the message is clear:

- Industry defines what you must address.
- Size defines how you should deliver and reinforce it.
- Culture, data, and design determine whether any of it changes behavior.

By leveraging benchmarks, adopting continuous learning strategies, investing in manager-focused and localized content, and using modern platforms to scale and measure impact, organizations can move from reactive compliance to proactive culture leadership.

2026 can be the year where compliance programs evolve from “required training” to strategic training ecosystems that protect the business and empower people to do the right thing.

Schedule Time with an Expert



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