



HOTLINE & CASE MANAGEMENT

QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD BE
ASKING YOUR HOTLINE PROVIDER

HOW TO EVALUATE WHISTLEBLOWER HOTLINE VENDORS

MAKE SURE THAT THE RIGHT VENDOR IS MANAGING YOUR HOTLINE.

When it comes to choosing a vendor for a whistleblowing hotline, be sure to vet your candidate companies carefully. If you choose the right vendor, you'll have a true partner in risk management that makes your job better and easier. The wrong vendor undermines the very purpose of your whistleblower hotline, that is, to build trust and engagement so management can take corrective action against risk.

Online reviews that compare one vendor to another are great resources.

But they leave you relying on the opinions of others. Worse yet, you're still not sure how much of the reviewer's experience will be your own given your unique and complex role. Vendor references should be a standard ask during the vetting process. Talking to satisfied customers is great, but don't you always wonder just a bit more about the unsatisfied ones?

This eBook arms you with the right questions to ask any hotline provider so you can dig deep and investigate important capabilities for yourself. If you're willing to settle for any vendor with a phone and an email address, you have a world of options! If your job and your team are more important than that, here are 10 questions to ask that won't be covered by online reviews and vendor references.

Do you already have a hotline vendor? Use these questions to audit them.

Once you choose a hotline vendor, wouldn't it be great if it was 'set it and forget it'? Compliance hotlines don't work that way. Business moves too fast and risks are too high when it comes to issue intake and case management. Who knew that the #MeToo movement would get so big so fast? And COVID-19 came from out of nowhere leaving cities, states and other organizations scrambling to provide hotline support for millions of citizens and workers.

For these reasons, it's wise to audit your hotline provider's processes regularly. What do you know now that you didn't know when you signed the vendor? How have your needs changed? How has the vendor changed?

With the 10 questions in this guide, you'll be able to identify how to evaluate a hotline vendor to support your company mission and compliance goals.



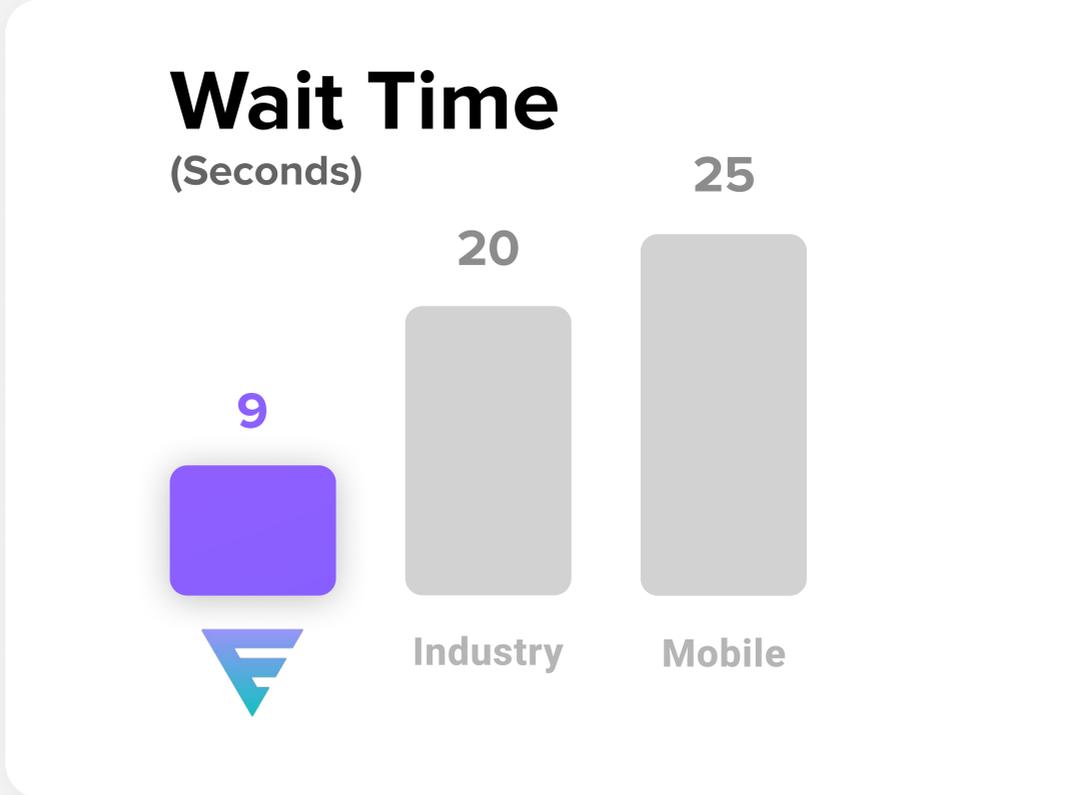


What is your average caller wait time before a speaker speaks to a live operator?

We're talking from successful dial to a real person. No cheap tricks or robo-callers!

Ethico answers every call live from the U.S. No waiting. No queues. No bad elevator music (unless you like that sort of thing).

Prompt and courteous call experience drives satisfaction for the hotline caller. It also expresses your leadership's commitment to listening. When a caller has a short work break to report a serious issue and is battling some fear of reporting, an excessive wait time (or anything that seems excessive to the caller) can lead to an abandoned call. You may never hear about that abandoned issue until it's a much bigger fire! The caller simply hangs up and walks away...along with your only chance to find out about an impending disaster.



Helpful Tip: Watch for call time quotes that exclude elevator music queue time.

- Data Source:**
- Ethico Data Nov 19 through Jan 2020;
 - Source for Hotline1
 - Source for Navex Global;



Q2

What is your call abandon rate?

JUST AS IMPORTANTLY, WHAT ABANDON RATE ARE YOU WILLING TO SETTLE FOR?

Long wait times or other service issues send callers a message that their time and desire to help don't matter to you. Worse yet, you miss an opportunity to find out about serious issues that create risk for your organization. Even if the caller calls back later, the information has been delayed. So think about it, when it comes to sexual misconduct, substance abuse, or guns in the workplace - do you really want to be in the dark? Missed or even delayed reports create a drag on your compliance culture as people spread the word that it's not worth the effort to call the hotline. In that case, your hotline could be creating a less transparent culture than if you didn't have one at all!

Helpful Tip: Ask vendors you're vetting to let you test their hotline so you can experience it yourself. (Don't be surprised if they won't let you)

Already have a vendor? Benchmark your abandonment rate and monitor changes (if your vendor will cooperate) on a monthly or quarterly basis.

Abandonment Rate

▼ | .8%

Hotline  10.0%

Mobile  20.0%

According to a recent consumer survey, nearly two-thirds of clients surveyed indicate that they are only willing to wait 2 minutes or less before hanging up. Over 13% of survey respondents selected that no hold time is acceptable.

Data Source:

- Facts
- Ethico Data Nov 19 through Jan 2020;
- Source for Hotline
- Source for Mobile

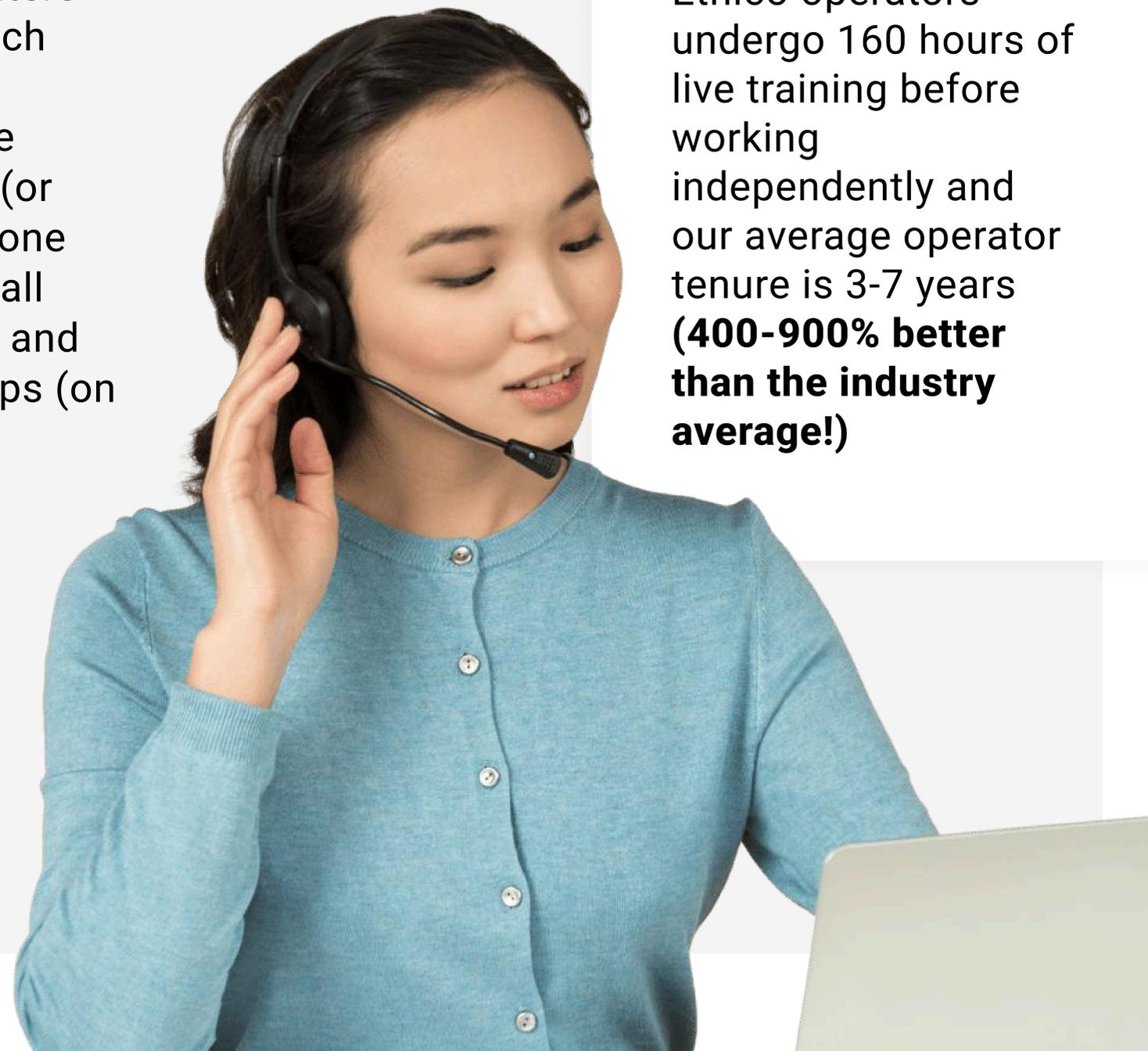
Q3

What is the average tenure of your hotline operators?

If you've ever onboarded a new hire, you know the first 60-120 days is a learning process. Most call centers have an average tenure of around 9 months, which means your calls may be answered without the qualifications and experience to handle sensitive compliance issues. A quick check of Glassdoor (or other employer rating sites) will reveal what anyone who has worked a call center job knows: most call centers have harsh cultures that devalue people and learn to live with high turnover. Inexperienced reps (on overage) can lead to restrictive call processes, mishandling of risk, and bad caller experience.

Ethico operators undergo 160 hours of live training before working independently and our average operator tenure is 3-7 years **(400-900% better than the industry average!)**

Helpful Tip: Find out how long the operators serving your line have been working, and what training and credentials they have.

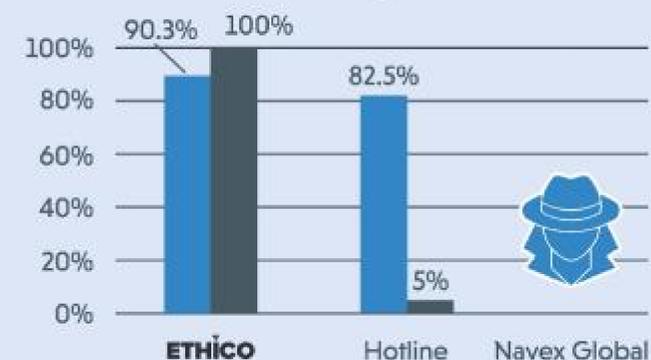


Q4

What is your process and current rate for quality reviews?

In many call centers, managers may only look at a few reports out of every hundred and assume that everything else goes well. While this can make sense for a mechanistic process like a manufacturing assembly line, compliance issues come in all shapes and sizes. How does a rep handle a frustrated caller? What does a high volume spike do to call quality and the accuracy of information?

Watch for: padded quality metrics focused on vendor profit and not your needs.



Helpful Tip: Ask about the issue review process (who does what quality checks?), the quality rating (Are they just trying to speed people up to increase profit?) as well as how many reports get sampled (Do they sample enough to make reliable conclusions?). Request a report for their success rate and compare it to what is acceptable for your industry. Your definition of success is what matters, not your vendor's internal profit percentage!

Q5

What standardized fields are collected and tracked?

Standardized fields like location, parties involved, and key metrics allow your team to quickly review and get to the heart of an issue. They help you triage issues, involve the right parties, and close investigations quicker. Additionally, standardized fields allow you to produce thoughtful reporting to identify trends

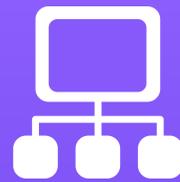
and find points of improvement for your whole compliance process. As you are pressed to increase efficiency and allocate a tight budget to the things that impact your goals, data-backed strategies make your team more successful and more respected across the enterprise.



Location



Position/
Title



Division



Category



Severity/
Urgency

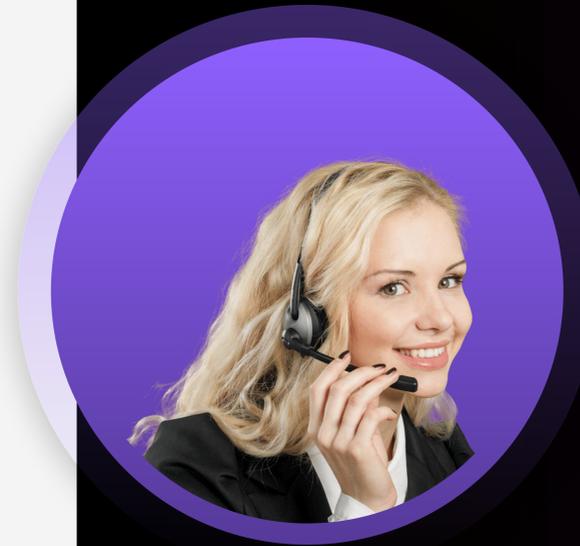
Helpful Tip: Find out what's tracked and ask for advice on which fields you should be tracked and reported on to support your goals.

Q6

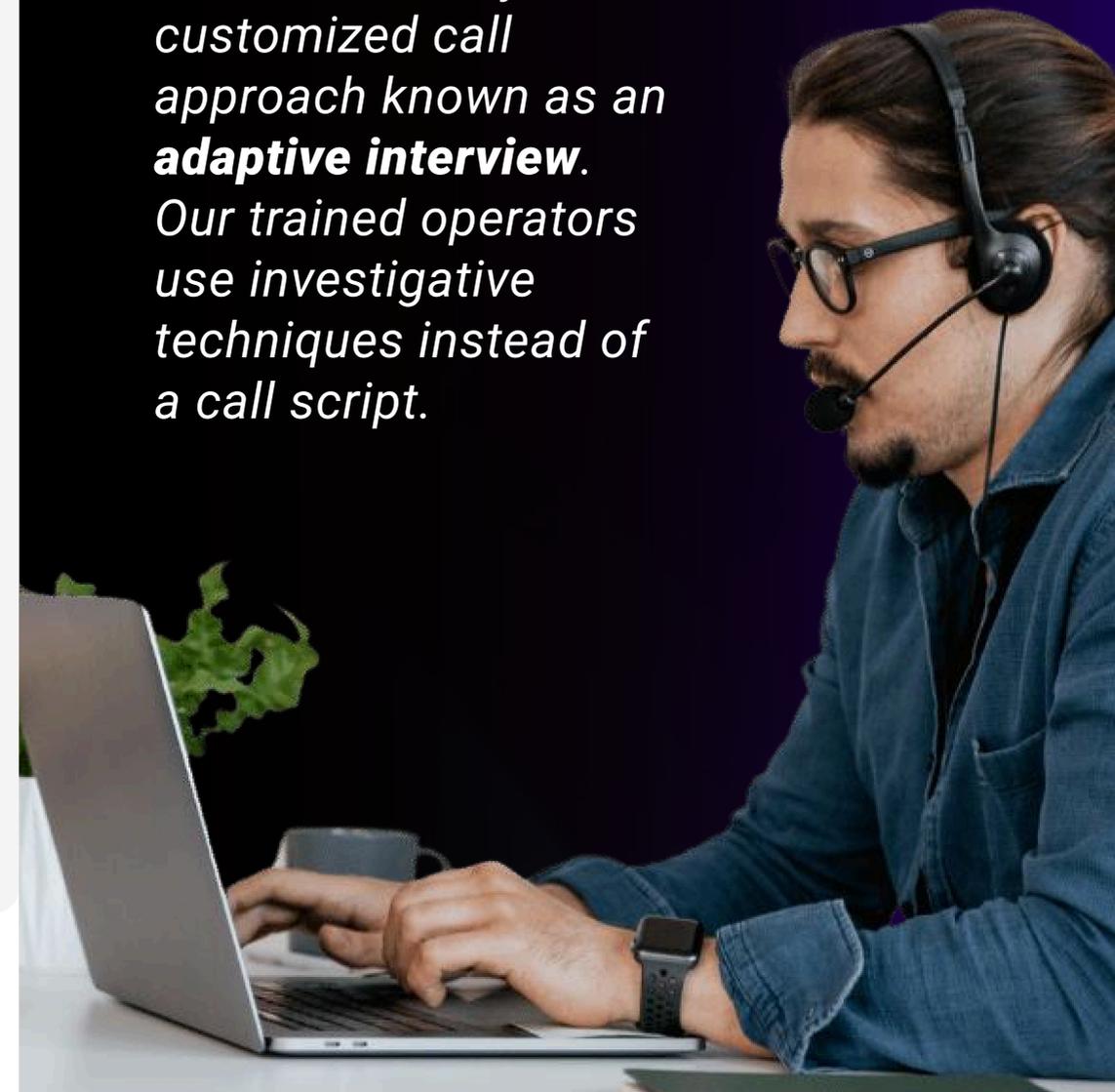
What questions are asked outside the scripted process?

If you've ever conducted a compliance investigation or received an incident report directly (e.g., phone or in-office), you know how many different directions the conversation can go. Intelligent follow up questions about witnesses, prior/related instances, and requested resolution empower you. With these, your compliance team can follow up quickly and appropriately while helping callers feel heard. Make sure your process allows amply-guided discovery outside hard-scripted questions so your issues, and your callers, aren't forced into a box.

Helpful Tip: Make sure essential, standardized info (employee ID, location) is properly codified and consistently collected. But tell your vendor to move past robotic surveys to make the call the first step in your investigation, rather than a vague hint that leaves your team confused.



*Ethico uses a dynamic customized call approach known as an **adaptive interview**. Our trained operators use investigative techniques instead of a call script.*





Q7

What service levels do you offer within or in addition to quoted/subscribed services?

Ask about a partnership with Ethico

Contact
sales@ethico.com

We all know how it stings when you get hit with hidden fees like checking a bag on a flight or the 'optional features' shown on car commercials. Some of us know how much worse that is when those charges hit a corporate budget.

With issue intake hotlines, be aware:

- Getting the reporting or workflow management you need can make or break an IT adoption
- The off-the-shelf setup may force your team to waste valuable time or budget
- Training and follow up time can be key to your ROI

Helpful Tip: Find out ahead of time what support, customization, and enhancements are included in your service. Finally, get a good justification why you need to pay extra for something reasonable.



Q8

What notification options do you offer?

Most providers will offer at least some basic notification so you or someone on your team knows an issue was reported. but what happens if you're on a plane or in a meeting while a key issue sits unaddressed and buried in your inbox? If you haven't worked with a more dynamic solution, you may not know to ask for the things that can really help your team. These include flexible notification to the party (or group) who most needs to know about or follow up on the issue. The best systems will enable intelligent issue assignment based on things like issue category, location, or severity of the issue.

Helpful Tip: Make sure essential, standardized info (employee ID, location) is properly codified and consistently collected. but tell your vendor to move past robotic surveys to make the call the first step in your investigation, rather than a vague hint that leaves your team confused.

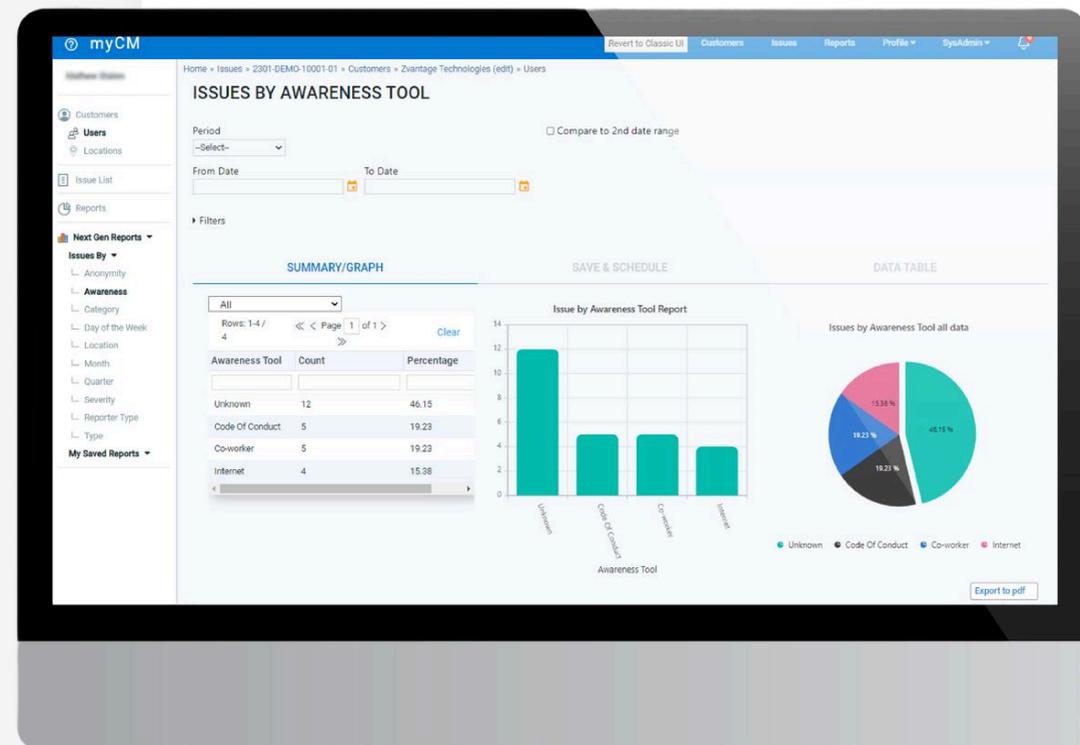
Q9

What reporting is standard and what enhancements are available?

Many compliance teams adopt a reporting structure to make sure individual issues are reported and addressed. The best teams, however, mine the data across their organization. Empowered by data, you can identify trends and intelligently focus your efforts to prevent future problems.

Helpful Tip: The relevance and accuracy of your reporting is key. Look for both capabilities in terms of system settings, fields, report types, etc. as well as support (i.e, training, advice, and hands-on help when needed) to get the most out of the information you've been tracking.

Ask for a quick demo of Ethico's reporting capabilities



Q10

What added value do you provide to our compliance team?

Every question you ask should come down to ROI. You can probably skip hiring a vendor to simply add a voicemail inbox to your phone system for negligible cost and call it a hotline. That's just checking a compliance box. If, however, you're asking the right questions to evaluate a hotline provider, you know that properly focused compliance efforts pay dividends.

A good hotline can be a key contributor in fostering a more engaged workforce, fewer legal/regulatory risks, and higher quality performance across the company. A properly structured reporting strategy should save your compliance team time, allow for quick issue resolutions and enable focused improvements to your entire compliance function!

Helpful Tip: Ask your provider how they help you become more successful in your role and operations.

And now a question from Ethico: What's most important to your choice in a partner, and your ultimate success as an **Ethics Expert?**

Ethico is dedicated to delightful service, expert configuration, efficient technology, and action-enabling clarity and information. From your consideration and selection of a vendor partner to fast, easy implementation and ongoing needs

over the coming years, Ethico is proud to make the most caring and professional compliance leaders more effective, trusted, and confident every day. Your ultimate success as an ethics expert is our focus.