3110 & 18-14 comment: Annual Compliance Meeting (ACM)

As someone who personally conducts my firm's ACM each year, I feel in just as good a position to comment on this as anybody could.

Each year, my firm holds a three-day annual meeting in the summer. A constant challenge for my firm is ensuring universal attendance by our representatives for the entirety of the meeting and the ACM is often employed as a means of doing that. The ACM is typically scheduled as either the final or penultimate on the third day; I'm often thing standing between my representatives and lunch prior to their departures. Using the ACM in this manner has indeed effected the desired outcome.

The ACM has also allowed me to tap into my more creative side, something I rarely get to do during my regular duties as a compliance officer. It's been a lot of fun creating my ACMs, which have taken the form of comic book/PowerPoint mashups to my more recent animated cartoon videos (complete with a variety of characters, voiced mostly by me), and making the ACM a draw, something my representatives look forward to each summer.

The flipside to this is that creating an ACM that's engaging—especially my cartoon videos—is extremely time-consuming. Between animation, voice recordings, storyboards, and scriptwriting, producing a 20-30 minute video can easily take 20 hours of work to complete. Because of this, I've had to abandon the cartoon video concept for this year's ACM and return to a more modest, more traditional PowerPoint presentation, complete with snooze-inducing slides of boredom.

Which brings me to my next point: ACMs are notoriously unengaging, unmemorable, and questionable in terms of value due to a lack of retention. Absent significant or noteworthy efforts (such as my cartoon video concept), retention of the material, both in my own experience as well as the experiences of my industry peers, ranges from minimal to non-existent. Due to this, everyone is always looking for the next big thing to seize their representatives' attention and not let go while maintaining some semblance of reasonableness in the time committed to constructing these presentations: "Compliance Jeopardy", among other game-themed ACMs, are popular options that frequently turn up in compliance circles. However, like my cartoon video concept, it's extremely time-consuming to prepare and execute even this sort of programming that's only used once for an hour, possibly less.

Though I've found the ACM enjoyable in the past, I've also felt that putting together an ACM is one of the least value-generating activities I undertake: 20 hours of work for a 20-30 minute video isn't a very economical tradeoff in my opinion. Unfortunately, for my representatives to get anything out of it, such massive efforts are almost necessary.