

It's Good Business –

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-- not caught in failure.”

Auburn, Alabama
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Tim Self, Director for Compliance and Ethics for the Southern Company, served as our Distinguished Speaker. In 2018, Southern Company was named by *Forbes* magazine as one of the world's best companies and ranked it in their top 20 of “America's Best Employers.” It is one of the largest producers of electricity in the United States and the largest wholesale provider of electricity in the Southeast.

Today, the company employs more than 32,000 people. Its electric providers include Alabama Power, Georgia Power, Mississippi Power, Southern Power and Southern Nuclear. In addition, its natural gas companies include Southern Company Gas, Chattanooga Gas, Nicor Gas, and Virginia Natural Gas. Other subsidiaries provide customized energy solutions, fiber optics, and wireless communications services; they include PowerSecure, Southern Telecom, Southern Linc, and Sequent Energy Management.

Core values are key to the company and serve as guidance for their decision-making and organizational culture. Employees and vendors are expected to act honestly, with integrity, respect and fairness. “Employees should be trained for high integrity success not caught in failure,” says Self. Southern Company is concerned about the security of customers personal information and privacy. For example, the company does not keep customer credit card information having it destroyed after each bill pay transaction. There are many federal and state regulations that must be addressed with strict compliance.

Recently, Southern streamlined its *Code of Ethics* which outline the risk areas for the company and include several confidential “Concerns” reporting systems via a hotline, an on-line link, email, in person, and by mail. All employees are required to read the Code of Ethics each year and sign an acknowledgement they did so. Before signing, they must answer a set questions about the Code ensuring that each employee has been given a direct opportunity to disclose a potential compliance issue. “Our company strives to consistently and fairly reward good behavior, appropriately address bad behavior and hold third parties accountable” stresses Self. This Code is reviewed and updated periodically. Contractors are also allowed and encouraged to use the “Concerns,” reporting system.

Due to the nature of Southern Company's business operations, the firm must interact with a variety of constituents, ranging from leaders in government, community, business, and industry. The company has a strict policy when it comes to conflicts of interest. Background checks are required for all employees of Southern Company, and in most cases for contractors as well based on job responsibilities. He believes the key to bringing all employees on board with the

Company's ethical standards is communication and training. Southern demands that all written communications utilize understandable language and be widely distributed. Their ethics education utilizes all forms of media from formal sit-down and on-line training to printed brochures. The company website and phone apps are vehicles used to reach all employees. Southern Company's ethical philosophy is "Core values guide our behavior and builds trust."