

Virtual Compliance

[Richard P. Kusserow](#) | March 2023

Key Points:

- **Common for compliance offices to have staff working remotely in a virtual mode**
- **COVID caused major gaps in jobs and difficulties in filling them**
- **Many engage [contractors to serve virtually](#) instead of hiring new employees to do so**

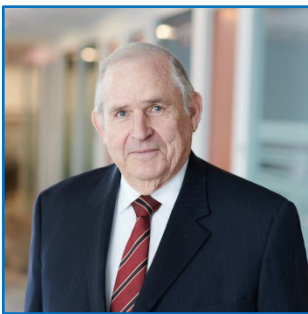
The virtual office concept goes back decades, and its use has been increasing ever since. However, the COVID 19 pandemic has accelerated this trend. Large and small health care organizations have been hard hit with staffing problems, and it has not been limited to care givers. Administration, management, and compliance also have been feeling the effects. The accelerated rate of retirement and employees quitting their jobs has been among the challenges. Coupled with this has been many employees working from home in a virtual capacity by phone or teleconferencing rather than in person. In the 2023 Compliance Benchmark Survey conducted by SAI Global and Strategic Management, only 16% of respondents reported compliance staff working full time at the work site. The overwhelming majority of staff is working remotely to one degree or another. Furthermore, many employees resist returning to the work site and threaten to resign if forced to return to the office. The result of all this has been for organizations to adjust their way of doing business to accommodate remote and virtual employees. This situation has also led to engaging consultants, rather than employees, to work remotely. Many smaller organizations engage a consultant as their outsourced [Virtual Compliance Officer \(VCO\)](#) to manage the Compliance Program. This option is not available for larger entities that are limited to using a consultant VCO on an interim basis only to cover a gap. However, any organization, regardless of size can employ virtual consultants in a supporting capacity. There are many benefits to using virtual consultants, including:

- Availability on short notice to meet compliance office needs;
- No cost for recruiting and training new employees;
- Avoid costly overhead of an employee (FICA, benefits, leave, etc.);

- Limited training needs in that consultants already possess compliance experience;
- Functions very similar to employees who work remotely;
- Enables augmenting staff during transitional periods;
- Offers the benefit of experience at other organizations;
- Services may be limited, as needed, to an on-call basis;
- Charges are only for hours worked;
- No travel cost as work would be done remotely;
- Engagement can easily be terminated when no longer needed.

For answers to compliance FAQs, see <https://www.compliance.com/faqs/>

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About the Author

Richard P. Kusserow established Strategic Management Services, LLC, after retiring from being the DHHS Inspector General, and has assisted over 2,000 health care organizations and entities in developing, implementing and assessing compliance programs.