



Regulation Matters: a CLEAR conversation

Episode 77: Telling Our Story – Reflections on Board Service May 14, 2024

Line Dempsey: Welcome back to our podcast, Regulation Matters: a CLEAR conversation. Once again, I'm your host, Line Dempsey. I'm currently the chief compliance officer with Riccobene Associates Family Dentistry here in North Carolina, with practices in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia, and I'm also a board member and past president of CLEAR.

As many of you are aware, the Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation, or CLEAR, is an association of individuals, agencies, and organizations that comprise the international community of professional and occupational regulation. This podcast is an opportunity for you to hear about important topics in our regulatory community.

And in this month's episode, our conversation is going to focus on the CLEAR community. CLEAR's president and board of directors would like to share CLEAR's story with you. And it's a story of connections, learning, and engagement, and one that I'm proud to be a part of and honored to be a part of with my fellow board members and colleagues. Joining me today is CLEAR's current President, Marc Spector, and President-elect Staci Mason. I'm so glad to have you with us today.

Marc Spector: Thank you, Line.

Staci Mason: Happy to be here. Good to hear you and see you both.

Line: Absolutely! Now, as for obviously reasons that go without saying, we all can't be in the same room together, since I'm the immediate past president, currently we have Marc as the president and Staci the soon-to-be president. So, I'm glad we were able to at least connect via Internet here. But I've been involved with CLEAR for quite some time. I think 2004 was the initial dive into CLEAR through investigator training, and I've been involved in committees and served in lots of different ways. And certainly it's been one of those things that's had a very impactful part of my life and my professional experience. So I'm certainly glad to be a part of this. But I'm really also excited to hear about your CLEAR journey, both of you, and the connections, learning, and engagement that you both experienced through CLEAR. So, let's hear from you. So, let me start with Marc. How did you first become involved with CLEAR?

Marc: So first of all, thank you, Line. And so great to see you again, Staci.

Picture it - San Francisco, 2012. I was just attending my very first Annual Educational Conference, and I was in awe. And I was immediately hooked. I felt like I was on the red carpet with a bunch of regulatory all-stars. And as much as I wanted to be just like them, I also felt like I wasn't. I felt that I wasn't knowledgeable enough, accomplished enough. I did not know enough people, and even if I did, I'm not sure what I would have even said.

But people were kind; they were generous with their time; they were warm; and they were thoughtful. And I learned a lot from them. And the best single piece of advice I received at that conference: Remember this feeling. Remember what you're feeling right now, and remember that other people may be feeling that same way, too. Remember to encourage them when they are looking at you.

And it's something - it was a valuable lesson learned that I will never, ever forget. I also thought about that moment, 11 years later, at last year's Education Conference, when I heard that 30% of the attendees at that conference were there for the very first time, too. I'll always reflect on that experience, and it's one of the reasons why I joined CLEAR.

Line: Thank you, Marc. And I know we didn't get to actually meet that first time. But it was shortly after that, you were doing a talk, and I somehow became the moderator for that. And it started a friendship that's lasted all those years. So, thank you for your journey. How about you, Staci?

Staci: Thanks for that, Marc; and thanks, Line. It seems like I've known both of you since I started with CLEAR, although, Marc, the way you made it sound, you weren't here when I got here. So, I started coming to CLEAR conferences, I wanna say, 2008/2009 at the, really, the pushing or the encouragement from my then-supervisor, who thought that it would be great for me to understand more about the work that I was doing from a more national lens, and of course international, that we could bring back to (at the time I was working for) the District of Columbia.

And I was also taken aback by the number of people who were so willing to share their time and their energy and their knowledge with me. I was young(er) then, and very green, not understanding how the association world really was about networking. And that's how you got the information. We all have websites. We all have public-facing information that we put out, but it was really the conversations in more intimate settings that you learned how regulation worked.

And that was my first taste. And I thought, 'Wow, this is great.' I really could get to know people behind the regulator hat and how that would catapult my career, but also how we could bring back best practices from around the world to better support our constituency, the public that we serve, and our practitioners, whether you know registrants or licenses depending on where you are.

And even learning the difference in the lingo. I thought that was very important, because we tend to be very self-centered in our own world, and understanding that the world is big, but yet it is so small. And so I really enjoy meeting people. I think that was the most important part of my journey was getting to know how other regulators and non-regulators - we have vendors, and of course I'm in higher education now, so not directly related to the regulatory space - but how it all connects, how people become servants of the public from start to finish, and where we fit in in the regulatory environment.

So, love to have had the time to meet with other board members, folks who are on committees. And joining committees was very helpful for me in learning where I fit in in CLEAR. And I think that's a great first step for people if they're unsure, is join a committee and do some of that hands-on work. I think that's where you learn the most. That's where you find your space, your fitting, where you are good, your strength - and also where you can find out where you need help and reach out to folks around the table. And that's how I got to be so close with Line and Marc, and others on the board of directors, and it really is a great experience. So, thanks for asking that question.

Line: Absolutely. Thank you, Staci. And I think you know, I can hear bits and parts of my story in both of your stories. And you know, it's easy when you get involved in a group as large as CLEAR, with as many members and as many diverse individuals and different organizations, you can get siloed a little bit sometimes when you first start in. And I think it was Donna Mooney who was a past president and in the North Carolina Nursing Board working for them, and she took me under her wing and basically, you know, encouraged me to be more than just a participant, but to be a member. I think that's the better term, and get to know some of those folks. And I think things like the DEI committee - and I think we'll probably talk about that at some point in time - but that and our recently formed Education and Training Committee are starting to bring people from different walks of life that maybe didn't get a chance or opportunity to work together or collaborate, are now getting intermingled if you would. And I think it's just fantastic.

But it's certainly interesting to hear the way that these different paths have basically led people to be involved with CLEAR. And one of the great things, like I said, is that we hear from time and time, is that the many different paths that you can actually take to make a meaningful connection with regulatory colleagues. And flowing from that, of course, is learning from other regulators, you know, both regulatory organizations that are similar to your own and organizations that may offer a different perspective.

So, I'll start this with Staci, kind of a multi-point question. How has your involvement with CLEAR improved your knowledge and understanding of regulatory issues. And can you maybe reflect on some key things and maybe even some specific examples of things that you've learned through your connections through CLEAR?

Staci: Thanks for that question, Line. You know, as I said before, working on CLEAR committees was probably my first indoctrination into what CLEAR really does and how I can be a part of that. I think my

first few years, in the famous words of Charlie Morrison, I ‘lurked’ on many committees. I didn't know what I could contribute as a young regulator or a new regulator, I should say. And that was the best place to start. There were many people on those committees who had a wealth of experience. Whether it was time or expertise, they would provide that very willingly, and it was an opportunity to really focus on what my strengths were, where I could contribute them.

And as a Black woman, American First Nations, I felt that I was welcomed. There were opportunities for me to participate. And I stand on the shoulders of the people that came before me, of course. I am not, as president-elect, I'm not the first woman of color to hold that position, but I know that there are many, many women of color before me. And you mentioned Donna Mooney - I miss her so much. She was very integral as well in my development in that space. She used to come to the District of Columbia and teach our (CLEAR) Board Member Training in person. (That was way back before Covid times. I don't know if any of you remember those days. It just seems like that's so long ago.) But the opportunity to meet with someone who was a past president of CLEAR, who was still committed to service of CLEAR, coming from North Carolina up to Washington, DC to support our Board Member Training, support myself as a member of CLEAR and encouraged me to do more.

And it wasn't until that experience, I want to say 2012, I was in San Francisco, Marc. That was my first course through CLEAR, and it was Executive Leadership for Regulators that solidified my thought process around service to CLEAR, service to the regulatory space. And it was an eye opener.

I thought, ‘I can do this.’ There's really more that I can contribute as a member of CLEAR, and from 2012 until now, it's just been, you know, getting involved. Like I said, multiple committees, really championing new committees such as the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee. That was something that I hold near and dear to my heart, and I thank everyone for contributing to that work because it takes all of us. It is, as I like to say, forever work. But I don't think I would have done that without the support of all of the members that I was able to network with and meet along the way.

So there's so much opportunity in CLEAR to be involved hands-on with the work and expanding what CLEAR means to the regulatory space around the world. And I hope that answered your question. I thought there was a third part I may have. . .

Line: Nope, I think you got it. You got it, and you nailed it perfectly.

Staci: Thank you.

Line: Actually, so perfectly that now I'm really interested to hear what Marc has to say.

[laughter]

Marc: Well, let me start off by saying that it's a podcast. People can't see us, but maybe give you a little bit of a lens into what's going on on this call. Regardless of who's speaking, I can see some

nodding and some smiling, and we're doing that because we're reminiscing on the valuable connections and the relationships that we've made. Staci, you mentioned Donna and Charlie, and I smiled about that. And Line, you mentioned a little vignette about when and how we first met, and it's bringing back some powerful memories. So, thank you both for that.

Line: I look younger though still; just so you know.

Marc: [laughs] And everybody can hear that.

Staci: You actually do. That is so true, beautiful.

Line: [laughs] I love you, Staci.

Marc: When we talk about a valuable lesson learned and some impressions - it was a few years ago, and I can't remember, maybe it was 3 or perhaps 4, CLEAR's stakeholder survey showed that DEI was the single most important issue facing regulators, more important than technology, than regulatory innovation, than legislative trends. And I remember that distinctly, because for me it was a game-changing moment.

And frankly, I'm a bit embarrassed, (and I think I felt that at the time) that I didn't recognize this sooner. What a valuable learning opportunity that wouldn't have come other than through CLEAR. But with the help of Staci (Thank you, Staci), and many others, both on this call and those listeners, I also learned that I do not have to be a DEI expert in order to be a change maker. I don't need to be an expert in order to be a leader. We're a powerful voice. I learned that I can use my influence to play a meaningful role in this space. So I have CLEAR to thank for that.

And speaking of my own reflections, my own learnings, I was surprised. I was really surprised to learn about the impact my words and actions can have on others; really surprised. I did not know that I had that kind of privilege. I didn't know that I could be part of the conversation, or that I would learn a lot about myself.

And I was also surprised that people were actually listening. And that's why at CLEAR I've really leaned into the idea of CLEAR telling its story, our story, including podcasts such as this and our conversations. So Line, thanks for creating the platform, and Staci, thank you for always inspiring me.

Line: Well, thank you, Marc. You know one of the things that I did when I became president was I did not serve on a committee. Which is kind of counterproductive in some ways, when you think about, you know, that's kind of what we did in order to get to the positions that we were. But I also, after having that year of floating between different committees and hearing and seeing how so many of our members interact differently, but at the same time, the same. I encouraged Marc to do that, too, this past year, and I think you got an opportunity to see parts of CLEAR that we don't necessarily usually get to see. Again back to the silo mentality that sometimes people have. And so that's why I wanna

encourage people to try to expand their horizons and try to see everybody in a different light.

But, I know that for me personally, you know it's such a rewarding way to deepen your learning and engagement with CLEAR by serving on committees or in board service. Now, the three of us have all been board members for CLEAR and you know, that's really a different perspective from the role that we have within our own regulatory organization or where you are in an administrator or staff role with working with a board of directors. So let me again. I'll go back to Mark on this. How has that perspective - basically because you're kind of flipping the role - instead of serving the board if you would, now you are the board, right? How has that different perspective helped you improve your own staff relationship with board members at your own organization?

Marc: Well, simply put, being a CLEAR board member makes me a better regulatory leader. And because of that I can better support great governance. Being a board member and watching the kinds of questions really great CEOs, executive directors, registers, and regulatory experts ask - that helps me better anticipate questions, be a better communicator, view things from a bigger picture lens, while still being prepared with the details. So in supporting boards, I now often wonder, 'Well, how could this be viewed by others? What would the impact be? Or have we considered everything?' Those are questions you'll often hear around the CLEAR board table.

And I also have a better understanding about how high functioning boards work and what a really dynamic board meeting can actually look like. As I was just describing to somebody this morning, to an outsider, it may sound like conflict or like fighting. But it's none of that. It's passionate dialogue in a respectful space, and there's an energy around the room, and kind of an inspiring moment.

So, with all that, I also now have a greater compassion for board members who make it look really, really easy. And again, after all these years, and now as CLEAR's president, honestly, I'm still in awe of what they do.

Line: Thank you, Marc. And Staci?

Staci: Yeah, thanks. Thanks for that question, Line. You know, being on CLEAR's board has provided me with a much broader perspective on governance strategy and the overall functioning of the organization. I mean, this perspective has been invaluable in improving my relationships with board members when I was at a regulatory organization. But in general, it's really helped me as I communicate with any stakeholder, even in my current role, As Marc said, communication is so important. And I think we've learned how to communicate better, but as it pertains to board specifics, serving on CLEAR's board gave me insight into effective board governance.

I learned about the importance of clear roles and responsibilities, effective communication, as we said, and strategic decision making processes. I mean, the understanding of that in itself was - you could not learn that anywhere else but by doing. And I think that helped me when I came back to my own board to navigate interactions with board members more effectively, and ensuring that everyone

was aligned and working toward common goals. Because you know, it's difficult to get everybody on the same page. But when you understand what you are doing as a board member, you start giving people a little bit more grace.

And as it pertains to the strategic thinking, when you are working with a board, you know you have something you want them to accomplish, and all you want them to do is get it done. But my experience as a board member with CLEAR helped me see the bigger picture. And so now I can better articulate our own organization's mission, vision, goals and things like that.

But also, I was able to help board members foster a shared sense of purpose and direction, even though they may have come in with their own ideas and their own agenda. But it was helpful to know that. Yeah, they're people; sometimes they just need a little bit of direction.

I think the most important thing that I would say, it was helpful for me in my role as a board administrator, but also currently in my role as a program administrator, is building relationships. So, being on the CLEAR board allowed me to network with other leaders from around the world, from very diverse backgrounds. These relationships have been so instrumental in sharing best practices, learning from others' experiences, and building partnerships. So I was able to leverage these connections to enhance collaboration, and I was able to bring that back to my own workplace, my own organization, and that way able to tap into a broader pool of expertise and resources.

We cannot do any of this, you know leadership at any level, by ourselves. So it's important to be able to build relationships. I think, overall, my experience provided me with, you know, so many valuable insights and skills that enhance my relationships with board members and peers that I work with. I think this is probably one of the biggest takeaways that I can think of that really helped me in my everyday role.

Line: Great! It's certainly beneficial when we can draw on different perspectives to help enhance our own regulatory work.

Now for our listeners who may be thinking about going down that path of committee and board engagement with CLEAR, let's share a little more from your stories. What do you get out of committee and board service, and what is your biggest takeaway from serving on CLEAR's board? Let's go ahead and have Staci start on this one.

Staci: Yeah, like, I said earlier, you know, my biggest takeaway is relationships. And there are other benefits certainly, both personally and professionally. I think there are the relationship building and the networking. So serving on the committees and the Board allowed me to network with professionals all around the world, whether it was in my specific licensee industry when I was working with the board, or you know someone who might share the same passion that I have. You can connect with individuals who share your interests and goals, learn from their experiences, and build valuable relationships that might even lead to future collaborations.

I mean, I've been able to be on the CLEAR stage with, you know, people from around the country and around the world delivering presentations, and that was because we had a relationship that we built over time on the committees, and people begin to trust you, and everyone has something to offer. So being able to share that with people, they help bring that out of you.

I think another important piece is, you know, sense of purpose. Being a member of CLEAR is not just, you know, paying our dues. It's allowing me to know that my contributions are helping shape the direction of CLEAR and that I can have an impact on the organization and the membership. That brings me a sense of my own personal pride and satisfaction.

There's also the opportunity to learn new things. CLEAR has a number of continuous learning programs. I gained exposure to new ideas, perspectives, best practices in governance, leadership, organizational management. I was able to apply them to my own workplace.

And so I was able to grow in my role back home, if you will, as well as you know, serving on committees, and then eventually serving on the CLEAR board. And now as President-elect, that trajectory is made possible by all of the learning opportunities that I was able to take advantage of.

And professional development, I think, is so important these days, because, you have to take the time to think about yourself as a professional in order to bring the best self to work to help your board members or your colleagues really accomplish the mission of your organization. So professional development is also very important.

I just think being on a committee, serving on the board, the collaboration and the collective action and achieving common goals is just the highlight. It's taught me the power of bringing together diverse perspectives, expertise, and the resources to address complex challenges and drive meaningful change around the world.

CLEAR is an international organization. I don't know how often people have the opportunity to serve an international audience, but you learn as much as you give. So I think leveraging our collective strengths to create positive impact and advance the mission of CLEAR has just been so enlightening, but also very fulfilling for me.

And I think everyone who is a member of CLEAR should consider reaching out to a member of a committee if you're not sure what that work involves. And trust me, it is not hard work; it is very rewarding work. The CLEAR staff by far help out so much, you know. It's not going to be something that is going to bog you down. There are always people to help you, and I can't say enough how much the CLEAR staff really supports the work of the committees and the board, so you won't be in it alone.

You will have an opportunity to receive as much as you give, if not more, and really contribute to the growth of CLEAR, but also the betterment of public protection. So I would say, come on, come on

board if you can.

Line: Well, thank you! Marc?

Marc: You know, this is probably the number one question that I'm asked. For me, the way I describe it - it's like being in the center of CNN. There's a ticker tape of information across the top, and you're getting all this information all the time, from around the world. Like, how cool is that!

In any given meeting, you're hearing the latest from Australia, Europe, Canada, New Zealand, and from almost every state in the U.S.A. Hi, Wisconsin! Hi, Florida! Hi, hi, everybody! And it's all happening really, really fast. And for all those regulatory nerds out there - and I think I have a few of us - it's absolutely fascinating. And in many cases, you're hearing things for the very first time, sometimes months, even years, before you might hear those developments closer to home. It really is the pinnacle of regulatory buzz. So I learn about perspective, nuance, courageousness, and especially kindness.

So I started off by talking about that first CLEAR event for me, and that was almost 12 years ago. And the fact is that I still get the dilated pupils and the butterflies and the sense of excitement going on. And I mention that because, even after all these years, I want to share that experience to encourage anybody out there thinking about joining a CLEAR committee or joining its board to really consider it. Or perhaps, if you just need a friendly word or encouragement, or they ask you what it's like, reach out to myself, Staci, or Line. We'd love to have that conversation with you. When someone did that for me, I didn't know it was going to change the kind of regulator, and even the kind of person, I want to be. So that's what CLEAR has done for me.

Line: Well, thank you, Marc. I appreciate everything that you've done for this organization as well. And to serve alongside both of you this past year, with joining Staci as the President-elect and soon to be taking over. I certainly do want to thank you both for your leadership in this organization. You know we can't move forward unless we have good leaders, and I'm thankful to know that both of you are part of that journey as well.

Marc: Thank you, Line. Thank you, Staci.

Line: And again, thank you for the reflections from a great group of colleagues. Thank you both for sharing your story of CLEAR connections, learning, and engagement with us today. So, thank you both.

Staci: Well, great talking to you all. Thank you so much for this time. It really was great to have the opportunity to chat with you about all the great work that we're doing at CLEAR. See you soon!

Marc: Cheers, be well.

Line: Well, again, this has been a great pleasure for us to talk. So for CLEAR members that are

interested in being engaged with the board, the call for board nominations is now open, with nominations due by Friday, June 21. The office of President-elect and 4 regular board seats will be available in September of 2024. CLEAR encourages nominations from across its diverse membership community, and self-nominations are also acceptable. Members can read more about board member competencies and duties online with the [nomination information](#) on www.clearhq.org in the *About* menu and click on *CLEAR leadership*. And you can always feel free to reach out to staff or any of our current Board members for more information.

But even if you're not quite thinking about board service, we do want to invite you to continue or start your membership journey with CLEAR. CLEAR's 2024-2025 membership cycle officially begins on July 1 of this year, but we are accepting membership renewals and [new membership applications](#) now. New members who join now will secure early access to their membership benefits. You can renew your existing memberships today via your membership compass or apply for a new membership at www.clearhq.org.

One valuable benefit for members is access to [CLEAR's Regulatory Network](#) where members can post questions and discussions. We invite CLEAR members to share *your* CLEAR story with us on the CLEAR Regulatory Network. This podcast episode will be posted there with an invitation for members to post your comments and make further CLEAR connections. If you haven't already joined the CLEAR Regulatory Network, we invite and encourage you to join and take a part in the online discussions.

I also wanna thank our listeners for tuning into this episode. We'll be back with another episode of Regulation Matters: a CLEAR conversation very soon. And if you're new to the CLEAR podcast, please subscribe to us. You can find us on Podbean or any of your favorite podcast services.

If you've enjoyed this podcast episode, please leave a rating or comment in the app. Those reviews help us to improve our ranking and make it easier for new listeners to find us. Feel free also to visit us on our website at www.clearhq.org for additional resources as well as a calendar of upcoming programs and events.

Finally, I'd like to thank our CLEAR staff, specifically Stephanie Thompson. She is our content coordinator and editor for this program. Once again, I'm Line Dempsey, and I hope to be speaking to you and seeing you again very soon.

The audio version of this podcast episode is available at [https://podcast.clearhq.org/e/CLEAR Board Story/](https://podcast.clearhq.org/e/CLEAR_Board_Story/).