1. Have you ever had knowledge of confidential information and been afraid you might do something to cause it to be disclosed inappropriately?

2. Have you ever worried that one inadvertent misstep could cause serious consequences to you and the company? It happens to a lot of us and it can be stressful as we struggle to make the best choices.
3. Imagine that a coworker has asked you to a quick lunch at a local restaurant. He’s leaving town on business and needs the details of a confidential project you are working on so he can pass the information along to another group in the company.

4. Do you discuss the project in the restaurant so your coworker has the information he needs or do you refuse to discuss the project and risk making your coworker upset and potentially delaying an important project?
5. The good news is that by the end of this issue of Compliance Illustrated, you'll have the tools to confidently make the best decision in this type of situation.

6. You'll make the right choices for both yourself and the company, avoid putting confidential information at risk, and end up feeling a lot better in the process.
7. Company confidential information includes strategic information, financial information, trade secrets and intellectual property.

8. All of which, if shared with the wrong people, could seriously jeopardize our company’s competitive position in the marketplace, or result in legal liability, remediation costs, or loss of public trust and reputation.
9. Protecting confidential information requires keeping it physically secure by locking up files, encrypting documents, and carefully guarding passwords.

10. It also involves avoiding discussing confidential information in situations -- like the one in the restaurant with your coworker -- where you are within hearing of anyone who does not need to know or should not know the information.
11. Privacy concerns the protection of confidential personal data, including data that can be used to distinguish or trace a person’s identity.

12. Some examples include name, Social Security or taxpayer identification number, address information, telephone numbers, information about personally owned property and medical, financial or education information.
13. Imagine what might happen, for example, if employee records that include social security and medical information are left on an unsecured hard drive or server. Disclosure of this information could lead to embarrassment, identity theft or even blackmail.

14. Such information must be kept strictly confidential, and laws in most countries place strict requirements on the handling of personal data. We need to be sure wherever we do business, that we are familiar with the local privacy laws.
15. In summary, all of us are legally required to protect privacy and to properly collect, access, use, share and dispose of the confidential information in our control or under the control of a third party.

16. In the situation where a coworker has asked you to discuss confidential information in a restaurant, it is probably pretty clear by now that you should politely remind your coworker that discussing confidential information in public puts our company at risk.
17. You should suggest another way to get him the information he needs. It may not make him happy, but you’ll protect our confidential information and potentially avoid having it disclosed to our competition.

18. Now, doesn’t that make you feel a whole lot better already?
19. If you have any questions about Privacy and Confidential Information or other compliance issues, please contact our ethics or compliance office. We're here to help.