#33 Is regulation a four-letter word?

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For many, especially in business, regulation is a four-letter word. It is synonymous with administrative burden and extra costs. Regulation is what gets in the way of doing what one really wants to do. Regulation is a cost of doing business that should be minimized. From this perspective, regulation is at best a necessary evil and at worst an unnecessary evil. And yet, not only did Human Resources choose to become a regulated profession, in doing so the profession chose to establish and support its own regulatory body. Why would we do this to ourselves?

One perspective is that regulation is a necessary evil. A previous article\(^1\) discussed professional regulation as the price of admission to the regulated professions club. But even this is a subtly negative view—the idea being that regulation is tolerated only because it is instrumental in getting what we really want. Yes, regulation is the price of admission to the regulated professions club, but is it a price grudgingly paid or willingly paid?

I would argue that it is important to ‘get over’ the regulation is a four-letter word mindset for the simple reason that because professional regulation has become the core mandate of the Association and that it is difficult to do something well is one’s heart isn’t in it. It is also the case that regulation is not something that is done to us, we are the regulators. All members of HRPA, as a collective, are the

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1 Balthazard, C, (June 18, 2017). The price of admission to the regulated professions club. LinkedIn article. [https://www.hrpa.ca/Documents/Regulation/LinkedIn-Articles/10-The-price-of-admission.pdf](https://www.hrpa.ca/Documents/Regulation/LinkedIn-Articles/10-The-price-of-admission.pdf)
corporation which has been given this regulation mandate. As members of a professional regulatory body, we all have a stake in effective regulation. That is why it is called self-regulation.

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Embracing regulation requires a belief in checks and balances. The idea is that any system that does not have effective checks and balances will tend to go out of whack sooner or later. It is a belief that professionals, despite their greater level of education and commitment to professional values, still need regulation to ensure that they actually live up to the high standards professionals ‘profess’ to. The real purpose of professional regulation is not to create burdens for members or to introduce unnecessary costs but to increase the quality of professional services and the level of public confidence in the profession. This quality of professional services and level of public confidence in the profession simply cannot be achieved without regulation. Professional regulation is part of a system of checks and balances that improves the quality of professional services. The public and the profession are better off for regulation.

Admittedly, not all members will immediately embrace this way of looking at things, and some will still prefer to think of regulation as a burden to be minimized or an activity that does not create value. But, truth be known, now that we (and ‘we’ meaning all members of HRPA) are the regulator, we can’t think of regulation as a four-letter word, our success depends on it.