5 steps to a more effective compliance intake model

For compliance leaders managing multi-entity, multilingual, cross-border operations, this guide outlines how to build an intake model that matches your organization's real structure - centralized, decentralized, or hybrid.

Don’t adapt to software. Build a system that fits your team.

Why structure matters in your intake model

When building a comprehensive intake system that matches your organization size, ethos, and culture, the key question is:

Does your structure support the way your team actually works, or force them to adapt to the software?

Most platforms assume a clean, top-down hierarchy. But enterprise compliance rarely works that way. You're dealing with:

- Multiple jurisdictions
- Language and cultural barriers
- Varying legal frameworks
- Decentralized teams with overlapping roles

> This guide provides a framework to design an intake model that works with – not against – your operational complexity.

Step 1:
Map your actual structure

Before choosing tools or workflows, map how your compliance responsibilities are really distributed. Ask yourself:

- Why are specific case handlers assigned certain cases?
(Consider legal requirements, oversight needs, or regional expertise.)
- Are approval processes centralized?
- Are local teams empowered to close cases independently?
- How many countries and languages are involved?
- Do cases require escalation across business units or legal entities?
- Who conducts investigations: local or global teams?

This helps determine your current intake model:

Structure	Description	Things to consider
Centralized	Reports go to a single global team	May simplify oversight, but risks local delays or language gaps
Decentralized	Local teams own intake and triage	Empowers local action, but can create visibility gaps or inconsistencies
Hybrid	Shared ownership between local and central	Balances flexibility and control, but requires clear roles and escalation paths

No structure is perfect. Each comes with trade-offs, but also strengths.
The goal is not to avoid complexity, but to manage it well.

Takeaway: Choose a structure that reflects how your team operates day to day, not how a tool expects you to work.

Step 2:
Define needs across the lifecycle

Scalable intake isn't just about ownership. It's about how reports move through the system. Break down each stage:

1. **Intake**
   a. Intake methods: Web, phone, app, AI voice agent, physical boxes
   b. Can reporters use their native language?
   c. Do you gather enough (structured) information to start an investigation if necessary?
   d. Do you have the right process to go back to the reporter and ask questions.
   e. How do we balance this with ensuring that the intake remains easy to use and low barrier

2. **Routing**
   a. Can you automatically route by region, risk, or topic?
   b. Is manual triage still in place?

3. **Triage**
   a. Can you tag and queue cases by severity?
   b. Is there a structured approach to prioritization?

4. **Case handling**
   a. Are handlers assigned based on region, topic, or role?
   b. Do you support cross-entity collaboration?

5. **Audit and closure**
   a. Is every step traceable?
   b. Can you generate reports by entity or jurisdiction?

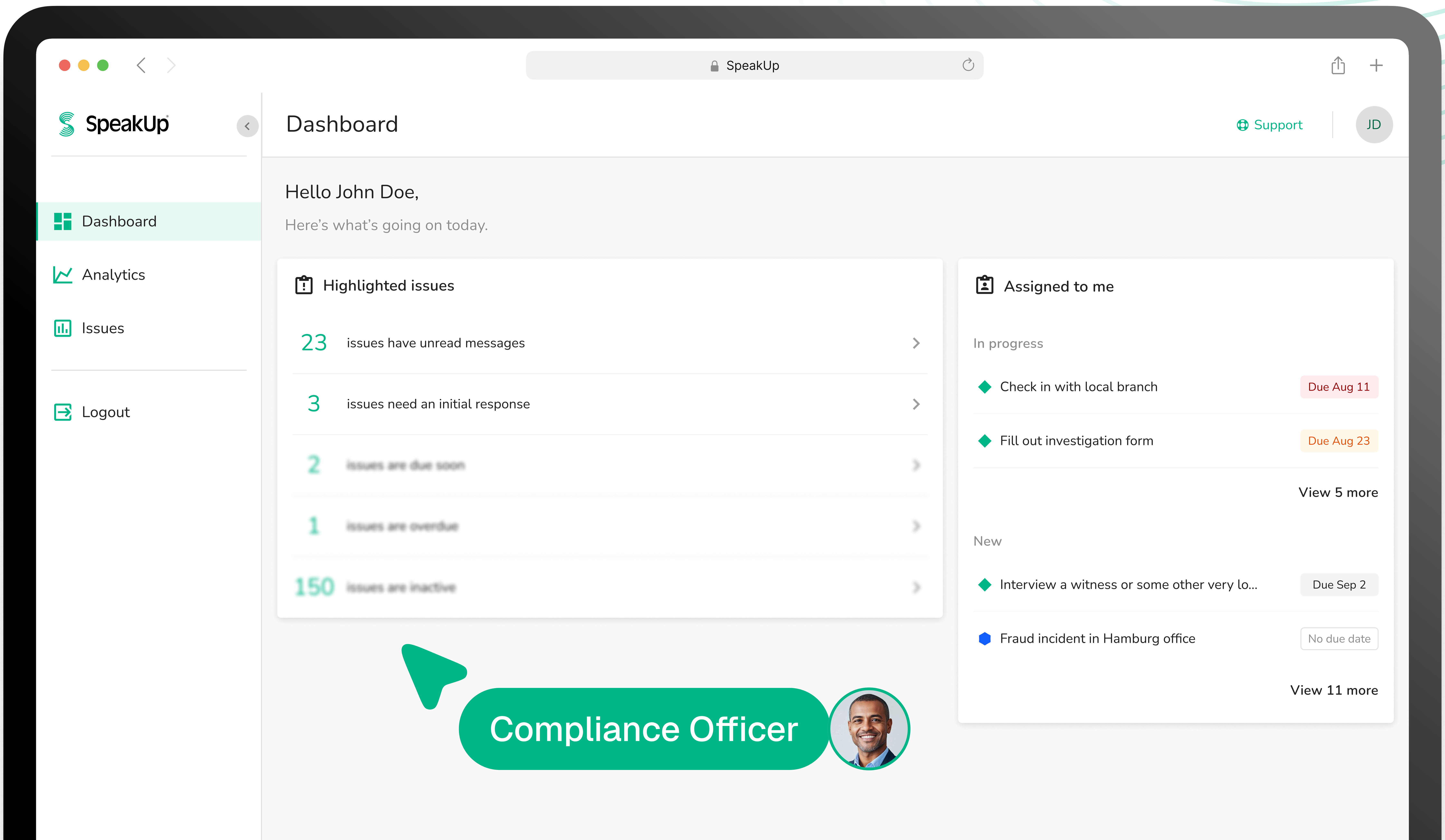
> **Takeaway:** Every stage needs to flex volume, geography, and structure.

Step 3:
Choose tools that flex with you

Many tools offer intake. Few adapt to your structure. Look for:

- **Configurable routing:** Assign by topic, geography, or severity automatically
- **Custom workflows:** Use drag-and-drop logic, not dev tickets
- **Role-based access:** Control visibility across teams and borders
- **Multilingual support:** Voice and text reports in native languages
- **AI-assisted triage and summarization:** Automatically manage case volume and highlight priorities efficiently

> **Takeaway:** Choose tech that grows with your team, not tech you'll outgrow.



Step 4:
Diagnose your intake model

The right intake model balances your operational needs and local legal rules. Choose:

- **Hybrid** if central oversight is ideal but limited by local laws.
- **Decentralized** if local legal requirements dominate or local teams have strong resources.
- **Centralized** only if clearly allowed by local laws and resources.

Question	If you answer "Yes"...
Are most reports handled centrally?	Consider if local legal requirements allow this; if not, strive for a **hybrid** approach
Do you operate in 10+ countries/entities?	A **hybrid** model may be best
Do local teams manage their own cases effectively, with adequate quality/ resources?	If yes, consider a **decentralized** approach; otherwise, lean towards **centralized**
Are there cross-entity investigations?	A **hybrid** model is likely needed
Is intake inconsistent across regions?	Consider a **centralized** or **hybrid** model
Do you require multilingual support?	A **hybrid** model is likely a better fit
Are local legal requirements outweighing the benefits of a centralized approach?	Opt for a **decentralized** model
Do escalation paths cause delays?	A **hybrid** or **decentralized** model may work best

> **Takeaway:** Most global teams benefit from a hybrid approach that balances local legal needs, resource availability, and centralized oversight effectively.

Step 5:
Operationalize your intake model

Once designed, make it real:

- Assign intake ownership at each stage
- Define what “good” intake looks like across regions
- Train compliance, HR, legal teams (depending on who handles whistleblowing and misconduct cases) on escalation rules
- Review routing and intake channel performance regularly
- Look for important reporting data to present to your board, such as quantity of reports, trends by country, business unit, and risk type

SpeakUp helps you launch with:

- Templates and routing logic out of the box
- Multilingual intake, AI translation, including Sienna voice reporting
- Custom workflows and role-based dashboards
- ISO 27001, GDPR, SOC 2 and ISAE3000 Type II compliance

What these models look like in practice with SpeakUp®

If you choose to work with SpeakUp, here’s how the platform adapts to your structure—not the other way around:

- **Centralized model:** Reports from all regions funnel into a single dashboard with automated routing and access controls. Your central team gets full visibility without friction.
- **Hybrid model**: SpeakUp supports shared responsibilities between local and central teams with region-based workflows, multilingual intake (including Sienna), and smart escalation paths. Everyone sees exactly what they need—no more, no less.
- **Decentralized model:** SpeakUp empowers local teams with automatic case assignment based on region or case type, enabling local handlers to fully manage investigations. The flexible access model allows adjustments as your needs evolve.

> This flexibility is standard, with no special configuration required.
> The goal: operationalize your existing structure without forcing change.

SpeakUp® Doing right, made easy

Final word: Don't scale chaos

Adding headcount won't solve a misaligned intake structure. The right model gives you clarity, control, and room to grow. SpeakUp® was built for teams managing real complexity - not idealized org charts.

Need help designing your intake model?

Book a demo →