

Success Story

Argentina – Securing Jobs by Complying with High Integrity Standards

by Carolina Irigoien

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ICOM Salud de SEDESA S.A.

Health products and services, including orthopaedic and surgical instruments

- Operates via online channels and country-wide distributors
- Established in 1974
- Approximately 60 employees
- Carolina Irigoien is Shareholder, Vice President, Financial Administrative Manager and Compliance Officer
- At ICOM since 2007, graduated with honours from University of Buenos Aires in 2000, started her career at Ernst & Young in the audit area and later worked at Siderca SAIC as a tax specialist for almost five years

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An audit leads to new approaches

When Johnson & Johnson, which accounts for 70 % of our business, announced to audit their two main Argentinian suppliers, I realised it will be essential to work on our company's compliance programme. As a family business it was paramount to show how we follow all anti-corruption measures to make sure our company will be able to continue its operations and secure the jobs of our employees.

Building up integrity

While ICOM had some processes in place to manage compliance risks before collaborating with the Alliance for Integrity, these were not as developed as they are today. We had never completed a risk assessment or looked at specific areas within the company with the highest corruption risks. The leadership team based decisions on market knowledge and experience without a well-defined compliance system in place. While I personally

knew that ICOM was in full compliance, the difficulty was showing and proving to our partners that we act with integrity not only in words, but also through recognised and well-established processes.

I met with various stakeholders who all recommended Alliance for Integrity. After taking part in the one-day training programme, “De Empresas para Empresas” (DEPE – “From Companies to Companies”), I joined the Integrity Journey to continue our efforts and define tangible standards. The Alliance for Integrity and their implementation partner in Argentina, AHK Argentina, were great allies, providing me with a network of support and different perspectives.

Open and flexible for a deep dive

One of the major benefits of the Integrity Journey is that it provides companies with fundamental knowledge and with the tools to implement an effective compliance system, yet it was also adaptable allowing to go deeper, providing more content, and reviewing documents and policies.

Professionalising the family business

During the Integrity Journey I successfully improved ICOM's compliance programme. I conducted two staff trainings, developed and implemented a bidding policy, and set up a reporting channel. The diverse exchanges with the AHK Argentina gave me a broader understanding

The Integrity Journey is a mentoring programme specifically designed to train small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in corruption prevention. The Journey comprises ten stages, including a kick-off event, online seminars and a DEPE corruption prevention training. Upon successful completion of the programme, participants are able to set up, implement and continuously monitor an effective compliance management system. Experienced compliance experts support the participating SMEs on their Integrity Journey.

of compliance. It was also the first time I conducted a risk analysis. I could now see where the risks were and start an inter-divisional dialogue bringing in different perspectives to make sure that all risks were addressed.

Improving compliance created a sense that the company was being professionalised and becoming more robust giving employees the security of a long-term perspective.

Implementing cost-effective compliance standards

The biggest challenges have been to incorporate the procedures into the company's daily routine. As compliance programmes have the reputation of being expensive, it is particularly important to make it easier for SMEs to understand that compliance is affordable and accessible if implemented with the correct orientation and targeting. The next biggest challenge is consistency and continuity: the measures must not just be a paper kept in a drawer for audits. The tone set by management is key for implementing an effective compliance programme, especially in SMEs, where it is close to the operation.

Working with integrity is good for business

ICOM's steps towards more compliance and integrity improved our relationship with our stakeholders. By leading by example, we successfully created a culture of compliance within our supply chain and are viewed as a better supplier ourselves.

We can now start conversations with other companies and speak from a different vantage point than our competitors. This has allowed us to grow more, to enter new areas and transactions. Our company today is more secure and stronger thanks to the new systems which ensure transparency and clarity in all business transactions. We have diversified our supply chain, choosing those with better compliance programmes and support our existing suppliers in further developing their integrity measures.

Opening doors to new opportunities through integrity

Collaboration is key. The support of larger companies and multinationals who have been implementing such measures for some time is particularly important as they share expertise, knowledge and experience and help put the topic of compliance on the agenda of SMEs.

Management must clearly communicate the reasons and values behind compliance to the employees: what type of company do we want to be, what legacy do we want to leave behind, and what kind of example do we want to set? This can only be strengthened with time as integrity is breathed within the company. It has been a year of growth and satisfaction for me, both for ICOM and on a personal level. The development of the integrity programme has been a big part of this, and I am incredibly grateful for the journey we have embarked on.

