



Implementing an Anti-Corruption Program for Competitive Advantage

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—María José Cuestas, President

This Spotlight features María José Cuestas, President of **Excelcom**, an Argentina-based company that integrates technology, software, and services for clients. Excelcom partners with major technology companies. Excelcom recently completed Ethisphere's Anti-Corruption Assessment.

The Anti-Corruption Assessment consists of a series of questions covering the elements of an effective program. Each question rates the maturity of systems in place to mitigate the risks of corruption. The Assessment also includes access to specific resources for improvement, such as model policies, risk assessment guidelines, and checklists.

Why is having a strong anti-corruption program important to your business?

María José Cuestas - At Excelcom, we integrate technology and services, offering solutions to a diverse range of companies, industries, and organizations—both commercial and government—located in different and geographically wide-ranging provinces in Argentina.

During the FY 2018/2019, 21% of our clients were public sector while the remaining 79% were private sector. Accordingly, although our public or government sector business is not the majority of our business, it is significant, and our company continues to grow.

In addition to global requirements, there are regulations and sanctions in our country that address corruption, including Law 25.188 and Law 27.401.

How did the Ethisphere Assessment change the way you think about anti-corruption?

María José Cuestas – The Ethisphere Assessment offered a paradigm shift in how we address anti-corruption. It has enabled our directors and employees to expand our point of view and put an emphasis on anti-corruption policies, procedures, and risk assessment with ongoing monitoring.

Enacted on March 2, 2018, corporate criminal liability law (Law 27.401) states that entities will be subject to sanctions in these offenses against the Public Administration and/or corruption:

- (i) national and transnational bribery and influence peddling;*
- (ii) improper and unlawful transactions of public officials;*
- (iii) illegal exaction committed by a public official; (iv) illicit enrichment of public officials and employees; and (v) forgery of balance sheets and reports to conceal a corruption offense.*



Ethisphere brings together leading global companies to define and promote best practices for ethics and compliance, and helps to advance business performance through data-driven assessments, benchmarking, and guidance.

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For Excelcom, incorporating transparency and integrity in our relationships with employees, vendors, customers, and third parties signifies a qualitative leap and a value-add that positions us well in the national and international markets. Adopting our anti-bribery and anti-corruption policies and procedures also offers security and predictability to our partners.

Excelcom has only 25 employees: could you please describe what you have learned about how to develop and maintain an effective anti-corruption program for your operations?

María José Cuestas - Ethisphere's Anti-Corruption Assessment allowed us to rethink and formalize our policies and procedures, which signified a change in the manner of doing our work.

Put into practice, we are consolidating our Ethics team, which requires actions to be communicated and authorized, such as our rules regarding the giving of business gifts.

In addition, we have incorporated permanent training and the evaluation and monitoring of risks, which enables better predictability and security, and in turn, generates more confidence in the ability to mitigate anti-corruption.

The design and implementation of anti-corruption policies promotes a mutual commitment between directors and employees. The policies also transcend to all third parties with which the company has relationships, including customers, vendors, and society as a whole.

The primary focus in implementing our Ethics program was on how we manage relationships with our governmental customers. We also continue to redesign our program to mitigate all risks in our portfolio.

What we have learned is that once the anti-corruption policies are designed, they need to be continually reinforced with training and communication to achieve the cultural change that is required.

ABOUT THE ANTI-CORRUPTION ASSESSMENT

Ethisphere's Anti-Corruption Assessment provides a practical way to assess the weaknesses and strengths of corruption controls across your company – or that of your third parties – and implement a roadmap for improvement.

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