

# Manager

Special IAM Centenary Edition

Q4, 2015



## Calling International SOS!

Manager meets CEO Arnaud Vaissié



Inspiring professionals since 1915



# Manager

Q4, 2015



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### IAM & Industry Editor

Laura Jackson - 01952 457452



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### Editor

Richard Pagett - 01582 635105  
manager@instam.org

### Advertising contact

Laura Jackson - 01952 457452

### Technical Production

Rod Farquhar

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## Dear Member



Welcome to the Autumn/Winter edition of the Manager magazine

As we head towards the end of the year, and indeed the second century of the IAM, we are entering a time of both reflection and planning. 2015 has seen steady progress in re-establishing the Institute, with membership numbers growing and the completion of a new range of IQ/IAM qualifications now in place. We can look back at a year in which we have managed to get many of the fundamentals in place, but with still much to do and some frustration that we have not moved faster.

As we enter our second century, we will redouble our efforts to provide a visible and credible voice for the administrative management sector. Our focus for 2016 will be to increase member engagement, strengthening the IAM Council, running regional CPD events and canvassing members on their ideas and opinions. We are looking to re-establish a number of the former membership surveys that will allow IAM to be more active as an opinion former, which in turn is critical to building the status and standing of the profession.

On the education side, we are now re-growing the number of centres offering IAM (IQ/IAM) qualifications, we are building a stimulating CPD programme, and will be playing a major role in relation to administrative apprenticeships. We will also be re-engaging with international networks and partners.

These are busy and exciting times. The team at IAM and IQ are only too aware of the importance of the rich history on the IAM. Our job is to work with members and industry leaders to establish a 21st Century Institute, relevant to members and highly visible to industry, commerce, education and government.

I trust that you enjoy the centenary issue of the Manager and look forward to working with more of you moving forward.

**Raymond Clarke**

Chair - Institute of Administrative Management

NEW YORK 07:19 LONDON 12:19 MOSCOW 14:19 HONG KONG 19:19 TOKYO 20:19 SYDNEY 21:19



**PASSION.**  
**RESPECT.**  
**EXPERTISE.**  
**CARE.**

# RISKY BUSINESS

For the last 30 years Arnaud Vaissie has been at the forefront of International SOS, a pioneering medical and security services company that operates throughout the world. Rob Shepherd finds out how he has succeeded in such a high-pressure sector and the role that teamwork plays in dealing with life and death situations.

**For a man who is on constant alert and never knows quite what the next telephone call, text or email might bring, Arnaud Vaissié appears to be very relaxed. One can only assume that after 30 years at the helm of the world's leading medical and travel security assistance company, he has perfected the art of staying calm regardless of the next man made or natural disaster that his company could be called to deal with.**

### The story so far

The 60-year-old Parisian is CEO and chairman of International SOS, a company he co-founded with his childhood friend, Pascal Rey-Herme, back in 1985 in Singapore. Although his father was a medical professional, it wasn't Vaissié's intention to follow in his footsteps and after graduating from the Institute of Political Sciences of Paris, he began his business career as a financial executive before relocating to the USA as head of Compass in San Francisco.

Rey-Herme had pursued a career in medicine and with Vaissié's entrepreneurial flair, the two decided to embark on the challenge of creating a new business in Asia providing medical and security assistance. The company – then called AEA International – was born and Vaissié recalls one defining moment that was the driving force in making his career-changing decision. He recounts, 'While in Singapore, Pascal and I had a meeting with the head of a company that was involved in the field we were looking to operate in. After explaining our plan, he said it would never work. When we left the office I was even more determined to go for it and make it a success – to have someone tell you that something can't be achieved is a tremendous motivator.'

### Success story

Now present in 92 countries, the organisation currently operates with 11,000 employees, including 1,400 doctors and 200 security specialists. It provides a range of services all over the world including assessing medical and security risks, advising on preventive programmes and assisting with emergency response for travellers, expatriates and their dependents. These activities are provided via 27 assistance centres in locations ranging from Bali, Beijing and Dubai, to Jakarta, London, Paris, Philadelphia, Singapore, Sydney and Tokyo, and are staffed by physicians, nurses, operations managers, multilingual coordinators and logistics support personnel.

International SOS has over 10,000 corporate clients and serves 83 per cent of the Fortune Global 100. 'Unlike most other organisations, we have spread from east to west,' comments Vaissié. 'We have grown as companies have become more multinational in their activities, rather than domestic.'

Asked what he considers to be the secret behind the company's success, he pauses before replying, 'In a



word innovation. We are constantly looking a new ways to evolve our offering and make sure it meets the requirements of an ever-changing world. A good example of our approach is the fact that we were recently awarded the Most Innovative Use of Technology in Global Mobility award by the Forum for Expatriate Management.'

### Think ahead

The types of situations that International SOS gets involved with are way beyond the scope of most other organisations, yet its experience offers valuable lessons that apply to businesses of all kinds. Perhaps the most important is to be prepared for any eventuality.

'International SOS is set up to deal with chaos,' says Vaissié without a hint of drama. 'Therefore, it's all about being prepared, planning ahead and being able to cope with unforeseen difficulties. Every situation is unique, so having mechanisms in place that can help us react quickly to a diverse range of scenarios is vital. I have to say that modern communications technology helps enormously, as the information needed can be easily provided, accessed and used.'

So is being able to make the right decision quickly under pressure something that people are born with or does it only come with experience? For Vaissié it's a combination of the two and he recalls an anecdote where a CEO was asked the recipe for success. His answer was 'good decisions'. The other person asked how to make good decisions. The CEO countered with 'experience'. Asked how you get the experience, the final answer was 'bad decisions'.

### Train to gain

Within the operations side of its business, International SOS does not have the luxury of making bad decisions, which is why getting the right personnel on board and making sure that they have the requisite knowledge and experience is crucial.

Vaissié explains, 'To avoid the potential for any bad decisions, teamwork and getting as much opinion about a situation as possible limits the risk of mistakes. On the medical side, our employees need to be highly

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## To your rescue!

From providing security at global events like the FIFA World Cup, to offering vital medical and travel support during disease and disaster events such as the recent Ebola outbreak and the Boxing Day tsunami that hit South East Asia in 2004, International SOS has supported a whole manner of international events and crises and will be ready for the next one.



qualified, but also able to lead in the field and practice in a multinational setting whilst under immense pressure. When it comes to security, we recruit staff who have worked in high risk and sometimes dangerous environments, and have backgrounds in security services, the military and special forces.'

### Get the message

Half of International SOS's employees work in administrative and executive positions, while the others are medical and security professionals. A sense of dynamic teamwork between the two areas pervades the company and each has an important and defined role.

It is important for International SOS to have managers with a global mind-set who are interested in the world, understand it, and can recognise issues that are present at any given time. Elaborating on this point, Vaissié says, 'We look at three key qualities in people. The first is people management – can they attract, motivate and develop others? Organisation and ensuring that things happen as they should is the second, while the third is business acumen – there's no point in being fantastically intelligent, if there is no ability to conduct business. International SOS's employees must also demonstrate our core corporate values of passion, respect, expertise and care in everything they do.'

With such a diverse and widespread workforce, communicating objectives and ensuring that everyone is singing from the same sheet has its challenges. Asked how this is achieved Vaissié replies, 'Good communication comes from repetition. With different cultures and people,

we attain alignment in a number of ways – annual general meetings, meetings in regional offices, our Intranet and other commonplace communications tools. Our senior managers extensively travel to ensure that there is consistency of approach and that our strategic goals are met.'

When it comes to his greatest achievement, Vaissié says he is incredibly proud of the work that the company carries out during these trying times before adding, 'When we set the company up we created an entirely new industry. I'm just as proud of this and the fact that we continue to set new standards and define what is expected. It keeps me wanting to strive for improvement.'

