

INTERNATIONAL RESCUE

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How did you enter the world of risk management?

My career has developed from my early education. In 1990, I decided to enrol in the first French curriculum dedicated to risk management. This was strongly supported by the French Risk Manager Association (AMRAE). I met the two leaders of AMRAE during an internship in Paris. Both risk professionals – Thierry Van Santen, who was risk manager at Valeo, and Pierre Sonigo, risk manager at Pechiney – enthusiastically advised me to embrace a career in risk management. It was – and still remains – a career with ever-increasing importance and prospects. I'd like to thank them both, and I am proud that I still benefit from their continuous mentoring today.

After my Master's degree, I joined MARS Inc (the global confectionery producer) in 1992, which at the time was a sponsor of the 1992 winter and summer Olympic Games. My role was to handle risk and security aspects of its sponsoring and hosting programmes. To this day, it remains one of the most eye-opening experiences in my career; it gave me the opportunity to manage risk strategies in a very high-pressure environment. Extremely rewarding – and a life lesson.

What does best practice risk management look like?

Risk management is based on conviction and a strong sense of ethics that governs our actions. In my eyes, it's not about compliance, nor is it a bureaucratic exercise. At International SOS, risk management is very well embedded across the entire organisation, where it's regarded as an integral contributor to business strategy and objectives. It's nice to be fully supported by other colleagues and management.

Describe your typical day

Any successful risk manager will tell you there's no such thing as a typical day, and that's why I love the job. It's

crucial to keep a fresh pair of eyes and a strong sense of curiosity so that you can embrace new ideas, projects and evolution in your organisation. Our world moves faster than ever, as does the risk landscape. Part of the job is knowing that there will be surprises every day.

What are the best and worst aspects of your role?

The sense of helping my organisation to make things better is the most rewarding aspect of my role. And I relate this to the sense of ethics a risk manager should uphold. The worst is obviously my involvement in tragic accidents or difficult situations where I'm inevitably exposed to people's personal hardships and misfortunes.

What has been your greatest achievement?

My greatest personal achievement is still being very passionate about my profession; I think it's an important aspiration in any role. As a career achievement, I'm very proud to be the founding chairman of the Pan Asia Risk and Insurance Management Association (PARIMA), as of 2014.

What advice would you give to an aspiring or up-and-coming risk professional?

Don't take things for granted. Be passionate and eager to learn. And enjoy the ride! You need to be comfortable in your own skin and work in an environment that lets you be creative but also provides a like-minded setting for thinking and learning. It's certainly been a rewarding aspect of my working life with International SOS. I'm a risk manager surrounded by 'risk-minded' people who have entrepreneurial passion for their work.

What's the best piece of advice anyone in the profession has given you?

Be passionate and eager to learn – its good advice no matter what you do or where you go. ■

