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A person is walking a tightrope against a clear blue sky. The person is silhouetted against the sky, with their arms outstretched for balance. The tightrope is a thin line stretching across the frame. The background is a bright blue sky with some light clouds. The overall mood is one of balance and risk.

INSIDE IN-HOUSE SURVEY

Walking the tightrope: 38 in-house lawyers on balancing investigations and business interests

Stuart Alford QC interview – GIR Live DC – IBA Seoul



NICOLAS TOLLET
 Technip
*Vice-president group
 compliance (now moved to
 private practice)*

I started working in anti-corruption compliance as an outside counsel back in 2008. At that time, I was working on the very first case of transnational corruption of a French company which was also one of the biggest cases in the world. I was very much interested in this new practice and I wanted to pursue it; I continued practising it at my former law firm. I noticed that the anti-corruption compliance practice requires a much deeper understanding of internal processes of companies than the M&A practice that I was in before. Therefore, when an in-house opportunity opened in another historic case in the frame of its then-ongoing monitoring (pursuant to a deferred prosecution agreement), I seized it. It was one of the most unique opportunities available in the world to learn about company processes internally and how you can develop and apply to them what was then a cutting-edge compliance programme. I felt very lucky.

It may sound naïve, but I believe that at our small level, we participate in fighting corruption.

The most challenging part of working in-house is learning how to deal with new kinds of clients, internal clients with their own perspectives.

My role is extremely diverse. The most challenging situation I've encountered was probably when I had to deal with my very first internal investigation. At that time, it was a very new practice for law firms in Europe and at the same time, it was quite a significant case. We had to adjust and be creative.

As we have anticipated for many years, compliance has a bright future. New areas of compliance are being explored, for example human rights, and a new profession of compliance officer is developing and structuring itself.

The advice I'd give to someone who wants to follow my career path is that compliance is a growing and developing area. You need to create your opportunities.

I feel very grateful that the European Compliance Network, which I founded in 2014, is becoming a success across Europe and that participants in the compliance workshops come in large numbers to meet other compliance professionals. The compliance profession is still under construction and structuring itself so providing a free and informal forum and seeing compliance professionals of all types using the forum to interact and share experiences is gratifying. This development occurred at the same time as I was confirmed to teach anti-corruption compliance at the University of California, Berkeley.