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Meet Pierre Lilly: Building effective relationships through transparency

Pierre Lilly is SVP & Chief Compliance Officer for Hormel Foods in Austin, Minnesota, USA

Pierre Lilly (pmlilly@hormel.com) was interviewed by Adam Turteltaub (adam.turteltaub@corporatecompliance.org), Chief Engagement & Strategy Officer at SCCE & HCCA.

AT: Let's talk a bit about your background. You're an auditor by training and experience, and your career has spanned many well-known companies. What led you to audit as a career?

PL: What really led me to pursue a career in audit is the ability to see various aspects of an organization and engage with key stakeholders in a way that allowed me to be instrumental in driving change to support and strengthen an effective control environment. The beauty of audit is the ability to learn about the operations of an organization as a whole and collaborate with senior leaders while functioning independently to provide management and the board with a level of assurance regarding the control environment. Internal audit has been a very rewarding experience for me because I really enjoy working with business partners and supporting them in setting the company's strategic direction while considering the control environment.

AT: What led you to make the jump to compliance?

PL: I have always assumed responsibilities within corporate governance, which included coverage of compliance risks. I spoke with our chief executive officer about his expectations for the compliance function, and he was very clear that compliance should be a strategic partner supporting the organization. This made me extremely excited to transition to compliance and leverage my governance background. I think my professional experience allows me to take a nontraditional approach to compliance, which historically has been driven by professionals with a legal background. I am also excited that we are on the path to centralize our corporate compliance function and structure a partnership with our compliance subject matter experts to drive a best-in-class compliance program.

AT: What was the biggest surprise when you moved into a compliance role?

PL: In internal audit, I had responsibility for some key compliance activities, like training, administering the employee hotline, and overseeing the code of conduct. My new ethics and compliance role is much more comprehensive. The biggest surprise has been just how important it is for compliance subject matter experts to partner with company senior management and other stakeholders. Their insights are critical to how we identify and mitigate our compliance risks to minimize blind spots. As a result, our team is focused on being intentional with partnering with these groups to strategically improve our program and strengthen workforce commitment to ethics and compliance.

AT: As I was preparing for the interview, I spent some time getting to know Hormel Foods. Frankly, I was surprised at how many well-known brands it encompasses. Can you offer an overview of the company?

PL: Hormel Foods is a global branded food company with a 130-year history, and is home to some of the world's most iconic and beloved brands. Brands such as the SPAM® family of products, Hormel® chili, SKIPPY® peanut butter products, Jennie-O® turkey products, Hormel® Black Label® bacon, Applegate® natural and organic

meats, Justin's® nut butters, Hormel® pepperoni, and recently acquired Planters® brand, just to name a few. We have more than 40 brands that occupy the number one or two position for their categories. Beyond our brands, our company has a strong culture and reputation and is committed to our team members and supporting important areas like environmental stewardship, community support, and making a difference with food security where we live and work. In fact, we have been named by *Newsweek* as one of America's Most Responsible Companies. What I am extremely proud of is our level of commitment to support our communities and team members, whether it is through donating food products to those in need or being a pioneer to support equity in education through our Inspired Pathways program,^[1] where the company funds a two-year community college education for the children of our team members.

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