

CEP Magazine – August 2020

Meet Thomas Meiers: Volkswagen's commitment to change

Dr. Thomas Meiers, Senior Vice President and Chief Coordinator of the Volkswagen Group US Monitorship in Wolfsburg, Germany

Thomas Meiers (thomas.meiers@volkswagen.de) was interviewed by Richard Bistrong (richardtbistrong@gmail.com), Chief Executive Officer of Front-Line Anti-Bribery LLC based in New York City.

Prior to coming to Wolfsburg, Thomas was at Italdesign in Italy leading strategy. After studying law in Germany, England, and the United States, Thomas specialized in intellectual property law and litigation and spent a number of years at the international law firm Freshfields at its office in Frankfurt. From 2005 until the beginning of 2010, Thomas worked in various leadership positions within the legal department of General Electric (GE) Healthcare. In 2010, he joined MAN Truck & Bus as its vice president, head of compliance, where he built up and led a global compliance department and implemented a state-of-the-art compliance management system.

RB: The Volkswagen Group has gone through a disruptive scandal that shook the entire automotive industry. Volkswagen pleaded guilty for violating US environmental laws and other offenses. As part of several settlements with US authorities, Volkswagen has undertaken major efforts to enhance its compliance program. What is your specific role and responsibility?

TM: My responsibility basically includes two key parts: First, I coordinate all global activities of Volkswagen Group in conjunction with Larry D. Thompson's mandate as independent compliance monitor and independent compliance auditor under two major settlements. Second, I oversee the implementation of our obligations under these two settlements with US and California authorities.

RB: You report to Hiltrud D. Werner, the board member for Integrity and Legal Affairs. In mid-2018, I read a *New York Times* article citing Werner from a press conference with the following words: "It is not easy to come from shock to shame to change."¹ Given your job as the chief coordinator for the compliance monitor, how does this resonate with your own experience?

TM: My role was established in early 2017 when Volkswagen entered into some key settlements with US authorities. Since then, being the chief coordinator has allowed me to be a part of the tremendous changes that the entire company is going through. The change is affecting all levels of the company and impacts our brands and businesses globally. Looking at the journey that Volkswagen took over the last four and a half years, I would say Hiltrud Werner was quite right in her observation. It really started with a huge shock. In late 2015, many people were overwhelmed when they learned about what had happened. Many of us at the company felt ashamed, and I remember people asking, "How could this happen?" However, Volkswagen wasn't given a lot of time to reflect on shock and shame. While the investigation into the diesel issue was ongoing, remediation and change started almost simultaneously. In the same press conference in mid-2018, Hiltrud also stated: "There is a lot that might not have been seen from the outside, but the effort from inside is really tremendous."

This document is only available to members. Please log in or become a member.

[Become a Member Login](#)
