



Announcer

It's time for the *IHSA Safety Podcast*.

Enzo Garritano:

Welcome to the *IHSA Safety Podcast*. I'm Enzo Garritano, president and CEO of IHSA.

In today's episode, hosts Stacey Blea and Sam Pitaro, IHSA's lead COR® auditor, discuss what to expect during an internal audit results debrief. This episode provides insights into the experience and how to maximize its benefits for your organization. Stacey and Sam, over to you.

Stacey Blea:

Hey, Sam. Welcome back to the COR® podcast. Thanks for coming in today.

Sam Pitaro:

Oh, no problem. Thank you very much for having me.

Stacey Blea:

Yeah. So today we're going to be talking about not a specific element, because we're past that stage in our process. We want to talk now about understanding your audit results. So after you have submitted your internal audit, and now it's time to...Okay, what's the next step?

So the Internal Auditor at the company is going to be getting their results of their audit. And I just wanted to go through that process, what that looks like, and just so everyone knows what to expect.

Sam Pitaro:

Okay. Well, the COR® auditor from IHSA who conducts the review of the internal audit submission will reach out to you once they've completed the review, and set up a meeting with you to review those audit results.

Stacey Blea:

Okay. So how long after a company submits their internal audit should they expect to hear back a response? What is a typical timeframe for that?

Sam Pitaro:

Well, let's go through the process of an audit being submitted. Audit is received by IHSA, it's stamped.

Then within a week, they'll do a pre-assessment. It'll go into the queue and they will do a pre-assessment.

From that pre-assessment, they will identify if there's any deficiencies. And if there is, they'll send it back. If there isn't, they'll move to an audit review. And IHSA, as per the COR® 2020 guideline, has a timeframe of 60 days to go through this process.

Stacey Blea:

Okay. In the audit results meeting, would you just be providing the firm with their final score? Or are you going to be going into a little bit more detail than that?

Sam Pitaro:

Well, a review is provided to the firm. It is important for the firm to understand that your score isn't always reflective of the company. And what I mean by that is, you may achieve a low score, but it might be due to the submission errors, misunderstanding, or not enough documentation.

And that's what we discuss with you in your review. And we'll also discuss the step moving forward from the review—what's the expectation moving forward from the audit review.

Stacey Blea:

Yeah. And I think that's really important, the whole thing that you're talking about, the score there. It's really important to keep in mind, especially when it's your very first time submitting your internal audit for review. Because it is quite possible that you've made some submission errors and that that has impacted your score.

So I know for myself, I don't just send the report and send them on their way, kind of thing. I want to sit down with the company's Internal Auditor and senior management and go through that report and talk about some of the key issues and whatnot, just to be able to make sure that we're managing expectations properly. And that if they do receive a score that is not passing, then they know why they haven't passed.

And maybe it is submission errors, maybe there's some issues in the program, but at least we're going through that together. Because if you receive a failing score, it can be definitely an emotional process. But yeah, it's good to go through the report together and just set those expectations properly.

Sam Pitaro:

Yes, it is important.

Stacey Blea:

Okay. So could you tell me who should be involved in the audit results meeting?

Sam Pitaro:

As per the COR® 2020 guidelines, it is important that senior management is involved in the meeting, as per their responsibility. And also because we're reviewing results and we're coming up with some solution and discussing the next step, senior management has to know what's going on. And also be better prepared for the next step.

Stacey Blea:

Right. Okay. So just for example, what sort of things would you find it important to be discussing during the results meeting?

Sam Pitaro:

Well, during the results meeting, we'll be going through elements that were low-scoring, less than 65 per cent. Or any legislative questions.

And we'll also maybe be discussing the supporting documentation not meeting the intent of the questions, or not enough documentation provided for that particular question.

Stacey Blea:

Right. Yeah. And I would also, obviously if it was an issue, I would be talking about any submission errors that were consistent or any themes that jumped out at me while doing the audit.

Maybe they missed something like they didn't realize or didn't know that there's supposed to be three samples of everything submitted. Or maybe they submitted items that were outside of the 12-month timeframe.

So just to make sure that we capture any overarching issues and make sure that it's corrected, and definitely not redone the next time that they submit an internal audit.

Sam Pitaro:

Yes.

Stacey Blea:

Okay. So the COR® auditor will provide feedback on the audit submission, and then is going to tell you or discuss with you the next steps?

Sam Pitaro:

Yes. And depending on their submission and their overall score, we will advise them on the next step, whether they have been successful and proceeding to the external audit or not.

Stacey Blea:

Okay. So I understand that there's three different possibilities of next steps. Could you explain what those are?

Sam Pitaro:

Yes. The three steps are very simple. The first is a failure, where they really did not meet all the requirements and they might have to resubmit a brand new audit again.

The second is a failure. But it's a failure where they have a management system, they have the system where it could be a pass, and there will be expecting a corrective action plan to be provided to IHSA for review. And once it's reviewed, then they can go to the external audit.

And then the last one would be a pass where they've met the requirements of 65 per cent per an element, legislative questions, all 100 per cent; and a pass of 80 per cent or more.

Stacey Blea:

Right. So, obviously we know which category everyone is aiming for, but what would you say is the most common result for a firm who's submitting for their very first internal audit?

Sam Pitaro:

The most common result is a failure with the corrective action plan to the external. We have seen a few of them where there's a failure and they have to resubmit again. And that could be something as simple as they rushed through the audit or not following the COR® guidelines. And then all of a sudden now they've got to resubmit again.

So at the end of the day, read the guidelines, read the COR® handbook, read the intent of the questions; whether it's documentation, documentation and/or interview, documentation and/or observation. And also understand the intent of the questions. If we ask for three samples, three samples have got to be provided. If they've got to be consecutive, they have to be consecutive. All of this could lead to resubmitting a brand new audit.

Stacey Blea:

Yeah. Sam, I would definitely agree that an organization failing and then being able to provide a corrective action plan and move on to external, that seems to be the most typical, just depending on what their submission was like.

But we really do want to help firms that are submitting something that is a complete fail and need to resubmit. We want to avoid those as much as possible because obviously we don't like to get them. We don't like having those conversations where we have to tell people, "No, you can't move on to the next step of the process." We want to want to see people be successful. But at the same time, COR® is about recognizing the health and safety excellence. So we need to make sure that that good foundation of a health and safety management system is there.

But like you said, all those resources are great. And then also, obviously this podcast is a new resource, and I think that that is one of the things that was really important for me in doing this project, is making sure that everybody understands the intent of the question, because we want to help people stay away from those failures and resubmit. We want people to be able to submit a good audit and be able to move on to that next step.

Sam Pitaro:

Yes.

Stacey Blea:

So on that note, Sam, you gave us a couple of resources there that are available for people if they need some extra help, but is there anything else that you can think of that people will be able to use for resources?

Sam Pitaro:

Yes. One of the best places for resources, and the most current resources, is IHSA's webpage. We always update the webpage.

And also, we have a page cor@ihsa.ca for any questions that you'll have. And they're usually responded within 24 hours, except for the weekends. If you send it in on Friday, they'll look at it on Monday.

Stacey Blea:

Yeah, of course. Okay, thank you.

So on understanding your audit results, do you have any final thoughts or any final recommendations?

Sam Pitaro:

Yes. One thing that I've noticed being one of the first people with COR® in IHSA, and I tell this to all the Internal Auditors, it is important not to get discouraged if they are not immediately successful in the first internal audit.

Please keep in mind that it's trial and error. It's a process where we'll help you achieve the end goal of getting a COR® certificate. It's a process about continuous improvement. And like I said, a big part of it is learning how to properly submit an audit.

And also the other important factor is the importance of senior management to be involved in the audit, supporting the Internal Auditor, supporting the company through this process. IHSA is there to help you get over the hump and be COR® certified.

Stacey Blea:

Okay, thanks. And just on that note, you said learning how to properly submit the audit, which is a huge, huge thing.

I just wanted to let everybody know if they haven't already listened to these episodes, just to go back. And at the beginning of the series, there are two episodes that I recorded with Pete: Preparing For Your Internal Audit and Common Problems. And hopefully that can give you a little bit more detail, more insight as to how to properly prepare and avoid some of the things that we commonly see in submissions.

Sam Pitaro:

Yes.

Stacey Blea:

Yes. So thank you very much for coming in and...

Sam Pitaro:

No problem.

Stacey Blea:

...Having this discussion with me. And I will see you on our next discussion.

Sam Pitaro:

Okay, thank you.

Stacey Blea:

Thanks.

Enzo Garritano:

Thank you for listening to the *IHSA Safety Podcast* and this episode on the internal audit results debrief.

Be sure to subscribe and “like” us on your podcast channel and visit us at ihsa.ca for a wealth of health and safety resources and information.

Announcer

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Thanks for listening.