

B.C. women lead complex project to transform audit, compliance systems

Treks to Germany commonplace in implementing major changes for electronics, engineering giant

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It has been a non-stop journey for two Vancouver women who have led one of the largest implementations of audit and compliance systems by Vancouver's **ACL Services Ltd.**

Since last September, ACL's **Fatima Pardhan** and **Jennifer Smyth** have been working with senior management at German electronics and engineering giant **Siemens AG** to implement a new audit- and compliance-monitoring system across the company's 1,300 corporate subsidiaries in more than 190 countries.

"You're getting to speak to the biggest people at Siemens that are leading the project from CIOs to CFOs to program managers, said Pardhan, the project's subject matter expert. "It's a first of this scale; it's across the enterprise with stakeholders from all different departments. It's not very often you get that opportunity."

The multimillion-dollar implementation will monitor Siemens' purchase-to-pay procedures to help catch any irregularities in any transaction. Its role is to strengthen the company's compliance requirements and improve efficiency in its operations.

Pardhan and Smyth have been working under a condensed timeline to get the entire project im-



Jennifer Smyth, left, and Fatima Pardhan of ACL Services Ltd. in Vancouver: multimillion-dollar implementation will monitor Siemens AG purchase-to-pay procedures to help catch any irregularities in any transaction

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- Fatima Pardhan, project leader, ACL Services Ltd.

plemented at Siemens by the end of this year. They had three different releases of their customized audit software, each release occurring three months after the previous one.

Siemens has aggressively been trying to transform its auditing and compliance procedures over the past year in the wake of a bribery scandal that hit the company a couple of

years ago. It has been investigated in Germany, Italy, Switzerland, China and the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission over \$1.8

billion in "suspicious payments" that may have been used as bribes to win contracts. The scandal had forced the company's chair, CEO and CFOs to resign last year.

Pardhan and Smyth have spent countless hours on the project with scheduled meetings on weekends or very early in the morning to accommodate the nine-hour time difference. They've also travelled regularly to Germany to work with roughly 100 Siemens' staff working on the company's new compliance system.

As project manager, Smyth had to be sensitive to some of the cultural differences between the people in Germany and those in Vancouver involved in the project.

"One example would be the approach to work; we looked at software development more in a flexible framework where they looked at it in more of the traditional sequential framework," Smyth said. "To make the project successful, we had to find the middle ground between both frameworks."

The first phase of the implementation has been executed to date to more than 250 Siemens' corporate entities. "We're going through the evaluation stage right now, so we're doing a lot of maintenance and it's going to be ongoing," said Pardhan.

Worldwide completion is expected by the end of the year. ■
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