Global Antitrust Compliance: Assessing Risks and Creating an Effective Antitrust Program

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Antitrust Enforcement Risks

- After a decade of robust enforcement, some signs of a slowdown
  - Lowest fines in more than a decade following record highs in 2015
  - Recognition leniency programs have become burdensome
- Inherent Risk (probability + impact) of enforcement remains
  - Impact should still be the key driver of compliance efforts
  - Probability of detection still should not be understated

Source: US Department of Justice, Antitrust Division
Risk Assessment is Key to Effective Compliance

- Risk assessment allows you to most effectively allocate resources – focusing preventative and detective measures on your highest risk areas
  - No “off the shelf” or “one size fits all” process; need to assess the specific risks for your company, industry, and jurisdiction(s)
  - Learn the business model / go to market strategies by interviewing business and legal / compliance teams
  - Assessment should consider a range of antitrust risks: Cartel, Info Exchange, Monopolization, Vertical, M&A, Bespoke Risks (e.g. HR)
  - Formal risk assessment recommended at least once a year; always be alert to changing risk factors (new laws, new inquiries, shifting business risks)

Understanding the Risk Factors: Cartel Conduct

- Market structure in your industry
  - Commodity product? Number of players? Barriers to entry?
  - Bidding markets (particularly government contracts)?
- Competitor interaction and opportunity for coordination
  - Commercial relationships and joint ventures with competitors
  - Employee rotation within the industry can facilitate collusion
  - Trade associations and conferences should be closely monitored
  - Information exchange mechanisms can be pro-competitive, but pose particular enforcement risks
- Countries where you operate (and related enforcement activities)
Understanding the Risk Factors: Human Resources

- HR activities are a new area of bespoke antitrust risk
  - New guidelines from US DOJ / FTC focused on coordination in employment following high profile Silicon Valley enforcement action
  - European Commission and Hong Kong Competition Commission have followed with similar guidance
- Example of shifting enforcement trends that can create enforcement risks in areas that were not previously a focus of antitrust compliance
  - Wage fixing and “no poach” agreements now potentially subject to criminal cartel enforcement in the United States
  - Information exchange activities related to sensitive HR material can also give rise to exposure

Measuring the Level of Risk in Your Organization

- Quantification of overall risk should be some representation of your Inherent Risk and Residual Risk
  - ICC guidelines provide some metrics for quantifying probability of detection and potential impact
  - Every organization has a unique risk profile
- Challenges associated with quantifying antitrust risks
  - Inherent Risk tends to be higher given the potential impact of antitrust enforcement actions (criminal and civil exposure)
  - Residual Risk can still be high given difficulty in applying antitrust controls and shifting enforcement standards
Implementing Effective Antitrust Controls

> Administering antitrust controls presents a challenge to most companies
  
  - Safeguards can be put in place ex ante to reduce potential exposure, but they can be difficult to administer
  
  - Prohibiting or requiring pre-clearance for interactions with competitors can be effective, but this is not feasible in most companies today

> Potential to focus resources on safeguards for higher risk areas:
  
  - Controls for trade associations and conferences
  
  - Safeguards for information exchange activities
  
  - Communication controls to flag suspicious conduct

Conducting Effective Antitrust Audits

> Audits are an important and effective tool for antitrust compliance
  
  - Effective audits can have a strong deterrent effect in the business
  
  - Detection of potential violations allow for effective remedial action

> Audits should be tailored to the risk assessment and antitrust controls
  
  - Monitor antitrust controls for potential compliance breaches
  
  - Conduct in-depth audits of higher risk business areas