

Focus on Funds: Global Fund Operations Innovate to Meet Uncertain Times

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Fund operations had to adapt quickly to many challenges because of the global pandemic, including remote work environments. In the September 18, 2020, edition of *Focus on Funds*, Ahmed Elghazaly, ICI director of securities operations, discusses operational changes and what they mean for the future.

Transcript

Stephanie Ortals-Tibbs, ICI director of media relations: So many areas of the fund industry have responded to the global pandemic-related office shutdowns, and global operations has definitely been one of those that has seen many changes. Ahmed, as you think back on what the experience has been like, what are some of the key takeaways?

Ahmed Elghazaly, ICI director of securities operations: Well, in a very interconnected world, the pandemic has tested the business resiliency limits of funds, and the industry has responded well and adapted successfully.

Ortals-Tibbs: You've indicated to me that some of that comes down to the two Cs: communication and continuity.

Elghazaly: In terms of communication, it's the flavor of the day. Internal coordination and collaboration within operational centers around the world to support the funds' processing activities was key. Similarly, close communication with the funds' counterparties and their service providers was important to manage the increased volumes and the transition to the new remote work environment. There was also heightened focus on funds' business continuity and the ability to transfer work between different sites to support operations globally.

Ortals-Tibbs: One other tool in the toolbox over this time period has been trying to really smoothly transition from a lot of in-person interaction to more remote work.

Elghazaly: Funds used more collaboration platforms, implemented workflow tools, moved to electronic signatures and electronic delivery of funds' documents, and we've seen many capital markets move towards electronic copies of documents that open and operate trading accounts.

At the same time, we've seen changes in how funds conduct oversight of their service providers, replacing on-site visits with remote,

online due diligence visits.

Ortbals-Tibbs: There continues to be so much uncertainty. But as you look ahead, do you think a few things are clear about how global ops will go forward from here?

Elghazaly: Remote work is here to stay, and as folks have transitioned to working from home, we've seen a boom in productivity. For global operations staff, the main consideration should be how to maintain that productivity level while avoiding staff burnout. It is important to ensure flow of knowledge in the current remote environment, so firms are looking for ways to build formal knowledge management capabilities and are also assessing various tools needed to support the workforce of the future.

Additional Resources

- [ICI Resources for Business Continuity](#)
- [ICI Viewpoints: Operations Managers Identify Technology as Key to Future Success](#)
- [Focus on Funds: New Technology and New Trends Are Driving Fund Industry Change](#)
- [Focus on Funds: Fund Operations Is Changing Dramatically](#)
- [ICI Viewpoints: A New Benchmark for Distribution Oversight](#)

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