

CÁMARA DE COMERCIO PARAGUAYO-SUIZA

Managing the Swiss-Paraguayan Chamber of Commerce in Asunción: My experience

By Felix Hotz

Approximately one year and three weeks ago, I arrived in Asunción, the capital city of Paraguay, for my job as the Managing Director of the **Swiss-Paraguayan Chamber of Commerce**. Upon arrival, a lot of uncertainty was awaiting me. Firstly, because this was my first “real” job experience of my life, and secondly, because I knew little about the state of the Chamber of Commerce as well as about Paraguay itself, apart from the information you can find online.

As I started working, I quickly realized that I had been thrown in at the deep end and that I was facing a number of challenges. Without a President of the Chamber’s Board, but with the support of the Honorary Consul of Switzerland in Paraguay, the team of Switzerland Global Enterprise (S-GE) and the Swiss Embassy in Uruguay, I was able to realize a necessary restructuring of a big part of the Chamber’s structures and processes. After around three months of hard work, the result was a Chamber of Commerce with a solid base to continue on and for example completely revised accounting structures as well as a newly elected, engaged Board of Directors, including a proactive President of the Board.



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From here on, I was able to arrange and prioritize ideas more freely. For example, starting with the Swiss Innovation Week in August 2019 – together with strategic allies or alone – I organized, collaborated and sometimes also moderated monthly events and panel discussions mainly in the two strategic areas that we had defined: Innovation and Dual Education. As a further, central part for a development, I kept on strengthening the internal and external structures of the Chamber and worked on enlarging the membership base as well as the benefits available.

Until to the end of the year, the realized work led to a well-positioned, better-known and proactive Chamber of Commerce, which was collaborating with its strategic allies and representing the interests of Switzerland and its companies in Paraguay. The biggest final successes were the general state of the Chamber itself including the recruitment of a HSG-successor for my position, a growth from 11 to 19 members in only four months, a completely new website and last but not least, the inclusion of the Chamber into the National Committee for Dual Education in Paraguay. Furthermore, I also achieved my personal goal of having a 1 to 1 meeting in the Presidential Palace, which was an honor for me – as was all of my work in Paraguay and the resulting exchange with experienced businesspeople and senior officials.

It is hard to describe such an intense time as the time at the Chamber was and all the work processes involved in this rather short passage, but it is safe to say that working in Paraguay was one of the more challenging decisions of my life, but even more so rewarding through all the experiences and lessons I could live and learn.

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Panel and organizers of one of the events of the Swiss Innovation Week, August 2019, organized in collaboration with the Swiss Embassy in Uruguay. From left to right: **Sebastian Campos Cervera**, President of the Chamber of Commerce, **Santiago Llano**, Honorary Consul of Switzerland in Paraguay, **Martin Strub**, Swiss Ambassador for Uruguay and Paraguay, **Jorge Garcia**, CEO Gestecner, **Florencia Attademo Hirt**, IDB Representative for Paraguay, **Fernando Vallese**, Co-Founder of Po Paraguay, **Gabriela Gaona**, Director of Girls Code, **Philippe Nell**, Head of the Americas Division of SECO, **Martine de Kaenel**, Deputy Head of Mission Swiss Embassy in Uruguay, **Felix Hotz**, Managing Director of the Chamber of Commerce.