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Regional Report

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2015 is an election year in Argentina. The citizens of this country are electing their leaders at municipal, provincial and national levels. The general election of Buenos Aires City Mayor and Deputy City Mayor that took place on July 5th, in the first round and the runoff between the top two candidates, on 19th July. It has been a novelty, because for first time, the electronic voting has been used in this jurisdiction, using the unique electronic ballot system.

The unique electronic ballot system is an innovative electronic system for selecting candidates through a touch screen and then printing the own ballot of the voter while recording information in an RFID (Radio Frequency Identification chip) inserted in it, so the scrutiny can be counted quickly, by reading the chip.

To carry out this important project, the Government of the Buenos Aires City has hired the company MSA Group (http://www.msa.com.ar/) for its experience in electoral processes. MSA is characterized by the generation of "Unconventional Software for mission-critical processes" and it main activity includes solutions for electoral processes by using technology.

President and CEO of MSA Group, Mr. Sergio Osvaldo Angelini, told us about this important project and mentioned that, due to MSA has been responsible for several ballots in municipal and provincial elections since 1999, it has been discussed for a long time the need to use technology to facilitate the electoral process, ensure transparency and speed up the scrutiny.

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(Photo: vot.ar machine and unique electronic single)

"In some countries this system has been implemented, but in Argentina it was not approved because all the information would only be registered electronically, and without the chance to audit and to validate the vote physically", says Angelini.

Due to this weakness, MSA has developed a technology through which the voting machine called "vot.ar" (www.votar.com.ar) does not store the information of the vote but it records and prints it in the ballot, and records a chip with the same information of the ballot.

The voter can validate both data, the printed information and the recorded in the chip, and only then inserts the ballot in the ballot box. With this system, the physical support of the vote is maintained, idem to the traditional manual voting system. So, the process continues being similar to the traditional process, as the support of the physical ballot is nowadays, but through this new technology the weakness was attacked.

MSA has provided this system since 2004 to several cities of the country, but it could be said that the most important experience has been developed in the province of Salta, which has gradually incorporated this "vot.ar" technology from the year 2009, initially

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covering only a small percentage of the electorate, and increasing the scope every year up to the elections of 2013 to 100% of the whole electorate. The authorities of Buenos Aires City have observed this electoral process, and later the City's legislature has approved the law that supported the electronic voting in the elections.

(Photo: President and CEO of MSA Group, Mr. Sergio Osvaldo Angelini)

The main challenge of this project, as mentioned Angelini, has to do with the large size of inhabitants in the City of Buenos Aires, which exceeds the 2.5 million voters. "Compared with the province of Salta, 100% of the scrutiny was carried out at 2,800 polling stations, while in Buenos Aires the amount of tables amounted to 7,500," said Angelini. "The elections in Buenos Aires were held in 811 schools and 2,300 trained technicians were allocated to support the 15,000 real-time table authorities". "This process involved a major human resources management, including recruitment, training and development." "Another critical aspect was the management for the cultural change and to convince the voters to adopt the new system. To make this happened, a training program for the voters was implemented, distributing over 1,000 equipment in different

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places of the city, including shopping centers and schools, and the knowledge of the system was promoted through websites and social networks, also extending this training to people with reduced visual capabilities" said Angelini.

(Photo: vot.ar machine used for school´s training)

As we know, a project of this magnitude requires strict risk management control. Asked about this topic, Sergio Angelini says that "Due to MSA has developed similar projects in the recent years, most of the risks are already known, and have been developed the routines for each one of the processes that trigger problem. For example, add Angelini, concerning the risk of problems in communications between centers, 4 models of contingent actions are contemplated and they shoot one after another.

Each of the processes, which by the way are defined and certified under the ISO 9001-2008 standards, has its own list of risks, contingency actions and divert indicators for decision-making. "

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"However, the technical risks are not the most complicated part. The most difficult risks to solve are those related with the commercial and economic management for public administration projects, where often the payments are delayed, generating difficulties in facing the significant costs involved in the projects"- explains the President of MSA Group.

"One of the lessons learned from this experience is related to our country's restrictions on imports and subsequently to make payments to suppliers of goods purchased abroad," comments Angelini. At this point, Mr. Angelini has clarified that all technology is designed in Argentina, and although most of the components are imported, also the assembly of the machines is done in the country. But still, it has been very difficult to obtain approval to import components that are not produced in the country.

"For projects of this magnitude, it is essential ensure the commitment of the various stakeholders in order to facilitate the success of the project," added Sergio Angelini.

"But the best lesson we learned - Sergio Angelini concludes - is to know that everything you propose, when working with seriousness and professionalism, you can achieve it".

"This year there will be voting with the unique electronic ballot system 12% of the Argentine electorate, approximately 3.2 million (three hundred billion) Argentines, considering all the elections in which we operate. In numerical terms, the total sum of votes with MSA system during 2015 will be approximately 7.5 million (seven million and a half), considering the primaries and general elections in Salta, Buenos Aires City, Neuquén. City of San Luis, Province of Chaco and other smaller municipalities.

"With this project we also learned that we must not stop dreaming!" said Angelini.

I thank Mr. Sergio Osvaldo Angelini for his kindness in giving me information of this important project.

For more information about Election 2015 Buenos Aires follow this link: http://www.buenosaires.gob.ar/justiciayseguridad/elecciones

Additionally, I´d like to remember you that there are interesting events been developed in Argentine PMI Chapters, and that it is open the call for submissions for the International Congress PMI Tour Buenos Aires 2015.

See the information in the link.

For information about local events project management, I suggest to enter the sites PMI **Buenos Aires Argentina Chapter** *website* and **PMI Nuevo Cuyo Argentina Chapter** *website*.

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Cecilia Boggi, PMP is founder and Executive Director of activePMO, giving consulting services and training in Project Management and Leadership skills in Argentina and Latin America.

After graduating with a degree in Computer Science Engineering from Universidad de Buenos Aires, Argentina, she has managed software development projects and PMO implementation projects for more than 20 years both in the government and private sector. Cecilia also has graduated from an Executive Program in Business Management at Universidad del CEMA. She holds the Project Management Professional (PMP®) credential since 2003, is certified as SDI Facilitator from Personal Strengths© and is alumni of the PMI Leadership Institute Master Class 2012. Ms. Boggi is Past President of the PMI Buenos Aires Argentina Chapter, and is a founding member of the PMI Nuevo Cuyo Chapter and PMI Santa Cruz Bolivia Chapter. She has been designated by PMI in the role of Mentor of Region 13, Latin America South, for the years 2014-2016. Cecilia has participated in the development of PMBOK® Guide 5th Edition, leading the Chapter 9, Human Resource Management, content team and she is professor of Project Management in some Universities and Institutes in Argentina, Chile, Peru and Bolivia.

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