





WORLD GATE

Service with Security

Text by *Ian Gregory*

►► **WorldGate Express Services is certainly no novice in the total logistics arena. The multi certified and award-winning brand is a one-stop logistics company which has years of experience applying organic and practical creativity in its quest to develop optimal operations and logistics solutions. The brand's in-depth industry knowledge and seasoned technical capabilities empower it to implement the most advanced supply chain solutions in use today.**

The company's *Vision*, 'Aspiring to Be the Leading Supply Chain Provider in the ASEAN Region' is reinforced by the fact that the brand is staffed by dedicated and hardworking professionals who have both have the perpetual drive and intrinsic knowledge to succeed in the company's aim of providing a friendly and personalized service.

In a business that revolves closely around people, the long-term goal of *WorldGate* is to provide a global presence in all spectrums of logistic solutions with total visibility across

the entire supply chain. To achieve said mission/vision, the brand has aligned a strong and integrated business centric with people at its heart. The company provides a host of logistical solutions. With its core competence in freight management, WorldGate offers a wide range of services which enable its customers to outsource their non-core operations confidently, including:

- International air and sea freight forwarding
- Customs brokerage
- Warehousing and distribution services
- Supply chain management services
- Multimodal transport
- Chartering of aircraft, vessels, tugs and barges
- Trucking and logistics services
- Project cargo handling
- Value-added services



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Looking Back

When asked on what inspired him to venture into this line of business initially, Ronald C. S. Lee responded that he started very young in this line of business; in fact, it was his first job after leaving school – summing it up as the world that he has known for almost three decades.

“Back when I began, little was known about freight forwarding, not to mention the word ‘logistics;’” he recalls with a reflective smile.

Today, the field is complex and has developed by leaps and bounds. *WorldGate* has organically evolved with the changes and trends.

Lee served in a big Taiwanese freight forwarding company for seven and half years, during a booming period when the influx of Taiwanese gave the niche business a break in the industry. In 1999, he triumphantly moved on to form his present-day company and considers himself truly lucky to start in the industry early because he had the blessed opportunity to grow and mature together with the trade. Initially focusing on the customs and delivery aspects of shipping, he considers himself fortunate to have seen his company grow from 13 to over 200 staff and the brand is an integral part of his life.

When asked on why the mission statement, ‘Service with Security’, was chosen, and whether the brand has lived up to it, Lee answered, “It is an important factor in this industry which has undoubtedly evolved very rapidly. There is good reason why we have been chosen by numerous clients in the electronics and semiconductor industries. In the past, about 14-15 years ago, ‘Service with Security’ quite literally meant ‘armed services’, including armoured trucks and armed guards. Nowadays, cargo containers and goods are being outfitted with GPS, satellite tracking, panic button, and etc. The business has evolved to include the recovery of lost/stolen goods as well. In fact, we have our own professional recovery team which is highly efficient. We also specialize in the area of recovery and look in to all kinds of mismanagement. I can proudly say we have lived up to the mission.”

Concerning his view on whether the ‘Asian culture’ of building business through the fostering of relationships has affected or interfered with the company’s KPIs in a significant way, Lee states that solidifying trust, relationship and respect are key. Relationship, in his view, is everything. There is an unsaid beauty in the mutual respect for one another; including heeding the gravity of colleagues’ decisions. The culture of trust is



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vital. Human capital, particularly growing and harnessing talent, is pivotal. It is important for the industry players to get involved in training for the future and promotes the 'succession plan' in his company; which is the inter-generational transfer of expertise or know-how from the older generation of workers to the younger ones; which he believes is the secret to success.

Younger family members can take over from the older ones smoothly, preserving the cumulative knowledge of the old in the light and dynamism of the new.

“Part of our business plan is to grow talent. Today, it is all about the knowledge industry and harnessing talent is certainly not a one-day job,” he remarks thoughtfully.

In a way, the brand champion is of the view that this delivers KPIs, instead of hampering them, as this approach to business is more holistic and reiterates that trust is vital on the whole.

Current Light

One of the appealing factors about the services *WorldGate* provides in this turbulent economic climate is the affordable cost of packages offered. At a time when the price of everything seems to be escalating, the company is asked on how it intends to keep its costing down to stay competitive. Lee asserts that cost reduction is part and parcel of the current economic world. He relates how value is key in business today; and value is both benefit and price. He envisions that the trend is moving away from a supply-driven industry into one that is demand-driven. Intelligent pricing, with added value will enable the organization to survive the global economic crisis.

When asked if he, as an unbiased customer, would employ the company's services and why, Lee responds in the positive. The reasoning he gives is the establishment started off and developed quite differently from others. There are people that have been with the organization for so long; as such, the employees are experienced, with over 20 invaluable years in the industry.

"Their hands-on experience, coupled by sound technical know-how, gives me great confidence in the service-provider outfit. I also can attest that the company is not benchmarked with local, but global standards. In today's climate, where customer's expectations are seemingly endless, benchmarking oneself with the international plane is the best way to go," he asserts.

Forwarding Ahead

Concerning the future expansion of the brand, Lee who always aims for the stars, responds, "For 2014, it will no doubt be a challenging year. Despite the further global economic slowdown, the organization remains optimistic. It has suitable expansion plans in place, including branching further out to Jakarta, London, Europe and the US. The company will keep its eye on UK as well because it is an important gateway in the industry."

An advocate of 'borderless decisions' as trade networks extend well beyond the confines of Malaysia, Lee's benchmark is nothing less than that of global standards, which is comparatively miles apart from most Malaysian

logistics providers who tend to look locally. He says that since decisions are being made outside the country, one must know international market trends to become a regional player. *WorldGate* is one of the very few to have a global network and smart partnerships.

"We need to think globally, but act locally," Lee expounds, "Malaysia is still lagging behind; a gauge of this is the flight connection delays experienced at local airports. It is important for industry players to get involved in training to ensure the stability of the future, one which is successive to continue the business.

Lee mentioned that *WorldGate* is more 'realistic' in its approach to logistics.

"That is the difference between our logistics company and others. When approaching customers, we first look at the most difficult, tricky or challenging part of the whole picture. Sometimes, our competitors tend to over-exaggerate on the external, for instance a gym for the staff or a fancy pantry in the office. Here at *WorldGate* our focus goes well beyond structural wonders. We believe in branding. We would also like to stress that the importance of core values cannot be undermined; for loyal and experienced staff ultimately develop the strength of the company."

In terms of how the sector can be further improved in the nation, Lee is of the opinion, "The Government has to play a more significant role, particularly in the propagation of technology. As knowledge is power (and ultimately control), locals tend to lose out a lot in the long run when they remain indifferent to change. More often than not, Malaysians are not willing to learn and master the trade in order to progress with the times. In the shipping industry, the loss is incalculably great as technology is consequently outsourced or left in the hands of foreign experts in the face of local apathy towards acquiring new skill sets. Malaysians must be willing to embrace change and move with times. No society that is reluctant to learn will prosper and move forward in life."

"Another main problem we are facing is the "brain drain" phenomenon - where local experts are leaving the country and all those years of experience and know-how is suddenly lost from our shores. This regressive mindset

ultimately means loss of control - and of a lot of money in shipping as well. As local players who want to bring the industry to the next level, we most definitely require more proactive help from the government."

When asked on his advice to the younger generation, he urges young entrepreneurs to be 'up to the task'.

"As ASEAN grows, we need to have the younger generation fill up the gaps. By learning from what has negatively transpired in countries such as Singapore, the next generation of citizens should be willing to pick up from where the previous or current generation leaves off, disallowing a lacuna to form. These days, it is rather difficult to find capable staff to handle even the most junior of positions, more so from home-grown denizens," says Lee.

WorldGate welcomes new employees who are seeking a long-term carrier in the organization. Successful candidates can look forward to growing, not only for themselves personally, but successively/generationally. In order to ensure this ongoing spirit of learning, the staff is continually sent abroad to gain more exposure in the industry - including better understanding in select sectors; for example in areas concerning shippers, consignees, market and conference; in tandem with the standards and requirements of WTO, ASEAN, FTA and various other frameworks.

Where ASEAN is concerned, his view is that, "Do not underestimate business in ASEAN; for not many realize that although the size of ASEAN is half that of China's population, it has twice the buying power of the latter."

When asked if he would be keen to be called as an expert who has been through the mill to give talks at the universities, he says that he may consider the offer when the time comes, depending on his availability and ability to free his tight schedule.

"If time permits, it will indeed be very interesting to share the knowledge and expound on the actual nature of the business - predominantly changing the pre-existing perspective concerning how the public views the industry as a whole," he responds with an enthusiastic smile.





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