

Case

A partnership built on shared ambitions and values

16 Apr, 2025 | Share ➦



Gabriel Carvalho CEO SGL Brazil

In September 2024, Blu Logistics Brasil (Blu) joined SGL as part of its ambitious growth strategy and expansion into Latin America, strengthening its presence in the region's largest economy. Founded by CEO Gabriel Carvalho in 2013, Blu has grown into one of Brazil's leading freight forwarders and the second largest in ocean freight imports, boasting impressive growth rates of 27% and 47% in the last two years alone and employing over 200 people across eight offices. For Gabriel, finding the right partner wasn't just about expanding into new markets; it was about preserving the company's identity, keeping its people-centric approach and customers close while unlocking new opportunities as part of something bigger. In the following, he reflects on the journey from when it all began.

*A cultural fit is pivotal to any acquisition,' Gabriel begins. 'We needed a company that matched our operational expertise and shared our customer-centric and solution-driven approach. We found that match with SGL.'*

To understand the depth of the DNA match, one must understand the journey of Gabriel and Blu.

A journey from salesman to industry leader

Gabriel's logistics journey began in 2008 as a young salesman in northeastern Brazil. This is where he met his future co-founder of the company. *'We thought, why not open our own company? I could handle the north, and he could care for the south and southeast. That way, we could cover more customers.'*

However, launching just another freight forwarder wouldn't suffice. *'If we were going to compete with the global companies, we needed something different.'* After meeting the business owner of Blu Logistics, which had operations in Colombia and Mexico but none in Brazil, governed by the entrepreneurial mindset and can-do-attitude shared by SGL, they decided to leap: *'Let's open in Brazil together.'* Blu Logistics Brasil launched in 2013 and quickly expanded to China, strengthening its supply chain and supplier relationships.

By 2019, Blu Logistics Brasil had emerged as the largest market within the group. However, Gabriel recognised the challenges of operating in a loosely connected network with differing company cultures and methodologies. He realised that to scale sustainably, a partnership with a global company sharing Blu's values of a local approach was the future.

Looking for the right partner

Gabriel had seen too many acquisitions where local businesses lost their identity and teams were left behind. *'We didn't want to be just another number, where big companies take over, and everything becomes robotic.'* He started looking for global companies that lacked a presence in Brazil. SGL was one of them. *'At first, I didn't know much about SGL, but I kept seeing Allan's name in industry news, acquisition announcements, and stories about its rapid growth'*. He continues: *'What stood out to me was that, despite expanding quickly, SGL kept its original partners involved. That was exactly what I was looking for.'* He found Allan's LinkedIn profile and sent the message that would become the beginning of one of SGL's most significant acquisitions so far: *'Hi, I'm local - I want to be global. Can we talk?'*

Global growth without losing identity

Choosing the right partner goes beyond the numbers; it is about values, trust, the future of the team and ensuring customers feel secure during the transition. Gabriel would engage the latter early in the process, and their response was unequivocal: *'If this enhances your reach and competitiveness, go for it. We'll support you.'* On top of that, his team was worried that they would lose their jobs. Would everything they built disappear? *'I told them, 'No. SGL is different.'*

From the beginning, the transparency reassured him. *'When I first spoke to Allan, I didn't even need to explain my concerns; he understood. He had seen companies like ours struggle to integrate.'* What set SGL apart was its people-centric approach, making it clear that a future with SGL would enable Gabriel and his team to grow even further in Brazil. *'That's when I knew this was the right match. It wasn't just a deal but an opportunity to build something bigger without leaving my people behind or losing our company identity.'*

Results are already showing a promising future

As the integration of the two companies is well underway, results have already shown. Accessing SGL's extensive global network immediately unlocked new business opportunities, especially with inbound trade from Asia.

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Can we talk?

By leveraging the cross-regional expertise of the China team, they secured a transport of 6000 vehicles for BYD, a leading automotive company. In addition, doors have opened for greater collaboration within Latin America and North America and expanded trade opportunities with Europe as they receive requests from global accounts to handle their goods.

For Gabriel, success is not just a seamless integration; it's merging growth ambitions with the personalised service and trust that have built the company thus far. *'I want us to be a reference point in Brazil, not only for ocean freight but for all logistics services — and the only global company here that makes customers feel as if they are working with a local business.'*

He finishes on a confident note: *'I wanted to continue to build the business as a part of a larger company. Now, we are, but we can still do things our way. It's the best of both worlds.'* The future looks promising.

Headquarter

Jernholmen 49, 2650 Hvidovre  
Denmark  
Tel +45 32 48 00 00  
Fax +45 32 48 01 01

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