

Mr Sivaswamy Mahesh

Chairman & CEO, Transworld Group Singapore & Managing Director, BLPL Singapore Pte. Ltd.
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Act decisively to ride the waves of change

‘Action without delay’ has been a mantra for Mr Sivaswamy Mahesh, Chairman of Transworld Group Singapore and Managing Director of BLPL Singapore Pte. Ltd. (BLPL), over the last decade and a half. In that time, he has transformed BLPL into a total logistics solutions provider with a growing fleet of 25,000 Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit (TEU)s across 80 ports in 25 countries. BLPL offers services in the Indian subcontinent, South Asia, the Far East, the Middle East, Upper Gulf and East Africa. This is a far cry from its beginnings as a small shipping liner plying only a single route.

“That mantra was something that my father used to say in reference to his success, and served as a great inspiration to me,” Mr Mahesh explains. Indeed, BLPL’s conception was thanks to Mr Mahesh’s quick wit and even quicker actions. His enterprise began in early 2000 when he spotted an opportunity to commence a transport service for a global shipping line, plying a route from Singapore to Bangladesh. Despite having only a single route, Mr Mahesh demonstrated full commitment and delivered quality service. His efforts were validated and trade progressed.

Two years later, he saw a chance to expand the business and purchased his own container vessels. That decision left him well poised to capitalise on the shipping boom in 2005. “That was the time when the order books of shipyards worldwide were full for the next 10 years,” he says. “It gave us the confidence to grow at a steady pace to a position of prominence in our area of operations.” BLPL’s upwards trajectory continued as it clocked 100 per cent growth year on year on a consistent basis.

However, Mr Mahesh was not one to settle. Once his core business was experiencing robust growth, he decided to diversify into cargo services, and subsequently, logistics. Through it all, he kept in mind his father’s wisdom about acting decisively and on time. “From a humble beginning, we were able to grow by identifying niche industries and deploying services in challenging ports that are often fraught with heavy restrictions and operational issues,” he says.

Being focussed and hands-on also enabled him to quickly spot potential market gaps that could be filled by BLPL. “Opportunities can only be created if you have a positive attitude, a firm belief that you can convert that opportunity into a need and the tenacity to keep trying until you achieve it,” he asserts. Today, BLPL is a major force to be reckoned with.

But such progression was no one-man feat. “Our team is the driving force for our growth,” says Mr Mahesh. Even in his staff management, he strives to incorporate his late father’s advice. He adopts a flat and open-door culture



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to facilitate quick decision making. “Employees are encouraged to speak up without being encumbered by hierarchies and bureaucracies,” he says. “This open environment facilitates knowledge development and sharing amongst our employees across levels.” Values such as mutual respect, trust and openness, service, excellence and customer orientation form the core of BLPL’s company culture. With this basis in place, BLPL is able to plan, communicate and work as a team to achieve the common goals of the organisation.

In view of the shipping industry’s current challenges, such a strategy is essential to ensuring BLPL’s sustainability in years to come. A highly volatile market, increasing charter prices and falling freight rates are some of the issues that Mr Mahesh is presently faced with. But he is no stranger to overcoming obstacles and takes these developments in his stride. He points



to the lack of publicly accessible data on the market size of the industry as a significant challenge when he first charted BLPL’s footprint in countries such as the Indian subcontinent, the Middle East and East Africa. However, the company has reported a healthy revenue and throughput growth over the years. “BLPL’s competitive edge,” he says, “lies in our dedicated commitment towards our customers, unwavering focus on maintaining a high level of adaptability towards the changing market conditions and our emphasis on strategic business development both internally and externally.”

Armed with these focussed strategies, he already has a plan of action to hand. He entered new markets in Vietnam and Indonesia in 2014 and has recently ventured into Thailand. “The experience so far has been good as we are working closely with IE Singapore in setting up our operations in these countries,” he shares.

Such cooperation is something that Mr Mahesh plans to work on developing further. “In today’s climate, you can no longer go ahead and tackle a problem alone,” he comments. “Synergy is the key word moving ahead.” With his strong team, together with the various partnerships that he has been able to forge over the years, Mr Mahesh looks set to grow BLPL even further.

“It is through this synergy,” he says, “that I can stand here today and confidently say that we will continue to ride on the waves of the stormy seas.”

