

# Bringing agility to logistics

By TAREK SULTAN

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TAREK SULTAN

has a Masters in Business Administration from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and a Bachelor of Arts in Economics from Williams College. He acts as an advisor to the Singapore Economic Development Board, and sits on Wharton's International Advisory Council. Mr Sultan also sits on the regional board of Junior Achievement (Injaz), which provides youth in the Middle East with opportunities to learn entrepreneurial skills.

In November 2012, we celebrated the sixth anniversary of our "Agility" brand. For a young company, we have had a phenomenal journey so far. We have integrated over forty logistics companies into our network and expanded from a regional presence into a global leader operating in over one hundred countries, and grown from under 1,000 employees to over 22,000 in 500 offices around the world.

Agility is one of the world's leading providers of integrated logistics and brings efficiency to supply chains in some of the globe's most challenging environments, offering unmatched personal service, a global footprint and customised capabilities in developed and developing economies alike.

A publicly traded company with US\$4.8 billion in revenue, our core commercial business, Global Integrated Logistics (GIL), provides supply chain solutions to meet traditional and complex customer needs. Global Integrated Logistics offers air, ocean and road freight forwarding, warehousing and distribution. We also offer specialised services in project logistics, fairs and events, and chemicals.

Our Infrastructure group of companies manages industrial real estate and also offers logistics-related services, including e-government customs optimisation and consulting, waste management and recycling. We also offer aviation and ground-handling services, support to governments and ministries of defence, remote infrastructure and life support.

We have gone from a local warehousing company in the State of Kuwait, to the largest logistics and transportation company in the Middle East in just over 10 years. We are now a global top 15 industry leader. Moreover, we are one of the few industry leaders with roots outside Europe and the United States.

The logistics industry is evolving to meet the constantly changing demands of global trade. Emerging markets around the world are only increasing in importance while risk management is becoming an important part of standard supply chain planning. There is also a growing emphasis on sustainability amongst the world's largest companies.

In many ways, Agility's story is in itself a reflection of these trends. The company's growth mirrors the rising role of emerging markets in the global economy. Risk management in challenging

environments such as Iraq and Papua New Guinea, which has long been one of our unique differentiators, is now becoming increasingly important in the core commercial business.

We see this as an especially exciting opportunity for Agility in the coming years. We have invested billions of dollars to build assets that make us a logistics leader in the Middle East, the Asia Pacific region, Latin America, Eastern Europe and Africa.

Thus we are really well placed not only to help those companies expand into markets where growth will be strongest but also to support companies from emerging markets as they grow into regional and international players. This is something we have been doing most recently with a major retail outlet in the Middle East.

As a company we also have a long-term commitment to the communities we serve and to our planet. Today, we deploy our logistics expertise, global network and multicultural workforce to provide humanitarian disaster relief, support employee-led community programs and improve sustainability of our own and customers' operations.

Since 2006, we have used our logistics expertise in challenging environments to support disaster response operations in Haiti, Chile, Myanmar, China, Indonesia, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Japan.

To date, we have invested in more than 600 community projects in 67 countries, helping over 600,000 people on the ground with some form of service activity.

We also recognise the importance of developing strong, ethical relationships with local authorities and gaining insights into regulations and rules that govern business. Good relationships with local suppliers allow us to scale up and scale out to meet changing customer needs without taking on added cost or affecting performance.

We understand the value of a greener environment and we work closely with our customers, employees, industry partners and NGOs to build more sustainable supply chains and mitigate the environmental impact of our operations.

And as we continue to grow as a leader in the emerging markets around the world, we look forward to leading the way in bringing more *agility* to logistics. ■