

Case

SGL humanises acquisitions

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Mark Talbot, Managing Director UK & IE

In 2021, we acquired Horizon International. With 41 years of industry experience, Mark Talbot, CEO of the UK and Ireland pre- and post the merger, has experienced acquisitions from the inside before. 'I've seen how not to do it', he says without hesitating, 'and now I've seen how to get it right'.

A cultural fit is pivotal to any acquisition we make. So, one of the first actions during due diligence was for the senior management to voluntarily perform an anonymous psychological test to assess the level of matching virtues and values. The fundamental similarities found ensured a smooth integration of the 150 staff in five countries.



Mark Talbot, Managing Director UK & IE. Photo: Private photo

How does the larger scale affect business opportunities?

'We are now talking with larger and more diverse types of customers, including new verticals and markets, which has tremendously increased our sales pipeline potential. As a result of these new opportunities, we have substantially increased the size and depth of our commercial team.'



One of the most rewarding aspects of the acquisition has been seeing the number of staff who have personally grown and benefitted from the new opportunities which come with the bigger business.

'Additionally, the calibre of people we can now attract in certain positions has increased, as well as the opportunities we can offer to retain our team members, which is a crucial pillar in our growth ambitions. Our people are our greatest asset.'

What is the most significant difference in daily business since the merger?

'Many of our customers have more and more complex supply chains. They look for people who have the time to understand their most pressing challenges and the expertise to deliver effective solutions anywhere in the world. With our much greater scope, we bring a powerful proposition that underpins how we help un-complicate their world through our proven global services.'

'Significantly we are now part of a worldwide network enabling us to provide enhanced capabilities, offer new gateways and more comprehensive customer solutions, which we could not do as comprehensively before.'

Why was the acquisition so successful?

'The strength of our virtues aligned to those of Horizon made it clear from an early stage that the fit felt right. Throughout the discussions, the management team were accessible, involved, and transparent in their communication, which made people feel comfortable and part of the journey. In that sense, SGL humanises acquisitions. The priority was to make sure that our customers were happy and not unsettled by the acquisition, and because of the personal approach, it was the case.'



All customers have stayed on board. The initial overlap in DNA is the driver behind our success today. I'd say the acquisition was a 10 out of 10. We haven't had a single colleague leave because of the acquisition neither. I think that says it all.

How would you describe your meeting with the SGL spirit?

'If SGL were a person, I'd describe it as a very grounded, humble person who knows who it is and, importantly, what it wants to be. It also knows it needs to keep evolving and staying curious.'

'The company is global but maintains the flexibility of a small-company mentality, which positively empowers countries and regions to be entrepreneurial and create unique solutions.'

'The headquarter supports, never dictates, which is a refreshing approach, breeding confidence and a will to do one's best.'

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