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SAFETY First

Westlink Rail is the only company solely dedicated to international rolling-stock logistics. Combine that with a 100-per-cent safety record and unrivalled experience in difficult, remote areas, and the organisation is well placed for success.

Images by David Phillips

As a specialised logistics provider to the global rail industry, Westlink Rail is widely recognised as a leader in its field. The business is dedicated to providing safe, end-to-end solutions that add value for its clients. David Lucido took on the role of CEO at Westlink Rail late last year. He says he recognised that there was a “very strong” platform for growth, and wanted to be a part of the company’s successful evolution. David’s professional background spans more than 20 years working in large technical and industrial organisations, including a number of multinational Fortune 500 companies.

“I was helping multinationals with go-to-market strategy and business development,” David explains. “Working across a range of sectors, from pharmaceuticals and life sciences to financial services and manufacturing, provides quite a broad background to draw from.” It has also included mining and oil and gas experience. “About six or so years ago, I returned to Perth and was employed by one of the

large global engineering companies to head up business development and strategy. I spent a couple of years in the space, and really saw that there was a huge problem in relation to the delivery schedules of multibillion-dollar mega projects being impacted by woefully inadequate, often non-existent, infrastructure in remote areas.

“I’m sure most people are familiar with some of the very big projects in Western Australia and around the world in remote areas such as in Africa, Brazil, and parts of South-East Asia. They’re typically located in the middle of nowhere—there is no rail, no roads, no airports, and no ports. That really helped me to focus on developing some ideas, and eventually solutions, around remote and difficult logistics, particularly in relation to mining and energy projects. When I was offered a position at Westlink Rail, it was quite an exciting opportunity for me to be able to bring those insights to a great company that has been delivering successfully for over 20 years. I have come in on the back of that success to develop the company’s global opportunities.”

While still quite new to the role, David has a strong vision for the future of Westlink Rail. He says the most important thing is to get the strategic focus right. To do this, he has spent time understanding the company’s capabilities, looking at various market segments, and then identifying where the company could ‘play to win’. “One area where we have an unrivalled track record is in the delivery of heavy-haul locomotives and rolling stock. No other company has moved as many heavy-haul locomotives or wagons as Westlink Rail. So that is where we are focusing our marketing efforts and investing in our global delivery capabilities.

“We’ve been servicing Australia’s biggest mining companies safely for many years now, so the expertise and safety culture developed in the Pilbara is really what we are leveraging in terms of growing our global presence. We want to export the success that we have had here in Western Australia internationally—the intellectual property, the unique systems, and project management techniques that we have developed. Working with heavy over-dimensional loads is >



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inherently risky. What we are able to do is reduce risks while at the same time achieving cost savings of between 12 and 15 per cent. It's a compelling offer that's fast gaining traction around the world.

"We are seeing some quite significant increases in demand for our services, and we are backing this up by investing heavily in building our internal capabilities—our systems and our people, with the training required—to make sure that we can offer our new clients the same level of service that our long-term clients are used to. We then want to keep pushing and innovating through thought leadership in what is quite a mature industry. It's about the right focus, applied with discipline, to consistently exceed client expectations. Things don't always go perfectly to plan, but if you speak with our clients or contractors, Westlink people are known for going the extra mile to get the job done—it's part of our DNA."

Technology is an important element of Westlink Rail's operations and can be found at every level of the business. From planning loads to financial analysis and asset tracking, it plays a crucial role in multi-mode supply-chain management and is embraced. David says he has an

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- David Lucido

extremely strong and effective IT team that keeps Westlink Rail at the forefront of new tools and innovative technologies.

The business also leads the way with its 100-per-cent track-safety record. While executing very complex and difficult deliveries, David is proud to say, there has not been one lost-time injury or safety incident in the work environment. "There are a number of systems, policies, and management plans in place that are dedicated to safety culture and governance, but, more importantly, it is something that we really work on as a philosophy. Everybody understands the need to take responsibility for their safety and for their co-workers' safety, whether they are in an office or on site. We have well-structured programs, but the reality is that unless people take personal responsibility and are aware of and alert to the inherent risks of the job, accidents can occur."

As well as safety, other core values that are paramount in the business include integrity and trust, service excellence, and teamwork. These values are inherently family orientated and relate to people, whether they be staff, customers, clients, suppliers, or partners. "We pursue and enjoy long-term relationships," David says. "Every relationship is built on trust. We are about making

sure that everybody understands our program, and, most importantly, the clients' drivers and priorities—because that is key. It's not really about us; it's about looking after our clients. By understanding what the client is actually driving at and what their priorities are, then we can align ourselves and our capabilities to meet their needs most efficiently. We include our suppliers in that because we just see them as an extension of ourselves. Our long-term relationships provide a very strong platform to build on, and they differentiate Westlink. What we are looking to do now is take our unique recipe for success, which has been a winning formula in Australia, and export it internationally."

Westlink Rail has a budget that is allocated specifically to the ongoing training and development of its staff. Employees at every stage of the business are given opportunities to find what they are really passionate about and what areas they are most suited to. From his experience, David believes that the best thing is to encourage people to believe in themselves and to have the confidence to back themselves. "We give people the chance to extend themselves, and if they want to try something a little bit different, we are open to that and are supportive; however, if it's not yielding results, we are firm believers in creating a safe 'fast fail' environment. We encourage innovation at every level and make sure that we continually reinvest in our people. We're all about building a confident team of people driven by a common purpose to serve. Innovative solutions and success in the marketplace will be a by-product."

With its specialised area of expertise in rolling-stock logistics, strong track record in safety, and unequalled experience in difficult and remote locations, Westlink Rail is in a position to achieve great things under the direction of David as CEO. He has reined in the focus of the business to really recognise and concentrate on its strengths, and is now looking to export that still leading the way in Australia. •