



CLARIDON

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**Interview with Vincent Miles,
S.E Asia Sales and Development Manager, Claridon Myanmar**

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Tell me about Claridon Myanmar.

Claridon Myanmar Co., Ltd. are a Global Logistics Supply Chain Provider and wholly owned by Claridon Group Ltd in the UK. Claridon Myanmar Co Ltd are the first privately owned British company and first European Global Logistics provider to set up in Myanmar. We operate a range of multimodal import and export logistic services to various industry sectors, including Oil and Gas, Aerospace, Pharma and Healthcare, Automotive and Heavy Plant and Construction. Outside of our logistic activities we work closely with national and regional Chambers of Commerce to promote trade and investment opportunities in Myanmar for British business. We also hold a seat on the British Chambers of Commerce International Advisory Council with a particular mandate to promote Myanmar.

Why did Claridon choose to set up in Myanmar in 2013?

We saw a great opportunity to establish ourselves in this exciting economy and position ourselves as the leading European Global Logistics Provider.

As the first wholly owned European Logistics Company in Myanmar – what was your experience of setting up the company in Myanmar in 2013?

It was incredibly challenging and the most difficult venture we have ever embarked on. Five decades of military rule had taken its toll on the country and its infrastructure and impacted quite significantly on daily life and the things we taken for granted, such as efficient transport networks and communications systems. It was a case of getting on with it, learning from our mistakes and not getting demoralized – which to be honest was easier said than done.

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What kind of support and advice did you receive locally?

When we set up in 2013, UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) at the British Embassy gave us practical support, such as market intelligence, advice in setting up Claridon Myanmar and sourcing reliable English speaking lawyers and accountants. They also provided advice on financial matters and office availability. We also received some advice from the Myanmar Government and Myanmar Embassy in London, and in return wrote a number of White papers on modernising the logistics and transport industry for them. The Myanmar Government assisted in our physical application of forming Claridon Myanmar and ensured that the process went through quickly and without any delays. The Myanmar Government also arranged appointments with key Ministers and distinguished business leaders connected to the shipping & logistics industry and also publically stated how pleased they were to see a privately owned British company setting up in Myanmar. We have maintained a very good relationship with the Myanmar Government and believe this is in part due to the fact we were not dissuaded by the risk of setting up in this new emerging economy and were prepared to invest in the economy where other European countries at the time were not.

To what extent is the infrastructure an obstacle to logistics operations in the country (sea, air, surface)?

Things are slowly improving but the main obstacles we have to deal with are the outdated and often complex customs regulations, poor road networks, especially outside of Yangon, insufficient capacity at Yangon International airport and port congestion.

How do you overcome these infrastructure challenges?

It's case of understanding and accepting the challenges and turning these into advantages by finding cost effective solutions where other logistics company either can't or don't want to.

What potential does Myanmar have to become a regional shipping hub?

With the right investment and infrastructure, Myanmar could position itself a transshipment hub and compete against the ports of Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. In fact these were some of the discussions we had in Naypyidaw with the Transport Minister 2012. Last February we took a delegation from Myanmar, including members of the Government, on a private tour of London Gateway Super Port in Essex, which is one of the most modern, innovative and efficient ports in the world, as well as the largest logistics park in Europe. We demonstrated to the delegation how they could model Myanmar's port modernisation programs on London Gateway's world-class port and logistics park. The delegation was extremely impressed with what they had seen and hopefully this will play a part in Myanmar's future port expansion and modernisation.

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What has been your approach to positioning your company in the market?

We have positioned ourselves as the first privately owned British company and first European Logistics Provider to set up in Myanmar under British management but employing 100% local staff. We have made it very clear in the market place that Claridon Myanmar are here for the long term, that corporate social responsibility is part of our DNA and that our staff will learn a whole variety of skill sets. As the company grows throughout Myanmar they will share in the success and prosperity, which is the model for all Claridon offices in Europe. We have been and will continue to be extremely respectful and sensitive to the market place and get on with our business in a professional and ethical way.

How is Claridon contributing to economic and social development in Myanmar?

We would like to think we are doing this in a couple of ways. Generating prosperity for our staff, local partners and suppliers, as well as investing in the wider economy. Through our involvement with charitable work which is of paramount importance to us, we are involved with charity projects, including supporting social projects as well as sponsoring a British teacher who is working in the country passing on her teaching skills and knowledge to the next generation of local school teachers.

What is your outlook for Myanmar's economy and for Claridon's prospects here?

We entered the Myanmar market knowing it would be for the long term, that we would need patience, resilience and investment. This outlook has not changed and we are starting to see our patience slowly starting to yield dividends.

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What practical advice would you give to UK companies considering doing business in Myanmar?

Our advice would be to firstly visit the country as many times as possible and get a feel for the way this wonderful country works. Our experience has been that it takes time to develop relationships and build up trust, so an investment in time needs to be made as well as financially. Make sure that the many excellent services and support that Stephanie and the rest of the British Chamber of Myanmar team can provide are utilised, as well as UKTI. The “made in Britain” label is very well respected and sought after and the opportunities are here for all types of British goods, services and expertise, but it will take time and patience will play a key factor in any success.