



## **Juan Pablo Bravo Good, Better, Bravo!**

He didn't hesitate for a second. "The day I got the offer was the best day of my life," says Juan Pablo Bravo, and there's no hint of melodrama in his voice. "I'd already been working for Continental for a while in Ecuador," he explains, "when I came to Mount Vernon in the USA for a training session. It changed my life. I told the people there that it was my dream to work in the United States." And then one day Continental contacted him, because a job had become available in Miami, the city he had dreamed of.

Juan Pablo Bravo is a true highlander – he comes from Quito, the capital city of Ecuador, which is in the Andes, nearly 3,000 meters above sea level. He grew up in a large family, spent a lot of time outdoors, and practiced his sales skills from a very early age. "A friend and I sold lemonade together out on the street. I really enjoyed doing that."

Not only that, but advertising his own lemonade sparked his early interest in his future studies: business administration and marketing. When he eventually went to college, a three-month internship in a company was a part of the degree requirements.

"I loved cars and everything to do with them," says Bravo. "And when I read that Continental was looking for an intern, I applied right away." He got the internship and was inspired. "Continental is very well known in Ecuador," he says. "As soon as I started to work there, I knew: this is exactly what I was looking for." And he definitely wanted to stay there. "At the end of the internship, I asked if there would be any chance of continuing to work there, with flexible hours for my degree. And they said yes!"

His office was a thirty-minute drive from college. He worked, hurried to his lectures and seminars in between, and then drove back to work. To manage his workload, he took evening classes wherever possible.

"In any case, I had to finance my degree myself," he says. "So what Continental offered was the perfect mix for me."

He began as a Marketing Assistant, then worked in several departments over the next five years, from Sales Coordination to Sales Development to Business Development – departments which were always completely new and yet captured his interest each time.

"A regional manager brought me into her department and, along with some other supervisors, she became my mentor. She was a great boss. But I had decided that it would be good to get to know different departments over time." And his mentor supported him in this.

"Since then I've worked in some very different areas at Continental: sales, marketing, logistics, export. It's great because I can see the company from different perspectives and learn a lot." However, it wasn't always easy to start from the beginning again. But he was happy to take on the challenge, because he liked the change. "It was a big responsibility every time, but they were all great experiences, which have really helped me on my way." He was able to successfully apply what he learned in Sales Development and Business Development to the next job.



"I had always wanted to go to Miami," says Bravo. "It's an exciting city, it's on the coast, and it's very international." But those weren't the only reasons that were drawing him there. When he received the offer after his training session in Mount Vernon, he was excited to learn that in his new Sales Manager role he would be responsible for southern Florida and Puerto Rico. "The market in Miami and Florida has lots of South American influences," he says. "This job was perfect for me because I know both cultures and speak both languages." He also felt particularly comfortable working with commercial vehicle tires. "I've worked in lots of different departments. What I like most about truck tire sales is that it's a practical business. You recommend a product which helps the customer to save money. You can track the tire's performance, so selling the tire is far from being the end for us. After fitting the tire, we check whether we have found the best possible solution for the customers, and observe how the tire proves itself on the road in everyday use. Of course I'm delighted when the carrier or his fleet manager chooses to buy tires from us again instead of from competitors."

He has been in Miami since 2009, and the highlander from the Ecuadorian Andes is feeling particularly at ease on the Atlantic. "Of course I miss my family," he says. "It's strange not being there to see my nieces and nephews growing up." And there's one more thing he misses: soccer. "Soccer isn't a big thing in the United States, but it's very popular in Ecuador." He misses being able to cheer on his favorite team, Liga Deportiva Universitaria, or Liga de Quito for short, in the stadium. Bravo says it's the best soccer team in the country, and it won the Copa Libertadores in 2008. It was the first time in the history of Ecuadorian soccer that a local team won the most important soccer competition in South America. "That was one of the biggest moments of my life," says Bravo with a laugh.

Another very important moment in his life was the "InnerCircle Ring" award, which he was given by Continental. Bravo explains: "This is awarded to the commercial truck tire salesperson with the highest volume of sales, and I won it in 2011." Today, if he drives to see his customers, he wears the ring with the horse symbol with great pride, and also a huge amount of gratitude. "Some customers ask me what the ring is for," he says. "I tell them that I can only wear it thanks to them. If it weren't for my customers, I wouldn't have been given it."

Juan Pablo Bravo doesn't see his job as a list of tasks that he has to check off. "I always try to be an ambassador for Continental, and to represent our values. I want to fulfill our customers' wishes, and if a customer is happy, it's a good day for me." He himself is completely happy with his work. It gives him a lot of variety, as every day is different. The support which he has received from his company and mentors is something unique for him. That's why he talks about his job a lot at home in Ecuador. Apparently so frequently and with so much enthusiasm that his brother also really wanted to work for the company. "My family is basically a Continental family. When I left Ecuador to come to the USA, my brother started at Continental in Ecuador. He works as an export coordinator there." They also have a younger sister. "She's still studying," says Bravo mischievously, "but we're already working on getting her to join us at Continental one day."