

Claudio Bozzo: “I Don’t Know Any Other Way but to Work for Italy!”

VINCENZO MARRA (November 09, 2010)



An interview with Claudio Bozzo the youngest President of Mediterranean Shipping Company, North America and head of the Italy-America Chamber of Commerce

“Here he is again!” Fanfani used to say referring to Indro Montanelli, one of Italy’s most famous journalists. I would be tempted to think that Claudio Bozzo is walking in the footsteps of one of the greatest protagonists of contemporary Italian history. It was only June 2008 when I interviewed the youngest North American president in the history of [Mediterranean Shipping Company](#) [2]. I also had written that Gianluigi Aponte, founder and chairman of MSC, challenged the future with someone who could be effectively projected into the future. Though Aponte surely had the entrepreneurial qualifications to launch Claudio Bozzo, it is surprising to find Claudio at the head of the [Italy-America Chamber of Commerce](#) [3] (IACC), which in its 132 years of existence has not been known for promoting young talents at its helm. It is for this honor that Claudio “Bolt” Bozzo acquires even greater value while he continues to reach important milestones in his career much as Usain Bolt, the



Jamaican World and Olympic champion, manages to eliminate all of his adversaries within the first 100 meters. Bozzo, like Bolt, also manages to accomplish this with the natural ability that talented individual, often unaware of their gift, possess.

As soon as I arrive to his office on 5th Ave and 37th Street, he is instantly concerned that I feel at ease while I ask him the first question...

You are the first young president after the brief tenure of Paolo Torello. Do you believe that Italy is finally searching for answers among its younger generations?

First of all, I would like to thank Paolo Torello for having started what you have defined as a “new trend.” As far as I am concerned, I can only hope that merits are always determined more on the basis of competence and less on age or seniority. It would be nice if everyone at age 40 could have the ability and diplomatic negotiation skills that a 60 year-old possesses. Even we must change the adage that says “experience is the greatest teacher” to “Google is the greatest teacher.” Technology is, in fact, accelerating life’s milestones from the start, particularly in career competition. While it is true that you can hold positions of greater responsibility sooner than before the dawn of the internet age, it is also true that the turnover rate of these positions is accelerated as well.

I have started to bring about some small changes in the Italy-America Chamber of Commerce with the idea that a company is characterized by its Board and with some small modifications we have managed to create a new Board in the heart of IACC. We have also opened our doors to the younger generations as well as women by creating specific groups within the IACC. The presence of these groups was long due in a male dominated world. We have also tried to instill the idea of responsibility into our people, though the use of first and last name. Practically, we are trying to work on creating a solid tradition because this will form a level of competence which will allow us to find ourselves working in the same office in 3 years.

So if we were to think of a new operational paradigm within the IACC, what would it be?

If you don’t mind, I would like to answer you in my native Genovese style: “Do more with less.” You see, at the core of my life, and I sincerely hope it is at the core of everyone working individual's life, there is passion. I love Italy, and I consider the IACC an opportunity to do something good for my native country. In the current global economic context, we are all trying to find new formulas since the system began regenerating itself. We are here to spend the money that was allotted to us to promote Italy in the most efficient way possible. We are here to facilitate Italian entrepreneurs in reaching business contacts that would otherwise be difficult and expensive to obtain. We are here to create productive synergies and an ongoing dialogue with the investors hoping to get some feedback as well. I can assure you that this challenge has occurred under spotlights that for 132 years have illuminated Italy’s entrepreneurial history in the USA and I can only consider myself fortunate if today I can measure up to this noble mission.

Minister Tremonti has underlined in the last “[Meeting dell’Amicizia](#) [4]” in Rimini that 80% of Italy’s economy is comprised of small and medium sized businesses. If Italy’s entrepreneurs don’t work in synergy, Italy will be left out of the world’s most important markets. What will the IACC do?

The IACC is a board that promotes Italian commerce wherever it is located. We do this in harmony with official government agencies. That said, it is evident that we must help all those who seek our assistance from Italy and put them in a position to profit from the relationship they established with us. One of Italy’s greatest virtues is the ability to diversify its products by presenting them in different historical contexts and traditions. It is possible to infer that this diversification is perhaps what our Minister was referring to. I can only confirm what all of the entrepreneurs are trying to do to prepare for the great emerging markets of the 21st century: more synergy and more unification. This is, however, a subject that is outside my sphere of influence and that of the IACC.

There are niche markets in the USA where Italian businesses have created true strongholds with their brands, which 10 years ago didn’t even exist. You have taught me that an entrepreneur puts his life into a product and never stops dreaming that one day the world will comprehend his intuition. You have to admit that it is difficult to tell such an entrepreneur to work in synergy with one of his



competitors. There are those who spend their money more or less efficiently for the promotion of their products. My nature, however, brings me to look at the final result. Even in these difficult economic times, wherever I go I see a profound appreciation of Italy that makes me proud to be in a position to do even more for my country. The loss of prestigious positions is a price that the entire Western world has had to pay although Italy is more agile than other countries and can get back in the game faster. Speaking of games, Italy played with Serbia today...do you know what the score was?

They suspended the game for disorderly conduct in your native Genoa, actually...
You're kidding!!!.....

Upon my statement, Claudio turns towards his computer screen and clicks on an Italian news website and says, "I don't believe this!! We are going insane!" We resume our discussion... ILICA is trying to bring its message of synergy in the promotion of Italian culture as an added value. You are on the ILICA Board of Directors, what does this mean for the IACC?

I think it is a positive thing to draw all new organizations closer to the IACC. Before we even think about unifying Italian businesses, it is necessary to bring together all of the groups who promote Italy in the United States. ILICA is a foundation that promotes the Italian language and culture; in this global reorganization, knowing the language of a culture is definitely an added value in the commercial promotion of that culture. For over 130 years, the goal of the IACC has been establishing the communication between two cultures on the opposite side of the Atlantic. In the previous century, it was probably easier because the parameters of this exchange were more favorable: a stronger dollar, a wealthier America, a weak Lira, and an Italy that desired to be richer. Today, we must seek new synergies because the parameters are inverted and above all Italy is still popular in the US. Every day on our MSC ships, I experience the promotion of Italian style. Our way of working, our way of pampering our guests, and everything that is Italian is still magic.

I would like to end this interview with a personal consideration. The first time I interviewed Claudio, he told me that he was a lucky man for all that life had given him. Today, that kid has become a cautious man who is justifiably suspicious but who always keeps his feet on the ground; serious, concentrated, logical...and lucky! So if fortune truly favors the braves our community has found a new leader that we all should support for his well-calibrated judgements, his willingness to do good, and his motivating love for Italy. Claudio Bozzo can do much for Italy in America and vice versa. The IACC has found a modern president and we can only wish him the best.

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