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MAGAZINE



**Brazil-Texas  
Chamber of  
Commerce**





# Brazil-Texas Chamber of Commerce

## Celebrating 15 Years in Making Lasting Connections

BY JUDY BLUESTEIN LEVIN



**T**he Brazil-Texas Chamber of Commerce (BRATECC) is thrilled to announce its 15th year anniversary building bridges between Brazil and the great State of Texas. Founded in 2001, the Chamber today is widely recognized as the leading forum for promoting commercial trade and commerce between the two regions. “We’ve been more successful than anyone could have imagined 15 years ago,” reflects Cid Silveira, the Chamber’s executive director and one of its early founders. “But we’re just getting started. Expect to see us around for 15 more.”

The brainchild of Brazilian business executives and local entrepreneurs in Houston, the idea to formally incorporate a chamber to foster commercial activity between Brazil and Texas harkens back to the late 1990s. Arguably, however, it was the support, vision, and enthusiasm of the Chamber’s first executive director, the late Ricardo Peduzzi, that most contributed to the Chamber’s early success. Peduzzi, a former Petrobras executive, was key to garnering support for the Chamber from the Consulate General of Brazil in Houston and Petrobras America, pivotal developments in the Chamber’s history. Sadly, Peduzzi passed away in 2012, having led the Chamber for 12 highly successful years. But his memory certainly lives on. “He is deeply missed,” remembers Silveira. “We are forever grateful and indebted to him as a friend and for the enormous contribution that he made to the Chamber.”

Peduzzi’s legacy and the Chamber’s successes over the past 15 years are certainly something to brag about. The Chamber has now held hundreds of impactful events, meetings, and trade missions with strategic business leaders, elected officials, government regulators, ministers, and leading commercial players throughout Texas and Brazil. In 2013, the Chamber helped organize a mission by City of Houston Mayor Annise Parker to the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Likewise, the Chamber’s members and sponsors have included leading Brazilian companies and firms as well as countless leading multinationals and local American companies with close ties to Brazil. Similarly, in addition to a solid membership base, which at times has reached over 400 corporate members, the Chamber also maintains strategic partnerships and relationships with many of Brazil’s most important industry and trade associations, including Amcham-Rio, Amcham-SP, Firjan, ONIP, IBP, ABDIB, ABITAM, SUAPE, Invest Sao Paulo, and Apex Brasil, among many others.

But it’s the Chamber’s board of directors over these 15 years that perhaps best reflects the true diversity and strength of its membership base. Today, the board proudly boasts members from Petrobras, ExxonMobil, United Airlines, Schlumberger, SBM Offshore, GustoMSC, Mecano-Tech, FTI Consulting, PFK, Apolo Tubulars, Rice University, and Legge, Farrow, Kimmitt McGrath, & Brown, LLP. “We are truly privileged to have such an active, high-quality

ity board,” says Claudio Nunes, the Chamber’s President and President of Petrobras America, Inc. “Our directors’ unique professional expertise, cross-border experience, and passion for Brazil and Texas ensure that we have the capability, tenacity, and drive to meet our core mission of fostering trade and investment between the two regions.”

That expertise and experience is particularly strong in the oil and gas industry, where the Chamber’s reputation is unparalleled. Given its Houston origins and Brazil’s importance as a major energy producer, it’s no coincidence that the Chamber has become the leading non-profit organization in the United States for advancing energy-related trade and investment into Brazil and vice versa – a fact which has not gone unnoticed by Brazil’s primary energy regulators and government ministers. Just last year, for example, the Chamber held a cocktail reception with Brazil’s then Minister of Mines and Energy Eduardo Braga, who was the evening’s keynote speaker. “The oil and gas industry will always be a bedrock for the Chamber,” remarks Nunes. “It’s where we started and it’s where we expect to remain the leader.”

It’s hard to overstate the Chamber’s role in the oil and gas space. In fact, its annual breakfast, which typically draws anywhere from 300-400 senior industry leaders, is perhaps the Chamber’s greatest success story. Offering participants the opportunity to liaise with the most important players in Brazil’s oil and gas sector and gain insight into the industry’s latest happenings, the breakfast is widely seen as the most important leadership gathering in the United States on the Brazilian oil and gas landscape. The head of the National Hydrocarbons Agency (Agência Nacional do Petróleo, Gás Natural e Biocombustíveis, or the ANP) Magda Chambriard, for example, chose to announce bidding rounds for the Libra pre-salt oil field during the 2013 annual breakfast. According to Chambriard, “BRATECC, in Houston, has been essential to expanding ANP’s performance on the American scene, as well as increasing Brazil’s visibility as a major world frontier in the oil and gas sector.”

Although Brazil and the oil and gas industry have been in the doldrums the past several years, recent signs that the Brazilian government and regulators are committed to creat-



Meet BRATECC’s “Dynamic Duo” of Cid Silveira & Claudio Nunes. *Photo by Gwen Juarez*



BRATECC has the privilege of  
having Ulisses Sperandio/V.P.  
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*Photo by Gwen Juarez*



ing a more investment-friendly environment for foreign investment in the energy industry mean many are optimistic about what lies ahead. “We’re seeing a clear resurgence of interest in Brazil’s oil and gas industry across the board right now, including from U.S. investors and companies,” Silveira points out. “There’s no doubt that the Chamber will continue to play a central role in the dialogue around oil and gas in Brazil for the foreseeable future.”

It would be a mistake, however, to see the Chamber as confined to the oil and gas industry or trade and investment directed solely toward Brazil. Since the late 1990s, the Chamber has seen a significant uptick in Brazilian businesses is looking to incorporate and do business in Texas. In fact, Texas is one of Brazil’s main trading partners, and the Chamber sees itself as having played a key role in luring Brazilian business to Texas, away from Florida, New York, California, and Illinois – the usual destinations considered by Brazilian businesses. “Together with strategic partners like the Port of Houston, the Chamber is largely responsible for putting Texas on the map in Brazil, not only for companies interested in oil and gas, but also agriculture, health care, education, real estate, and logistics,” explains Silveira. “We are working hard to ensure that trend continues.”

It is no surprise then that the Chamber’s future plans include strengthening its strategic

relationships throughout the State of Texas, by strengthening ties to Dallas and Austin, for example, and diversifying its membership base beyond the energy industry. And phase one of that strategy involves an industry where both Brazil and Texas are titans - agribusiness. The Chamber looks to leverage its success in the oil and gas industry to similarly become a leading forum for Brazil-Texas agriculture dialogue in the near future. To kick things off, the Chamber and the American Chamber of Commerce in Sao Paulo (or Amcham-SP) have already been collaborating on agricultural trade missions. Last year, a delegation of agribusiness entrepreneurs and government officials from the State of Goias, a major agriculture-producing region in Brazil, joined the Chamber for a successful event during the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, which included a highly-productive daylong visit to Texas A&M in College Station. “Expect to see a major Brazil-Texas agricultural event supported by the Chamber in the near future,” anticipates Silveira. “We are making every effort to do great things in the agriculture space.”

It’s important to point out, however, that whether its oil and gas, agriculture, or otherwise, the Chamber doesn’t see itself as limited by industry. “All are welcome at our table,” explains Nunes. “Our mission has been and will continue to be to promote trade and investment of all sorts between Brazil and Texas.



Anyone who supports that agenda should join and participate.”

And you'd be wrong to think that the recent economic malaise, political uncertainty, and corruption scandals in Brazil have the Chamber worried; quite the opposite, in fact. The Chamber feels strongly that foreign investors may be a bit too overly bearish about Brazil. As one director at the Chamber put it, “Foreign investors frequently suffer from Goldilocks Syndrome when it comes to Brazil; the porridge is either way too hot or way too cold. We think that for many industries and many opportunities in Brazil, the porridge is just right.”

With that optimism, it's not surprising that the Chamber remains convinced that the best

is yet to come. “We at the Chamber will continue doing what we do best, which is to constantly seek ways to hold meaningful events, meetings, trade missions, and other networking opportunities to facilitate our members' pursuit of trade and investment between Brazil and Texas,” states Nunes. “At the end of the day, the Chamber is only as good as its members, and we're committed to working hard to ensure the Chamber is as relevant and impactful for members in the next 15 years as it was for the first. We welcome all who are interested to come along for the ride.”

It's been a good 15 years for the Chamber. Now it's time for them to celebrate.



Pictured with Cid Silveira/  
Executive Director of BRATECC  
& Director of Apolo Tubulars,  
3 VIP's. From left to right they  
are Claudio Nunes/President  
of BRATECC & President of  
Petrobras America, Inc., Roberto  
Ardenghy/Honorary President  
of BRATECC & Acting General  
Consul of Brazil in Houston,  
Chris DeSa/BRATECC  
Director & Senior Director of  
FTI Consulting.  
*Photo by Gwen Juarez*

To find out more about the **Brazil Texas Chamber of Commerce**,  
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