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Simon Cohen (A)

Over a 10-year period, Simon and his three business partners – his brother José, Manfred Jaekel and Thomas Kroeger – had built up a successful freight-forwarding business, with offices in Monterrey and Guadalajara, Mexico. Manfred and Thomas ran their own separate, longer-established branch in Mexico City.

Simon had won some large, multinational customers and had benefited from the increase in imports from China. By focusing on customer service and building up a hard-working team, he had grown bigger than the original Mexico City operation. There had been some friction over the years, but Manfred had proposed combining the companies into a group and after some negotiation a verbal agreement had been struck on 15 August 2007.

But, a week later, Thomas had phoned to say that he would not go ahead with the deal they had agreed. Simon was forced to reconsider his options.

Simon Cohen

Born in Mexico City in 1974, Simon Cohen had moved to Monterrey aged five (see **Exhibit 1**). His father Salomon moved to Monterrey to join his brother, who had a textile manufacturing business. The Cohen brothers built a successful business by basing their designs on fashions in the US, only 140 miles away.

Simon was ambitious. Despite suffering from asthma and not having a particularly athletic physique, he made it into Mexico's national swimming team and became National and Central American champion in the 100m and 200m breaststroke. Through his success in competitive swimming, Simon travelled widely, making friends around Latin America and further afield. It also brought him a scholarship to a prestigious university, the Instituto Tecnológico y de Estudios Superiores de Monterrey, known as Tec de Monterrey. Although not a brilliant student, Simon combined hard work and a sociable disposition. A decisive moment came when a teacher told him, "Simon, you're not the greatest student but I know you'll be successful. You have many friends, many contacts and you always manage to get what you want, which is very important."

Darice Gubbins and John Walker prepared this case under the supervision of John Mullins, Associate Professor of Management Practice, London Business School.

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