

# GLG Explained:

## Excerpts from an Interview with GLG CEO Alexander Saint-Amand

Below are excerpts from a recent interview with GLG CEO Alexander Saint-Amand on *The Tech Blog Writer* podcast, hosted by Neil C. Hughes. You can access the audio of the entire conversation at this [link](#).

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### **What exactly is GLG, and what makes it unique?**

If you're a CEO who's trying to figure out, for example, how to fix your product development organization, you're probably not going to take a course on that; it's too specific. Or if you're an engineer at GE working on Artificial Intelligence and how it might apply in the refrigerator market, something super specific like that, you can't take a course on it. But you can learn those things from another person. So what GLG does is make it possible to learn one-on-one... And to do that all the time, so that a part of your life is that you're learning all the time. And the other side of GLG's business, we want to make it possible for you to teach someone on the other side of the world, about something that it might not be possible to teach in your local market, but you may have a student on the other side of the world.

### **How does GLG use technology to bring people together?**

We're building technology to anticipate what people want to learn and what people want to teach. Those sets of technology are built on Artificial Intelligence. We've asked our members tens of millions of questions about what they know and what they like to teach, and over time, we can make a better match to them about what's the best project for them using artificial intelligence, or even less sophisticated systems. The key with GLG is that a conversation may be simple, but allowing a professional to teach someone else something every single day in their life requires a set of underlying technologies that we're working on.

### **Can you tell me how you are helping clients with on-demand experts, to help listeners visualize just how many topics you cover?**

Most of the top technology companies in the world, most of the top pharma companies, for example, use us. To give you a sense of breadth, at those companies, it could be the CEO learning from another CEO about how to build a part of their organization, and it could also be someone who's working on super technical problem trying to figure out how a chemical equation is resolved. So we really span a broad set of professional questions.

### **How did the concept for GLG come about and how has its mission evolved?**

This is Uber meets Harvard. So one of the constraints at a learning institution like Harvard is that the teacher cares about the quality of the student. So we set out in the beginning to find the best teachers and also to find the best students who would ask the kinds of questions that were interesting to those teachers. And that turned out to be our mission, then and now... And that remains our mission today: find the best teacher, find the best student, and match them at scale.

### **Technology is already changing the way we work – how do you see the future of work evolving? And what part do you expect GLG to play?**

What I like about GLG is we're creating real opportunities to share very high levels of expertise. Most of the gig economy is focused on ride-sharing, or businesses like TaskRabbit that provide opportunities for people

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to do relatively low-paying jobs. GLG provides an opportunity for people to find a new buyer for their expertise at relatively high levels of compensation. I think the gig economy will continue to expand in that direction... I can also tell you that the best companies in the world are increasingly thinking about the fact that they just can't hire the best people on any subject. So you can hire a lot of people who know a lot about AI, but if you're expanding into the refrigerator market, you're not going to hire all the people that know that market, and you have to rethink the way that you gather expertise from all those people that don't work at your company...

A big part of what I'm excited about at GLG, and in general for the world, is that you might be retiring as the head of a sales organization in Germany and find that your local market doesn't need your expertise at that point – but there may be a company in China that doesn't know anything about your expertise, and now you have a different opportunity for employment that you would just never have had, if it weren't for the way that technology is connecting two people around the world.

### **What technology excites you at the moment?**

One of the really cool things about working at GLG is it's a little bit like working at the world's largest university. People are looking at amazing things all the time, and because of the way our systems are set up you can look at what people are interested in, and particularly what the world's top professionals are wrestling with about the future... What's interesting is to look at the big trends. Artificial intelligence, the internet of things: those have been consistently rising as areas of our clients' interest over the past few years. One that interests me in particular is digital health, which has been the fastest-rising topic across all GLG's, we call them taxonomies, over the last few years.

### **Is there anything you can share about your plans, goals or vision for GLG this year?**

Scale is the answer. We've been in business since 1999 and we're growing more and more quickly now every year, and the world seems ready for the idea... For whatever reason, it could be the failings of social media, the understandings of personalization, the proof now that we have the customer base that we do, comparable ideas pursuing the same market – whatever the reason, we really feel like the idea is ready for scale.

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