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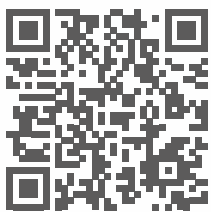
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On the surface, very little. Take a look at a sizeable chunk of this issue - interviews, features and reports derived exclusively from talking to their subjects online where, in the not-so-distant past (can it really be just a year or so?) a similar issue would have involved car mileage, airport parking charges, hotel accommodation costs (when not a guest of the host company), taxis, airport security queues, delays, early starts, late finishes, a batch of freshly ironed shirts.

It's a model that works, then, especially for the bean counters (and those who don't like ironing). But does our content suffer for this change in how it is compiled? That's for you to decide (with my fingers in ears and eyes tightly shut, if you don't mind). Me, I can't see the join, but at the same time I can't wait to meet everyone face-to-face once again, because while there are some great substitutes for in-person contact, nothing can beat it. So bring on those airport security checks.

Meanwhile, look at who we've spoken to. I've had access to senior players and decision-makers in our industry. Our exclusive webinar with Business France (see page 6) features one serving French government minister and one former French Secretary of State, while it and several other pages feature exclusive talks with CEOs, Managing Director and C-suite executives in abundance offering pithy opinion, insight and advice.

And here's another win for digital - put the words 'trade show' and 'costs' in the same sentence and you won't find too many marketing managers and CFOs with broad smiles on their faces. Hence the rise and rise of the webinar and the opportunity to display your wares digitally to prospects and customers at a fraction of the flesh-and-blood show cost. To that end, I do urge you to register for our unique *Logistics Business Virtual Exhibition*, which enjoys its second outing from September 20-24th this year. The thing about new technology is that, naturally, it suffers glitches and it did cause a few headaches at our debut digital show in February, but there's no question that the lessons learned will add to an outstanding-value opportunity for you to reach customers next time round. Do contact the team at show@logisticsbusiness.com for more information, or visit www.logisticsbusinessshow.com.

Paul Hamblin
Editor





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France Post-Brexit Logistics

Logistics Business took part in an expert webinar in April with Business France looking at the theme of French logistics in the post-Brexit world and the challenges and opportunities for British exporters and importers. *Paul Hamblin* moderated.

EXPERT PANEL:

Franck Riester: French Government Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade

Anne-Marie Idrac: Chair, France Logistique; former Secretary of State for Transport

Richard Catt: Director, PSL Freight

Olivier Thouard: GEFCO Customs and Tax Director; TLF Brexit Working Group

Rob Burrows: MD, UPS France

Christopher Devernay: Director, P&G Amiens site

NB: Introductory remarks and general overview of government investment in logistics in France were made by Mr Riester and Mme Idrac. Space restrictions prevent us from reproducing them here - they are available in full by scanning the QR code to register and watch at the bottom of page 7.

Nuts and bolts first - how has the logistics industry coped on both sides of the Channel since the Christmas Eve signing of the Brexit EU/UK trade agreement and what day-to-day issues does it still face?

Richard Catt: From the UK perspective, many companies were left so unprepared. The FTA was agreed minutes before the deadline, and I think a lot were expecting an implementation period while everyone had time to understand what the FTA meant. January therefore met with huge volumes requiring declarations on both sides of the Channel. The trade really struggled with this, with the extra burden of explaining what was required to a very unaware industry and those explanations being pushed on to intermediaries and customs brokers. The numbers simply couldn't cope. Huge pressures and concerns forced some drastic commercial decisions.



Richard Catt: Director, PSL Freight

We continue to press the UK government for support for intermediaries. There are significant challenges there for us all in October 2021 and January 2022 (*when new import rules are to be introduced - Editor*). With prelodgement, there are issues with what needs to be scanned, which MRN needs to be put on the form, all with the trade not fully understanding what is required. Transit guarantees are also an issue for most exporters, with many forwarders unwilling to take on the liability, which means much of the heavy lifting is left to intermediaries such as ourselves. In our case, we're raising several hundred T1s (*customs shipping note*) a month and have an open liability of several million at any one time. It's not comfortable, it's expediency.

Discharging the transit docs within the EU 27 has also been a challenge, with shipping delays, onward transit delays, and many offices not being open 24/7, coupled with lack of flexibility on end dates and transit times being big issues in getting guarantees discharged. There is also incorrect information supplied, for which we are putting up the guarantees. Yes, it has improved, but there are still issues with drivers having the wrong documents and wrong barcodes, leading to turn-backs and delays.

Olivier Thouard: On the French side, we introduced a new customs IT system, with the target of allowing fluid traffic, basically 'Brexit without Brexit for transport', if you will. We saw no real EU to UK issues. Our first challenge was to



Olivier Thouard: GEFCO Customs and Tax Director; TLF Brexit Working Group

make sure companies understood what was required, and some didn't; we also planned for the storage of trucks on both sides of the Channel, but it didn't happen, because the border was successfully managed. Yes, there were delays with transit export docs needing barcodes or maybe because a driver needed a Covid test, so there were some issues with transit. As Richard said, it was very difficult on the UK side to issue a transit, especially with a lot of trucks coming into the EU.

In January it became clear that few traders understood that they needed to make an export or import declaration and that they needed to pay taxes/duties. Many companies were still asking us what they had to prepare for, because of course there had been a lot of uncertainty about whether a Brexit deal would happen.

This then led to difficulties in finding the right broker and the right supply chain. The rules of origin issue became very prominent - the FTA didn't mean 'free' in the sense that you didn't pay duties, that scenario would only happen if you complied with the rules of origin. If you import through a second country, such as from Ireland to the EU via the UK, or Turkey to the UK via the EU, you run the risk of losing that original status.

Let's now look at the experience of companies in the logistics sector on the ground in France, beginning with parcels logistics.

Rob Burrows: In the express parcels business, France has always been the ground gateway to Europe, and the channel ports have always been how volume has flowed into Europe and into France. So we had to find solutions



Rob Burrows: MD, UPS France

to the challenges of Brexit. From a UPS perspective, we tried to get a little ahead of the game, we positioned important infrastructure in both the southeast of England and at Evry, just south of Paris, giving us two fully automated hubs which also act as inland clearance depots for traffic moving from UK/Europe and vice-versa.

To echo Richard, it's clear that the challenges thrown at us all are from the technical/regulation side and in people's understanding of that. From a small and express parcels perspective, the pandemic situation has certainly added to it. The huge boom in ecommerce, with dramatic increases in parcel volumes and the flood of traffic to individuals, is great for the transportation business because it adds volume. But it also creates an awful lot more consignments, sometimes smaller consignments, that might be going directly to a consumer who is not conversant with the process of importing goods and what they need to do to receive those goods. So we have experienced problems at the consignee end. We've been working through that over the past four months and certainly we're making significant process.

The majority of the preparation by UPS in France has been successful - I have to say the cooperation with French authorities, especially French customs and brokerage, has been outstanding, right back to 2017. We had outstanding dialogue, regular meetings which enabled us to set processes in place for us and our customers. Those channels and collaboration have only served to enhance what we've been trying to do. So I can't speak highly enough of them in this regard. I think it's clear that France sees itself, or recognises the unique opportunity it has, as a gateway from the UK into Europe. I think it's playing that part well, the infrastructure is unquestionable and the opportunity is immense. This is a period of change, but we're very positive.

What tips would you offer to a UK company looking to use France to soothe UK/EU import/export processes?

RB: If you're a company in the UK looking to export into France, do engage with customs and brokerage. As an Englishman living in France for the past four years, trying to explain Brexit has not always been my easiest job. But what I will say is that the French very much looked at it as an opportunity, rather than a bad thing.

But are there cultural sensitivities, particularly in the area of labour?

France carries a little bit of a stigma - a culture of expressing one's will might be a polite way of seeing it. But the situation is very calm, we have outstanding labour relations with our colleagues, I don't see it or experience it in the way it's sometimes portrayed in the British media. It is definitely not an obstacle to a British company setting up here. I've encountered no language barriers and there is an abundance of support.

Christopher Devernay: The UK is our biggest export country and absolutely vital to PG Amiens, so transparency after Brexit was really vital to us. Delays would mean queues and congestion of lorries at our facilities and absence of our products from the shelves. To ensure fullest operations post-Brexit, we built our project on two pillars - first, by forming a multifunctional team grouping operations, customs, transport and warehousing, we ensured that all steps from finished production up to customs clearance had been fully mapped, ensuring that all system flow was fully synchronised and integrated. As an example, the customs clearance request is made to the French authorities less than 15 minutes after loading completion. Our second pillar was a minute examination of our production processes in November and December, exploring any bugs, so that we would be ahead of any issues before they arise. As a result, we've had no business impact post-Brexit.

The big question: how can UK companies use France to improve their post-Brexit capability?

OT: If you want to organise your flows as a British company in France, you have two options: 1) you can set up a company in France or 2) you can use a French VAT registration, which will enable you to operate in the EU, to buy, sell, import, export in France, and from France to the whole EU.



Franck Riester: French Government Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade

Ask yourself: do I need people, perhaps to check goods or to sell in France? Do I need an office, or just the right warehouse and someone to manage it? The answers to these questions will determine if you need to set up a company or you will be able to operate with a VAT number.

If you go for the latter, I would say that French fiscal rules are among the best in Europe. Why? Because you don't need to appoint a costly fiscal representative, whereas in other countries you need to appoint one. And from January 2022, the rules on paying, declaring and refunding VAT in France are being simplified and improved.

Another solution is to use a bonded warehouse as a storage option and to avoid full payment of duties. Bear in mind that you can use as many of these options together if you wish.

AMI: If you come to France, The first thing you'll discover is that we hate frogs (*much laughter*). We're not frog eaters. And the second thing is that it is not as complicated as you might think, as the number of British companies who who are taking these steps shows. What I can tell you is that you are not alone and that Business France will help you confidentially and free of charge. So don't hesitate to contact them, they are looking forward to talking to you.



Anne-Marie Idrac: Chair, France Logistique; former Secretary of State for Transport

Register and watch by scanning the QR Code



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Focus: HAROPA

The grouping known collectively as HAROPA comprises three ports: Le Havre, Rouen and Paris. Ranked 5th among Northern European ports, it is France's leading port for external trade with an outreach to almost 700 ports around the world.

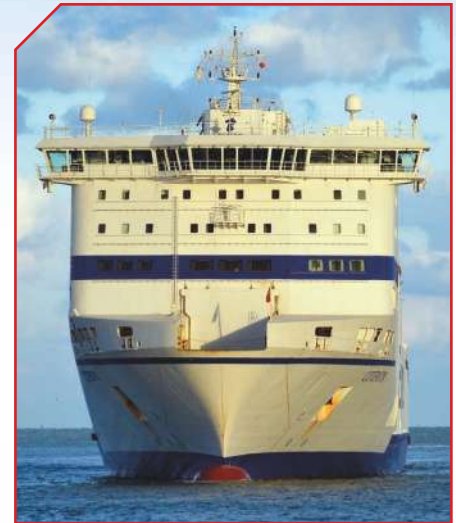
HAROPA offers many key advantages for the new configuration of trade flows with the United Kingdom and Ireland. The 'Grande Bretagne' terminal is ideally located and fully equipped to cope with the new post-Brexit checks. It is capable of handling not only accompanied trailers, including driver services, but also those that are unaccompanied, doing so in a totally secure facility. The many specialist companies and logisticians based in Le Havre port also provide a wide range of services to guarantee the quality of your supply chain with the United Kingdom. A wealth of facilities, far from the congestion at the Northern Range ports, are conveniently located just next door to consumer and production hubs. Positioned alongside the major container terminals of Le Havre and the port industrial area, the Radicatel short-sea terminal offers rapid processing for a wide range of traffic flows thanks to its 410 metres of quayside and two mobile cranes. This terminal, which also has 80 reefer connections, has a depot for empties at the terminal itself.

The port's ferry and short-sea offering goes hand-in-hand with its deep-sea offering. Among HAROPA's key advantages is its geographical location, which makes it the gateway to France and Europe. HAROPA is the first port of call for imports and the last for exports. Its deep-sea transit times to North America and Asia are the Northern Range's most competitive.

Logistics DNA

As the leading French port complex its consumer catchment area is the biggest in France with a population in excess of 18 million. HAROPA is also France's number one logistics hub with 2.7 million square metres of warehousing and easy connections to the river corridor of the Seine Valley, which facilitates freight transport. It is a gateway to the European Union, its single market and 450 million consumers.

HAROPA is a Brexit-ready port system: the facilitation of freight throughput is in its DNA. It strives to enhance



its competitiveness whilst keeping a keen eye on energy transition, and endeavours to make its rail and river services even more robust. A smart border system has been implemented to guarantee agility for freight flows post-Brexit.

In a position to welcome new industrial and logistics activities, HAROPA can point to the availability of over 200 real estate opportunities along the Seine Axis and 2.7 million square metres for warehouses, offices and sites. The objective? To strengthen its ecosystem of companies operating on port land. For that reason, no stone is left unturned to attract investors to its turnkey real estate opportunities. Alongside this, the port complex is keen to generate synergy between logisticians and industrial companies, creating economic clusters that produce solutions for its customers, activity for its ports and jobs for the surrounding area.

HAROPA is your seamless solution for post-Brexit trade.

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Characterised by its maritime links and its North-South road infrastructures, the region is a natural and dynamic transit hub. Nantes Saint-Nazaire's connections and infrastructure rival those of the continent's best-known ports.

As western France's major economic hub and France's second biggest industrial region, both companies and individuals are attracted by the high quality of life, dynamic job and consumer markets.

France's top port hub on the Atlantic coast, Nantes Saint-Nazaire offers great connections with more than 500 international ports and offers the world's largest shipping lines, eight regular

maritime services for containers, Ro-Ro, and breakbulk logistics as well as extensive quality infrastructures by road, rail, and river.

There is no congestion. Users benefit from services to simplify and optimise processes for improved information exchange and movements of goods. For instance, the port has the advantage of a Single Regulatory Desk (veterinary, phytosanitary, customs control). Its compact yet mighty Ro-Ro logistics site includes vehicle parks & preparation, shared document control and pre-delivery inspection.

To support industrial and logistical operations, the port area has land reserves on the terminals such as a 10,000 square-metre container terminal, a 21 hectare Ro-Ro terminal and an additional 35 hectares in immediate proximity.

As per client requirements and needs, the various on-site port companies offer tailor-made solutions with high-quality equipment. For instance, a new maritime service with Ireland and Great Britain is currently under development. The port companies include:

TGO – Terminal Grand Ouest is the single operator of the General Cargo and Containers Terminal (TMDC). It manages all the calls of container vessels as well as stevedoring general cargo vessels calling at the port and provides services for containers.



SOMALOIR is a Ro-Ro logistics specialist on the Ro-Ro Terminal (50 hectares) offering a wide range of services, covering ship agency, Ro-Ro stevedoring and storage which simplify and optimise supply chain management.

SOGEBRAS is located in the ports of Nantes and Montoir and is involved in all aspects of port operations, sea transportation and logistics including liner agency, ship agency, stevedoring and storage.

In addition to the large range of logistics and industrial services around the port, the surrounding region provides a wide range of service providers and infrastructures to help operations run seamlessly. The area is home to both national and international key players from 1PL to 4PL providers, a total of 7.3 million square metres of warehouses and 407 business parks spanning 11 hectares close to the port or urban areas as well as to main roads.

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Focus: Occitanie

The French springboard to the Mediterranean and beyond offers all four major transport modes and 11 economic areas.

On the Mediterranean coast, the Occitanie region is a gateway to African and Southern European markets. It is strategically positioned for logistics platforms with 11 OZEs (economic industrial areas) set up across the region and all four major modes of transport fully available.

The presence of transport and logistics giants goes without saying, thanks to the region's extensive road network with excellent links between France and the Iberian Peninsula. Geodis, XPO Logistics, FM Logistic, amongst others, have chosen Occitanie.

Four multimodal platforms are found across the region, as well as other logistics platforms. Eurocentre, is one such example, home to more than 140 companies and just 10 minutes from Toulouse.

Leading brands have been won over by the region, such as ASICS which opened its southern European logistics platform there, in 2019. Former CEO/COO, Robert Vermin, explained: "Occitanie is at the heart of a strategic crossroads with direct access to France, Italy, Spain, Portugal and northern Africa. This new location is very well connected to road, port and air networks and close to our French offices in Montpellier."

Four rail highways, from the Spanish border (Boulou) to Germany (Saarbrücken) and Luxembourg, reinforce Occitanie's excellent long-distance transport options.

With 130 miles of coastline, Occitanie opens the door to the markets of the Mediterranean basin (Europe, North Africa and the Middle East). As a result, a large number of shipowners, handlers and freight forwarders (Corti, Estie, SPS, Sea Invest, ALTM) are present. Maritime logistics includes three trade ports, five fishing ports, three river ports and the Rhône canal in Sète. As the region's major port, Sète is an entrance point to southern Europe, and

the second multimodal deep-water port in the French Mediterranean. Moreover, Eurocentre 'dry port', north of Toulouse, is the inland terminal of the Barcelona port authority.

Take to the skies in Occitanie: There are 10 airports, three international. Toulouse-Blagnac airport ranks second among French regions for freight, bringing together express freight (Chronopost and DHL), but also charter (Cargolux) and traditional freight players. Montpellier airport also brings together key operators, handlers and freight forwarders.

E-commerce logistics is booming in Occitanie, thanks to its consumer reach and strategic location; Amazon Logistics is one of many international entrants.





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Diesel: The Rebate Debate

Attitudes to diesel have changed. A power agnostic approach offers the trailer refrigeration industry a route to fully sustainable solutions, argues *David O'Gorman*.

For cars, the gap between petrol and diesel taxes at the pump has been constantly closing. For hauliers though, the number of countries offering fuel tax rebates and tax-recovery options has been steadily going up.

Until now. By October 2022, the British government will discontinue the rebate on red diesel – the fuel of non-road machinery and refrigeration units – as part of the initiative to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Meanwhile, France is looking at removing the diesel fuel rebate, but is also looking at reducing taxes on electricity to give hauliers a purchase incentive and make electric trucks more appealing than diesel ones – aiming at decarbonising its road freight sector by 2050 (source TransportEnvironment.org).

The thing is, whether operators burn rebated, red or white diesel, they are still burning the same amount of fuel.

Fuel-efficient: hybrid or electric

It's fair to assume that eliminating rebated diesel in isolation is not going to impact the environment - but choosing a sustainable solution will. In this sense, the withdrawal of the red diesel rebate should speed up the adoption of more advanced, sustainable transport refrigeration solutions - be it more fuel efficient, hybrid or electric.



Electrification and transition of conventional architecture is a trend that is set to continue, but the industry needs to stay agile. The future does not define one, particular power source for the refrigeration systems. There is no one single fit.

To offer a sustainable choice from the customers' business and environmental point of view, power agnostic designs seem to be the key. Following a power agnostic approach means that to deliver efficiency improvements and carbon reductions, you need to remain unbiased towards the use of any specific technologies. A refrigeration unit's power source should be adaptable to current (diesel, engine, electric) and future sustainable, alternative sources of energy, every time with maximum possible efficiency.

In trailer refrigeration, Thermo King's recently launched Advancer A-Series trailer units has been designed to address and reduce fuel consumption in most of the applications that we see running in the market today.

By trading up to Advancer, hauliers take immediate advantage of Thermo King's fuel efficiency, mitigating the expected higher costs of red diesel. Depending on the model, they can clearly monitor the fuel consumption, with the data being recorded, displayed, and made available remotely via telematics.

Advancer is between 30 and 50 percent more fuel efficient when compared to the units we see in operation today. These savings have been validated by independent authorities like Dekra in Germany and Cambridge Refrigeration Technology (CRT) and make Advancer the most efficient trailer refrigeration system under the French Energy Certification scheme.

On top of that, with a modular design, Advancer offers future-ready power agnostic capabilities that can utilise diesel, axle generator, or shore power sources.

Adding to that, Hybrid and electric Frigoblock solutions offer a plethora of options to customers concerned with the expected raising of fuel costs who are looking at their sustainability goals.

The power of hybrid

Frigoblock 'alternator-driven' refrigeration systems are powered with energy generated from the truck engine via an additional three-phase alternator. Thermo King has leveraged this technology and enables hauliers operating Thermo King trailer and rigid-bodied trucks units to create a hybrid solution, by adding a Frigoblock alternator and inverter.

This gives them the ability to switch from diesel to electric when they are running into urban areas and need to reduce their emissions and/or noise level. They can also run on hybrid for the entire journey to keep their fuel consumption at the minimum. Once back at their distribution centre, they can connect the refrigeration unit to the shore power.

David O'Gorman is Regional Director, North and Western Europe, Thermo King.

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Pallets to the People

How has the palletised freight sector adapted to the perfect storm of Brexit and Covid and what's next for the sector? *Paul Hamblin* talks to Rob Gittins, Managing Director, Palletways UK.

Palletised freight has been at the centre of the firestorm of the past 12 months, with the double whammy of Brexit and Covid. How has the past year changed your business and what did you have to do to adapt?

After Covid-19 hit and the UK locked down, the logistics industry became a vital cog in the fight against the pandemic. It made sure vital supplies kept moving and our economy remained open. It was no different for us. Our resilient staff and members worked through these difficult periods to ensure that supply chains remained strong and that the goods we shipped, ranging from medical supplies to everyday items, reached their destination.

Covid-19 has also meant a rise in people staying and working at home for extended periods of time. These habits I think will continue long after the pandemic has passed. What that has meant for us is an acceleration in the trend of pallet deliveries being made to home addresses. People are more comfortable now in ordering bulky products online and getting them delivered to their homes on pallets. This is without doubt a growth area for us.

As experienced by most logistics businesses in the UK, Brexit did come with challenges. While it has led to a general slowdown of imports and exports across all industries things are beginning to settle, and a new norm of European transport will develop. Having faced the challenges presented by Brexit it has allowed us to develop robust processes and technologies to ensure detailed information flows that allow for efficient export and import to and from the EU. Our dedicated Customs teams and facilities ensure that EU freight is processed with great accuracy and efficiency so that it can continue cross-border without issue.

Give us your view of the state of the palletised freight industry as we - hopefully - emerge from the worst of the Covid crisis. Who will the winners and losers be as we move forward?

The industry in general is strong. The pandemic has created many opportunities as well as challenges for the industry. B2C is only one growth area and those who can adapt to permanent change whilst fulfilling their standard B2B deliveries will continue to strengthen and grow. Whether B2B or B2C, the development of new services



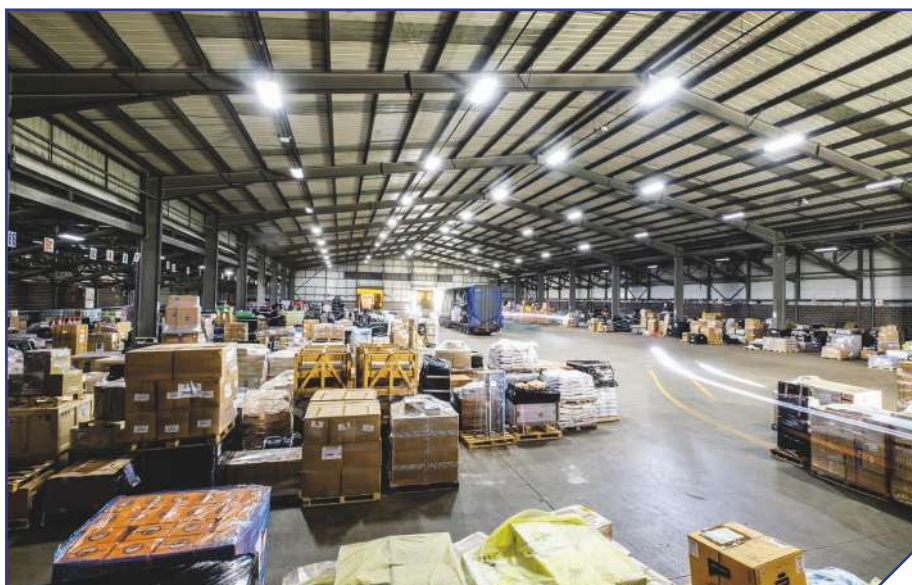
and offerings will focus on providing recipients with visibility and flexibility. This is because customer expectations are evolving as they adapt to a new norm and type of delivery.

I think also important to the health of every business in the sector is efficient working practices while working safely.

Most agree that Covid-19 has accelerated the advance to online purchase and direct delivery to customer. A full-size pallet is not a small parcel, though. Have you seen an increase in pallet delivery to home addresses? If so, what sort of items are optimised for home delivery via pallet?

Yes, online purchases have grown significantly across the board over the past year, and this trend I think is here to stay. This is also true of our own ecommerce platform, where we have seen a significant increase in those ordering pallet delivery services online. This combination has created significant increases in direct home pallet delivery

However, prior to Covid-19, home deliveries were something Palletways already specialised in. We had seen growth in the sector, where nearly 25% of our volumes were for residential addresses. It is something we have gained experience with over many years, so the sudden increase in deliveries to home addresses due to the pandemic was natural progression for our network. We had already developed tools for the home delivery market, like our industry first ETA (Estimated Time of Arrival) service and other services like evening delivery. This offered choice and flexibility to customers.



How have you had to adapt your processes to carry out these deliveries and how do you make it cost-effective?

Palletways have been prepared for the growth of this market and last year launched the industry's first palletised freight product specifically for home deliveries. Ultimately it is about offering these customers choice and flexibility.

The new Pallets to Consumers (P2C) service is for companies who sell directly to the end consumer, and need a reliable delivery partner to get their product to its destination. It aims to improve the efficiency of product deliveries and offers much-needed flexibility for those end consumers. It enables retailers to integrate their systems and website with Palletways' platforms to offer their customers a seamless service and also incorporates a set of delivery options from Premium AM, the fastest possible delivery, through to Economy. One of the main benefits of P2C that offers this flexibility and choice is the new industry first digital book-in platform. Customers who have booked the standard economy service will be offered the option to change their delivery time and date after they place an order and when the pallet is in transit, should the existing delivery allocation be inconvenient. The fact they can do this via the platform after receiving the notification provides them with more convenience and choice than has ever been offered before from the palletised freight industry.



We all hear about white vans speeding around the roads to hit tight delivery times. But a large pallet-carrying truck is a different matter, especially in tight, residential streets. What can you do to make the process safer and easier and to avoid complaints from irate locals, which might reflect badly on Palletways?

It is difficult to compare parcel and pallet deliveries in this instance. Parcel delivery drivers will have many more addresses to visit in a day, delivering many more consignments than a pallet delivery driver. The parcel delivery driver will inevitably have different pressures because of this. Urban C&D Vehicles have been utilised to deliver specifically to residential addresses and are more suited to these areas, making it more efficient and safer for the drivers and recipients during the pallet delivery process. We always prioritise the safety of our staff and customers. Our drivers are trained in delivering their consignments safely and efficiently, and we have specific customer education

campaigns to ensure they know exactly what to expect from a pallet delivery both in terms of safety and service.

We know that sustainability matters, both to bottom lines and to consumers. What steps are you taking to make pallet transport more sustainable?

Sustainability has become key when looking at business strategies. By its very nature the hub and network model that Palletways have in effect works towards a more sustainable model, that promotes consolidation of freight and minimum empty truck miles, where local members also travel fewer miles for collection and deliveries. Our regional Hub Model also feeds into this as it is a more robust approach to reducing carbon emissions. With four regional Hubs, Palletways Members in those regions have to travel fewer miles to trunk their freight into the network. Where many other networks only have one national hub our regional hub model means that freight that is to be collected and delivered within one region can remain within that region rather than travelling out to a national hub before being picked up and delivered back into the region. This saves HGV miles, fuel and significantly reduces carbon emissions.

Other initiatives we are exploring and adopting include the use of bio fuels and electric vehicles, new more efficient FLT fleets, paperless systems and waste management systems. To underpin this commitment we report directly to the government with our annual SECR (Streamlined Energy and Carbon Report) showing our energy and fuel usage and improvements we have been making.

www.palletways.com



Goodbye Diesel

The surge to alternative fuel solutions is taking us to a new world, says *Graham Neagus*.

With so many sectors of the global economy deeply affected by the pandemic, the resilience of the logistics sector and the importance that it plays have been clearly demonstrated. Indeed, 2020 saw record growth of vehicle sales at Renault Trucks within the LCV sector, fuelled by increases in home delivery. As we approach the end of Q1 in 2021, one might have expected to see sales slow - but no.

As 2021 gathers pace, so does the inevitable change that is driving this sector. For while many may quote 2030 as the date they need to be ready for electric vans, it is the end date, not the beginning. In the UK, the switch to electric has accelerated at rapid pace with the initial support of Government grants. And while the recent announcement of a cut in the Plug in Van Grant may slow the growth in the short term, it is evident that over the next decade the transition will take place regardless.

Planning for alternative fuel solutions within depots (electric, HVO and soon hydrogen fuel cells) is now on many boardroom agendas. Vehicle selection and price are only part of the story of introducing electric vehicles to an operational fleet. For example, the move to electric will impact on many areas of your business, including

property or facilities management, purchasing, engineering, distribution, energy supply, sales and legal, so it is important to ensure you fully understand the technology in order to make a well-informed decision. Experts who take a consultative approach can help.

Renault Trucks, for example, has been working with operators over the past ten years to prove the operational capability and commercial viability of fully electric vehicle technologies. Its latest generation of ZE 100% electric vehicles from 3.1 tonnes right up to 26 tonnes are already in operation with customers - proven performance with zero tailpipe emissions, backed by proven experts in the dealer network ready to help fleets transition to electromobility. In answer to the future needs of the logistics sector, a new 40 tonne ZE tractor unit is being prepared to meet the needs of regional and inter-regional transport from 2023.

In depots very soon, the sight of a diesel tank or bunker in the corner of the yard and a tanker coming once a week to refill it will be ancient history as we migrate into a cleaner, quieter and greener future. And fleet managers will need to be as aware of the cost per kWh of electricity as they are of a gallon of diesel today.



Graham Neagus is Head of LCV, Renault Trucks UK & Ireland.

Just as road transport operators will adapt to the changing environment, so must van and truck manufacturers, who will start to offer a complete electromobility solution, packaging the vehicle, maintenance, connectivity and access to energy provision.

As our societal needs and expectations change, so the transport and logistics sector adapts. We have seen extraordinary growth in the variety of assets now being used in last-mile deliveries including vans, ecargo bikes, drones and even autonomous delivery solutions to meet the challenges of an ever more demanding world.





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Suez Crisis: What Next?

The blockage of the Suez Canal in March has long-term implications on both trade and visibility, says *Josh Brazil*.

The Suez Canal crisis was an incident cut from the same cloth as COVID-19 in that it paralysed maritime operations, albeit by very different means. While the pandemic shrunk port operations due to the necessity of social distancing, the *Ever Given* sealed shut the maritime bottleneck between Asia and Europe. Running aground and staying there for six days, the *Ever Given* stopped over 400 vessels from reaching their destination ports across the two continents.

Roughly 13% of the world's maritime trade and 10% of all oil shipments exit the Suez Canal, witnessing around 19,000 vessel crossings each year. The immediate aftermath of the crisis saw vessels rerouted by shipping lines across alternative routes, including around the Cape of Good Hope at the tip of Africa. This episode is expected to make a measurable dent in annual global trade growth. The German insurance firm Allianz estimates growth to reduce by 0.2% due to the six-day crisis.

The holdup eased after relentless round-the-clock operations by the Egyptian authorities, but the ripples set off by the logistics bottleneck have far-reaching consequences. The global maritime ecosystem operates as a cohesive unit, with ship routes and container movement mapped to precision across ports. This balancing act of maritime container trade was tilted badly by the 'black swan' event, as the containers aboard the queued ships at the Suez numbered in the hundreds of thousands.



Global ports, especially in Europe and Asia, went on an overdrive, preparing themselves for almost simultaneous port calls from the delayed vessels. Congestion is a persistent issue across several major ports, anticipated to be exacerbated by the Suez crisis. Congestion is pernicious, seeping through ports and into drayage operations. Thousands of trucks are needed to haul all containers aboard a vessel, and simultaneous port calls caused by the crisis will significantly draw down truck availability for vessels that follow. Congestion can prop up the situation, creating chaos that can be sustained over weeks.

Port traffic apart, the Suez Canal crisis did nothing to help the already-tight container capacity available in the market. Container freight rates have risen spectacularly since last summer as strong trade volumes outstripped available capacity. The Suez crisis has pushed Asia-Europe shippers to ship goods via alternate routes, including moving cargo from Asia via the US to

Europe. Notably, freight prices across the Atlantic have climbed by roughly 40% from the US East Coast to North Europe and by nearly 30% between North Europe and the US East Coast in the first two weeks of April.

Aside from the race to book available containers, shippers are also struggling to reserve berths at ports. This is complicated by factors like longer dwell times due to lack of availability in intermodal chassis and decreased port activity due to continuing COVID-19 restrictions. Demurrage and detention charges have been soaring for shippers and carriers - a predicament that has gone unsolved for months across major ports - and will worsen due to the Suez crisis.

The implications of a logistics gridlock resonate across several industries as material availability becomes a cause for concern. For instance, the automotive industry is in deep trouble with sourcing semiconductor chips for auto production, with the congestion pushing wait times further.

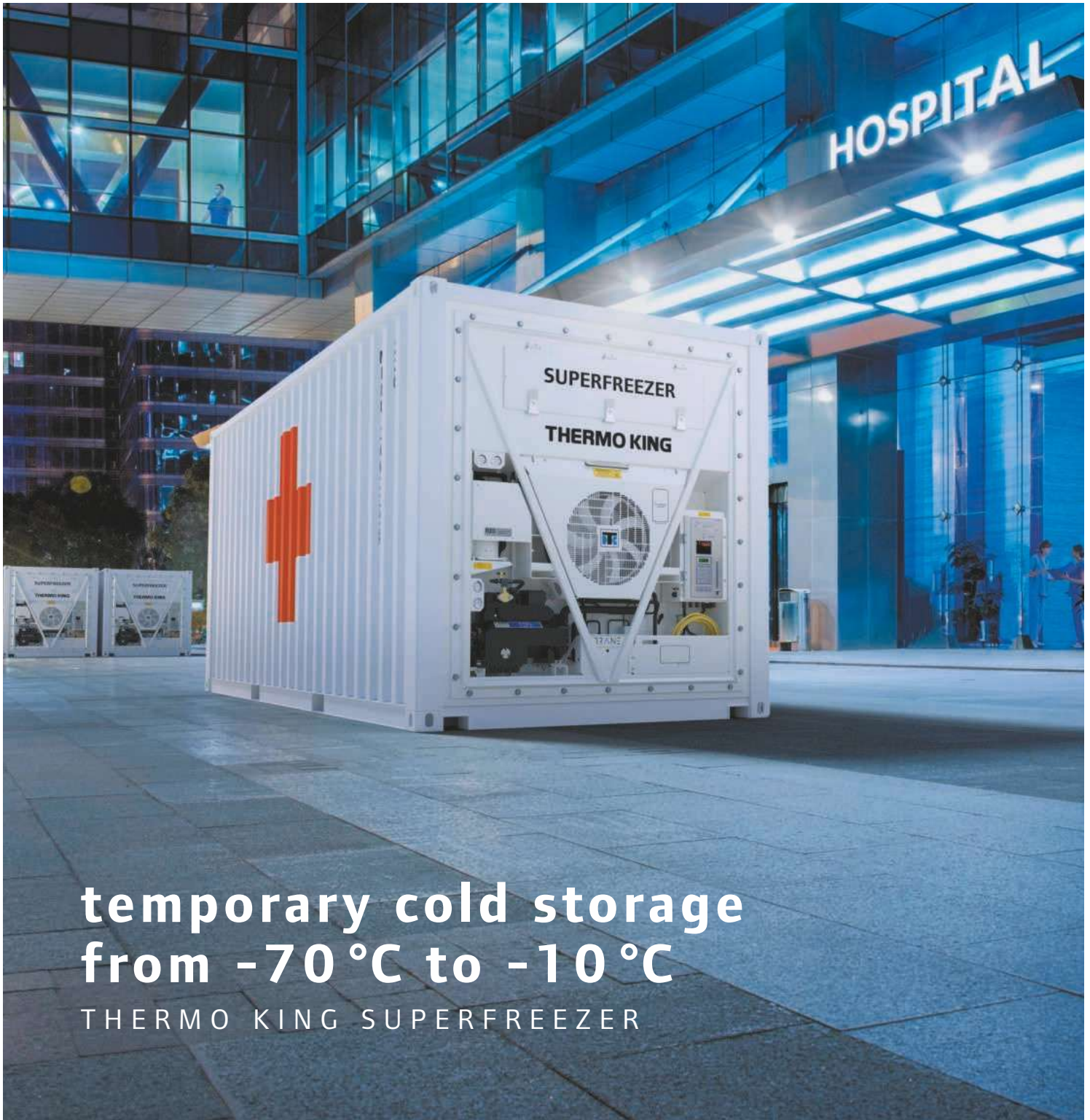
The maritime industry has moved from being favourable to shippers to becoming a 'carrier market.' A global trade lane outage adds more pain to shippers, as disarray supply chains and tight capacity availability will burden shipper bottom lines. This crisis could serve as a wake-up call for logistics stakeholders to actively pursue operational visibility and keep their business flexible to meet such unforeseen disruptions.

Josh Brazil is VP Marketing at project44.

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New Amsterdam

Amsterdam Is the 'New London' for startups and logistics firms in the Brexit fallout, argues *Jon Fath*.

Amsterdam is making significant gains in the tech world, the startup world, and where they meet in the middle, with a record €1.4 billion being invested last year. There are many reasons for this landmark shift for the port city - one obvious one being the recent changes within the EU put in place by the Brexit legislation. However, there are many other fundamental factors in play.

Location and convenience

A city's capacity to become a major hub often depends on its ability to efficiently and conveniently receive people and cargo internationally. Schiphol, Amsterdam's international airport, saw almost 72 million passengers in 2019, making it the third-busiest airport in Europe in terms of passenger volume and the busiest in Europe in terms of aircraft movements. The airport hosts 104 airlines that fly to 97 countries and is Europe's third-largest cargo airport.

The port of Rotterdam is the biggest seaport in Europe and the largest outside Asia in terms of volume, and is just an hour away from Amsterdam by car. In 2017, Rotterdam was the world's tenth-largest port in terms of annual cargo tonnage. Schiphol and Rotterdam's capacity for world-ranking facilitation of cargo helps to support the more than 400 transport and logistics companies operating in the local area.

The Zuidas, Amsterdam's business district, houses large powerhouses such as Google within the international business world. Also known as the



financial mile, the journey from the Zuidas to Schiphol is only eight minutes on average. This established infrastructure for business has primed the pump for smaller businesses to move in and help the ecosystem flourish. There are hundreds of coworking spaces throughout the city, hosting many of the up-and-coming tech startups.

Big city, small town feel

Amsterdam combines the advantages of being a European capital with the feeling of a small-scale city. All relevant business contacts are just a stone's throw away - which makes the processes of networking, creation, and production fast and flexible.

If you are embarking as a startup, you are not alone. Amsterdam has a long history as a budding business hub and leading centre of trade, so there is an established infrastructure of progressive thinkers, business accelerators, and networks. The city is home to numerous incubator programs for startups, making it a breeding ground for new companies.

The government has also taken to fuelling Amsterdam's business escalation by supporting entrepreneurs and startups through its Ambitious Entrepreneurship Action Plan. Setting aside €75 million to provide early-stage financial support for startups, this program aims to provide better access to capital, knowledge, innovation, and the global market. This makes Amsterdam an ideal place

to validate and tweak your business model, determining if your product or idea is technically feasible and suitable for the market.

Talented workforce

Amsterdam is also home to an extremely talented and diverse workforce, providing access to a large labour pool of highly motivated, well-educated, and multilingual potential employees.

In Amsterdam, 44% of the population has attended higher education institutions, with 80% able to speak English and 90% able to speak two or more languages. Amsterdam thereby provides access to a lot more multilingual people than London, beating the average of Londoners by a landslide where only an average 22% of residents reported a main language other than English. Coupled with this talent pool, Amsterdam's economic climate is also very welcoming to highly-skilled migrants, with an opportunity for them to qualify for a 30% personal tax income advantage.

Taking a cue from startup capitals around the world, the broad spectrum of startups in Amsterdam keeps it away from saturation. This encourages more interesting interactions amongst different businesses to see where possible synergies lie. In combination with the Dutch entrepreneurial mindset, the Amsterdam startup culture is growing rapidly.

Jon Fath is CEO at transport planning optimiser Transmetrics.

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SME Specialist

As the ROI on automation becomes more tangible for SMEs, a new breed of integrator is there to help. *Paul Hamblin* talks to Iain Gillard of Big Box Group about the opportunities.

Automation used to be about the multi-billion turnover, blue-chip global players putting out global tenders for eye-watering sums. Not any more. Return on Investment (ROI) on warehouse automation is becoming both faster and more visible for a whole new tier of organisations.

For some, it's a scary prospect. Seasoned managers who have had very successful careers making decisions about trucks and material handling equipment (MHE) are having to go out of their comfort zones to explore frighteningly complex technology and solutions. Where do they start?

Step forward, Iain Gillard and Big Box Group. A UK industry veteran steeped in the world of MHE hardware, Iain founded his East Yorkshire-based concern initially as a highly effective storage and racking supplier, but over the past decade it has made increasing strides as a full integrator, now with three companies within the group: Big Box Intralogistics, Big Box Automation and Big Box Buildings. Big Box's core racking base has now expanded to also include full service options - its forklift partner is UK-based Flexi, it works with Balyo on AGVs and with GreyOrange in goods-to-person picking robots. Big Box Buildings designs and builds warehouses, including temporary and semi-permanent structures in steel and aluminium.

"We see the customer warehouse as an empty box, and we build solutions from there," he tells me. "It's about offering a turnkey solution with full service capability. That's propelled us to where we are now, with storage solutions and automation solutions. It's a great, highly competitive proposal for any end user or any client looking at this area of their business. We know they'll go to other suppliers also, we know we'll be price-checked, but as long as we can come up with a solution which is right and which is competitive, we stand a very good chance against anyone."

The crucial word there is 'right'. What gives him the confidence that he is providing the right solution for the client?

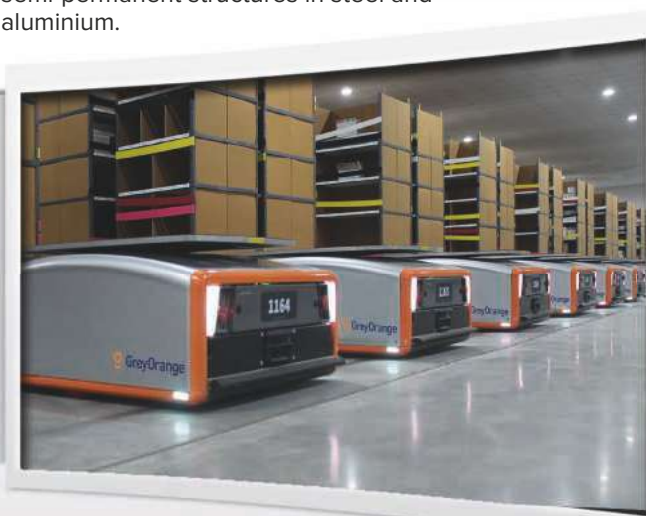
"Because we are much more than just a racking supplier. Let's think of an imaginary example. Let's say a client wants 10,000 pallets as a capacity. A standard racking supplier will simply quote for 10,000 pallets. We will dig deeper and may find out, for instance, that the customer is sending out 40 lorries a day. It's pretty clear now that the system can't breathe, it can't function. So it's about finding a solution that works for the customer and improves his processes, rather than us thinking purely in terms of our own profit, or in just winning the business at whatever cost.



Once we model that solution with the MHE, then we are providing a unique offering to the customer. We can put a raft of ideas to them: 'if you go down the VNA route, this will be your capacity, if you prefer reach trucks then this is your capacity', and so on. So the end user can have comfort that we know what we're talking about, that we have the right answers for them."

It's a small team which, he says, packs a considerable punch and provides the personal attention that comes from lean structures. "We offer a specialist service based on our years of experience in the industry, we know from first-hand experience what works and what doesn't and we have no hesitation in being very honest about that. Add the building side of the business, we become a very tangible prospect for a customer to consider as a full-service provider."

Iain Gillard makes no bones about automation's place at the centre of the offering. "We know which direction the



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industry is headed and we think the pandemic has brought it forward by five years," he asserts. The result is a new opportunity for SMEs, he explains.

"Of course all the big blue-chip multi-billion turnover businesses are likely to have established systems and relationships in place, global tender agreements etc. But the ROI now for AGVs and AMRs is based on one-and-a-half to two-and-a-half-year returns, so the prices have become tangible for SME markets. You don't need to be a £500m business at all to understand that the ROI is very available, especially if you're running a two or three-shift process. Remember that AGV technology has actually been around for a long time, but it's only recently that the flexibility of SLAM technology has made it easier to implement and reconfigure as required."

He makes a strong claim for the business case and its increasing affordability. "When you add it up, 70% of the cost of material handling is the labour, the driver. And we know the labour is not available. It's not about

replacing jobs - it's about giving the ROI back to the client. If you are a company looking at your ROI over five years, and we present you with an AGV product, that company can now see that it's worth investing £400k because their historic five-year costs might be £1-1.2 million. So we want to open all ideas and all doors to our customers. Our worst case scenario is if an enquirer simply wants a price for racking - then it's simply about competing on price. Where we shine is when a customer says, 'I've got a problem, help me sort this out.'"

Can he offer examples of where such an approach has reaped benefits for his customers?

"On the storage side, we have a customer in West Yorkshire, his business has grown well, but because of that speed, it had to fight fires in getting there. We've implemented vertical carousels, order picking solutions, reconfigured the racking to suit the new processes, as well as an unloading conveyor for containers, where previously they had been manually unloading.

"Then there are customers who've never explored the opportunity presented by articulated forklifts. We've reconfigured a production area for a customer in Grimsby to get them another 4000 pallets onsite.

"We've also implemented 28 AMR sortation robots in Rugby a fulfilment business. That's just gone live with a 2500 per hour throughput."

For such an integrator, it's essential to work with proven partners in whom all sides can have complete confidence. "I've known Flexi for a long time and I'm very happy with both their trucks and their product support," he reflects. "We've signed with GreyOrange for our Automated Mobile Robot (AMR) offering. The bot market is growing very fast, there are over 100 manufacturers already, with many coming out of Asia. You can buy a bot from £20k up to £100k, but it's important to bear in mind that the bot is only 20% of the system, the real cost is in the software. And GreyOrange software is absolutely first-rate in my view."

Picking the right solution for your business is the key. "There are no bad forklift trucks out there - there is a forklift out there to do anything you want," Iain Gillard promises. "The question is, do you want it to do a couple of hours a day, or do you want to use it seven days a week for three shifts? The bot world is just the same. That's why our job is to be aware of all the options and be able to present them with expertise to our clients."

For now, the Covid-induced challenge for Big Box Group is getting out to see people face-to-face to show what they can do. When that time comes later this year, they have big plans for your business.

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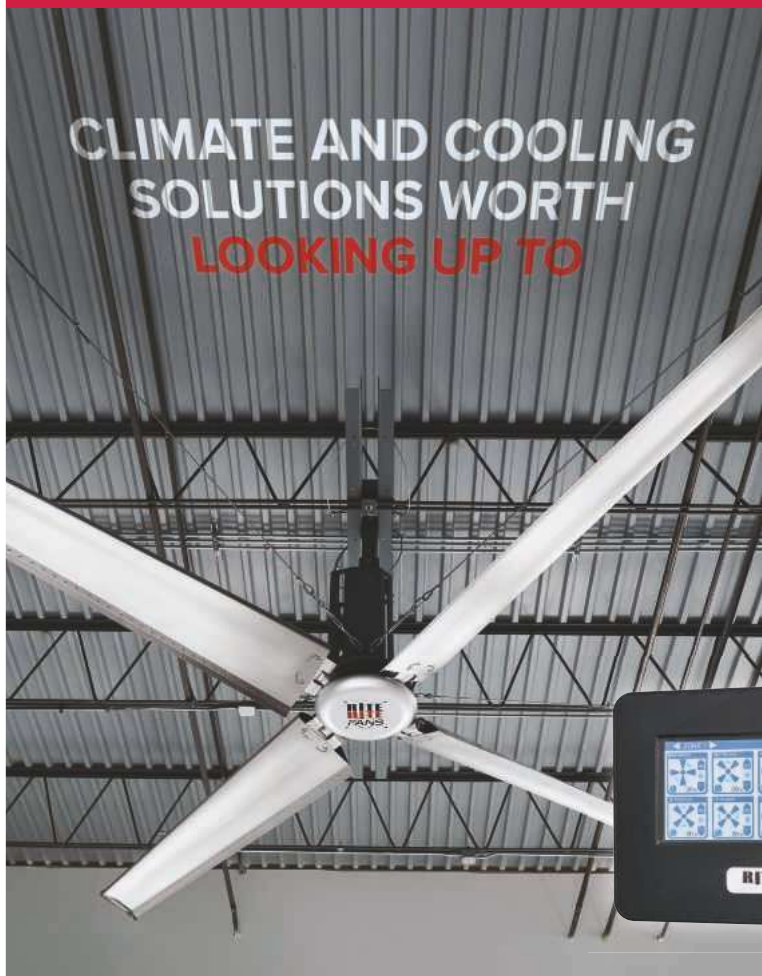
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Advanced Vehicle Restraint

Netherlands-based loading dock specialist Stertil Dock Products has launched a new version of its successful automated vehicle restraint system.

Stertil says the COMBILOK G² answers the challenges of the modern day distribution centre which is often 24/7/365, needing to accommodate a wide variety of commercial vehicles and all building situations. Intensively tested in the field at a variety of customer locations internationally, the Stertil Dock Products COMBILOK G² is TÜV approved according to EC Machinery Directive 2006/42/EC and is CE certified.

The COMBILOK G² blocks the rear wheel of the vehicle during the loading and unloading process in order to prevent accidents to personnel, goods, vehicles and the warehouse building. Premature 'drive-off' happens when time-pressure or miscommunication between the driver and warehouse personnel leads to the vehicle being driven away while loading or unloading is still in progress. The other potential hazard is the phenomenon known as 'vehicle creep', where due to the continued movement of the forklift truck in and out of the parked vehicle, a dangerous gap gradually opens between the vehicle floor and the warehouse floor.

Stertil says its brand-new COMBILOK G² is the most versatile automated vehicle restraint for all types and models of vehicles: from small parcel vans to large articulated vehicles, whether small or large wheel diameters

and for vehicles with or without skirts, even vehicles with a tailgate. It has a versatile blocking height range from just 240 mm up to 460 mm. The product has a compact design, without extra units mounted on the loading bay, as found with other conventional systems offered in the market.

Bart van der Steen, Global Sales Manager at Stertil Dock Products, says: "How do you improve on a best in class product? At Stertil we take a different approach and develop products that answer the safety issues being faced today, tomorrow and long into the future."

He explains that the existing COMBILOK G² remains fully available. "Both of our COMBILOK systems prevent the driver from prematurely driving away from the dock while the vehicle is still being loaded or unloaded; what we look at is the specific customer need and what is right for their particular situation. For instance, due to internationalisation the transport sector is confronted with language barriers. Miscommunication can also be caused by being distracted in a split second, for example by a mobile phone call. Whatever the cause may be, with the COMBILOK automatic vehicle restraint systems our goal is to help prevent accidents, damage to goods and buildings and create a safe loading bay dock environment."

Space-saving

With 4.8 metres in length and only 6.3 metres installation space required, the COMBILOK G² is the most space-saving automated vehicle restraint system on the market, according to Stertil, offering extra shunting space and freedom for vehicles. All hydraulics and electronic components are protected inside the sturdy galvanised housing. "It's a matter of plug & play," says van der Steen.

The galvanised construction of the G² is very robust and is engineered with fewer moving parts leading to reduced maintenance and repair. The Stertil Hydraulic system is housed in the frame and, says the company, not exposed like other conventional systems available on the market making it extremely weather-proof even in extreme conditions and thus has a long life span. The COMBILOK G² also works as a deterrent to potential theft by securing the vehicle to the loading bay and hindering access to either the vehicle or the building.

Black and yellow Stertil chevron striping offers perfect visibility while a contra wheel guide helps the driver position the vehicle more safely and accurately to the loading bay. An advanced guidance system with automated indirect energy-efficient LED lighting ensures absolute visibility and safe guidance for the vehicle driver especially when the light is poor. A white sound option is available for suburban locations, especially developed to reduce environmental impact caused by noise.

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Fan Control

A new management system for optimum control of HVLS fans promises low-cost, high-efficiency climate control in the warehouse.

Rite-Hite has launched a new wireless fan control system to further improve the working conditions in warehouse and logistics environments.

The new Fan Commander 2.0 is a touch-screen control box which enables operators to remotely control fan settings via Wi-Fi from a single location. Thanks to its powerful and innovative technology, the new Fan Commander 2.0 can coordinate the operation of up to 24 high-volume, low-speed (HVLS) Rite-Hite fans, located up to 120 metres apart.

Fans can be arranged into four separate zones and still be operated simultaneously or independently, as well as being turned on and off. Fan speeds are also adjustable in 1% increments between the 20% and 100% settings. Weekly schedules can also be programmed, allowing fans to operate only when needed, hence maximising energy saving.

Additionally, the new Fan Commander 2.0, can be fully integrated within a Building Management System (BMS), enabling users to run diagnostics with other building functions, providing further energy saving capabilities and delivering greater employee comfort.

Thorsten Mauritz, Marketing Manager (Europe) at Rite-Hite, says Fan Commander 2.0 is a great energy saving product: "The Fan Commander 2.0 puts facilities managers in total control of their fans," he explains.

"In the winter months, the fans only operate when needed, reducing energy consumption and reducing costs. In the summer, when fans are in greater demand, they can be programmed to deliver the optimum performance, taking into account different working patterns and the busiest times of the day."

The Fan Commander 2.0 is compatible with the full range of Rite-Hite Revolution HVLS fans. It further contributes to operational efficiency by removing the need to visit each

individual fan to make adjustments. The control station is password-protected to prevent unauthorised users from adjusting fan speeds.

The Revolution fan is Rite-Hite's original HVLS Fan and has become today's standard for low cost, high-efficiency climate control, delivering the most air movement of any HVLS fan on the market. Thanks to blade diameters of up to seven metres, these fans are ideal for any large facilities with high ceilings. Rite-Hite Revolution fans range offers a simple upgrade for any facility, and a smart, economical, green choice.

A number of safeguards are built into the Fan Commander. It features an internal battery, so it retains custom settings in the event of a power failure. Additionally, the control boxes used to relay signals to and from the main control station can be mounted high on walls or columns to avoid damage and minimize the cost of wiring.

High Volume Low Speed (HVLS) fans are typically thought of as devices for keeping a facility cool in the hot summer months, but they also play a critical role in maintaining heat in winter. When the air moves in a conical shape, heat not only gets forced back down to where employees and products are, but it also keeps airflow steady throughout the room. Large-bladed fans have the power to move stagnant air approximately 85ft (25m) in every direction, helping to ensure even temperatures in every corner of a facility. This matters because maintaining a constant airflow prevents the air conditioning units from kicking in unnecessarily and using wasted energy.

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Defeating Downtime

A German dairy plant simply cannot afford any downtime of its doors, because failure would cripple its entire logistics process.

Berchtesgadener Land is Bavaria's oldest organic dairy, with heritage dating back to 1973. It comprises 1,700 farms, one cooperative and 300 million kilogrammes of milk per year.

State-of-the-art systems, including Efaflex high-speed doors, are essential to guarantee that fresh products and long-life milk arrive at the right place and at the right time.

"The most important thing for me is the reliability of Efaflex doors," says Johann Hager, their Senior Technical Manager, when giving a reason for using 93 of the world leading manufacturer's industrial high-speed doors.

All of the dairy's loaded pallets of produce pass through the EFA-SRT® MS Machine Protection doors which open and close every minute, as part of their journey from production onto the electronically controlled rail conveyors. "We can't afford any downtime of the doors. This would cripple the entire logistics process. In half an hour, 90 pallets leave the production area. They would stop on their respective conveyor line instead of being transported into the chilled high bay warehouse."

Efaflex's space-saving, self-contained design of the EFA-SRT®MS machine protection doors make them ideally suited as movable separating guards, as they are performance level "d" and can be adapted perfectly to the required safety devices. They are exclusively used to lock openings in or around machines in accordance with

the Machinery Directive 2006/42/EC. They outperform others due to their extraordinary resilience and stability, capable of up to 250,000 operating cycles per year. The EFA-SRT® MS door leaf is fully transparent and equipped with warning strips, with coloured, highly tear-resistant, and transversely stable curtains are also available as standard. All curtain versions are free from substances that could interfere with the lacquering process.

The interplay between a high-performance frequency inverter controller and a functionally adapted drive makes the high cycle rate of up to seven cycles per minute possible in production processes. Because of the lack of a weight counterbalance mechanism, the side frames are extremely slim, meaning that any maintenance work or spare parts required are reduced significantly.

A transparent cover provides a clear view of the integrated safety end-limit switch of cat. 4 / PI according to DIN EN ISO 13849-1. Thanks to the optional floor supports, the safety devices can also be installed as a stand-alone system, with any uneven ground compensated using levelling screws.

All products which are deposited within the 20,000 pallet bays in the three high-bay warehouses are channelled via the Efaflex doors.

All three warehouses are completely automated. Two of the buildings are cold storage buildings which are maintained at 4 degrees Celsius.



"We are a sustainable operation throughout," explains Andreas Koch, Deputy Technical Manager. "This includes and ranges from reducing the fuel consumption for our milk vans thanks to more modern vehicles and route optimisation, right up to completely foregoing PET bottles and using cardboard packaging made from renewable raw materials. It is clear that we are also trying to keep the energy costs of operating our high-bay warehouses as low as possible for climate protection." The exceptionally insulated EFA-SST®-L Premium spiral doors support these efforts of the dairy cooperative in every respect. They reduce exposure and the loss of cold air due to their rapid opening and closing speeds, with a keep-open time of a mere ten seconds!

"The Efaflex portfolio offers doors for almost all areas of use, and the advice given by their field service technicians is specifically tailored to the installation issue," Johann Hager describes the excellent cooperation with the door manufacturer. "We need doors that are suitable for the conveyor lines, and also use their stainless-steel effect cleanroom doors for the hygiene locks between the first production building and the bottling plant."

The maintenance costs for the doors are very low, according to Johann Hager. "The customer service is excellent, and they arrive on site quickly when we need it. We are also planning a further 23 new doors for the fourth production building in the dairy. If the budget allows it, we will also work with Efaflex again here," says a smiling Johann Hager.

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Watching Brief

Video surveillance of logistics properties is about security – and a great deal more besides. *Paul Hamblin* meets *Rishi Lodhia*, MD EMEA for Eagle Eye Networks.

Rishi Lodhia is a veteran in the cloud video surveillance market - he was CEO and co-founder of Cameranager back in the early 2000s, and after selling that business to Panasonic in 2013, bought it back again as part of Eagle Eye Networks in 2017. He offers a vision of security throughout the supply chain enabled by cloud surveillance.

“The overarching tenet of logistics is that effectively you’re looking after someone else’s assets at multiple sites and in transit,” he explains. “As a result it’s the responsibility of the logistics company or department to ensure that those assets remain protected and secured at all times throughout the total supply chain. The ability to view those packages and assets as they move through the supply chain from one central location is key. Keeping an eye on the supply chain, the commercial goods within it, and the people who work in it is a core capability of surveillance. Ultimately surveillance matters because, used correctly, it means that throughout the entire journey assets are kept safe and in the right hands, and if something should go astray, it’s easily traceable.”

So cloud-based assets offer a lot more than a small camera perched over the front door? “The real advantage of today’s modern cloud-based video surveillance systems is that they deliver so much more than a visual overview of the live and historic situation. The availability and integration of computer vision and artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming what was previously just an ‘observation’ tool into something that can deliver real business

operational advantages. In the same way self-driving and electric cars are transforming mobility and transportation, the combination of cloud-based video surveillance and AI is revolutionising the video surveillance industry and will be very impactful in the logistics industry.”

It sounds good - but can he give an example of how it might work? “Here’s a great example. These past 12 months we’ve all witnessed the growth of e-commerce businesses. The importance of picking and shipping the right product to the right customer is a given. But mistakes happen. With a cloud-based video surveillance system it’s possible to provide 24x7 customer support. Footage is immediately available that shows what is actually happening in the distribution centres. Where did an error occur? What needs to happen to make things right? All this insight is available in real time to resolve any customer queries.”

Taking it one step further, he suggests integrating the cloud based video solution directly into the customer’s support software. This enables video footage to be shared directly with the customer so they can see their shipment’s journey through the package line. Looking even further ahead, computer vision is a field of AI that enables digital images from cameras and videos to accurately identify and classify objects - and then act on what they ‘see’. “The combination of computer vision and AI is going to significantly help to accelerate the automation of manual work and enable autonomous distribution and logistics centres,” he suggests.



All very ground-breaking - but we all know that security cameras are very often switched off or malfunctioning. “The problem is, many video surveillance systems in use today are frankly outdated. These legacy systems require monotonous monitoring or a meticulous manual review after each triggered event to extract useful information. This places serious limitations on the effectiveness of the technology and the ability of organisations to more broadly apply it to real world security, safety and business challenges. And of course, if the cameras are switched off, nothing gets recorded anyway. With a cloud based system, alerts are directly presented when a camera is offline and they can even be rebooted remotely saving time and money.”

Regulatory compliance matters, too. “Video surveillance footage has to be kept for a designated periods, for instance. When it comes to an on-premises solution, adapting that to ensure you can meet changing regulatory requirements can be difficult - in some cases impossible. With a cloud-based solution, it’s easy to change.”

Download Eagle Eye’s white paper on ‘Analog Video to Cloud’ from their website.

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Emerging Markets

Agility's annual Emerging Markets Logistics Index has become a useful marker for the global logistics sector. *Paul Hamblin* was at this year's presentation.

In its 12th annual incarnation, this was the first Emerging Markets report from Agility and research partner Transport Intelligence (Ti) that was able to measure significant impact from the dreaded C-word. It was no surprise that Covid had a significant impact on the responses of the 1200+ executives, drawn from 50 countries, which fed the report's content - gratifyingly, the optimism for the future that many expressed offered a welcome counterpoint.

What is the report about? The clue is in the title. Countries from Emerging Markets regions are ranked by Transport Intelligence according to their performance in three categories, each divided into thirds: domestic logistics capability, looking at such factors as national economic performance, population and income equality; international logistics, incorporating the size of its market and important considerations such as the strength and security of its border control measures; and business fundamentals, to include the country's regulatory safeguards and overall stability for business.

Ti Head of Research Nick Bailey explained that there are three main ways in which a country is likely to hold or boost its place on the ranking. The first is size and scale, a simple

explanation for China and India continuing to hold the top spots. The second is for countries showing fast-rising potential, to include rapidly growing ecommerce capability, which accounts for the steady ascents in recent years of Indonesia, Malaysia and Vietnam. The third is for those countries where business fundamentals are firmly established, such as the GCC countries of the Middle East.

The factors that prevent countries rising up the ranking are the ones you would still expect - poor transport infrastructure and corruption are no match for proven economic growth in boosting growth for Emerging Market countries with serious ambition.

The Covid Impact

The report found - of course - that Covid had a major say in economic performance in 2020, but what will cheer observers is the recognition that confidence is still high among managers in the overall opportunities ahead for them. The picture was grim - a 75% drop in air freight in April 2020, still 20% down year-on-year in December. Maritime's difficulties with the container crisis in China and port congestion more recently are already well known.

But only 20% of respondents are now less confident in their Emerging Markets strategy post-Covid, with just over half either more confident or with their views unchanged. Sixty per cent of respondents say that they will now definitely look again at their global logistics strategy, but a strong 40% stated either that they will not or that it is still too early to say.

Asked to state what will most impact on their paths back to growth, the domestic and international pandemic naturally figured most highly, but Ti's John Manners-Bell visualises a longer-term



Agility Emerging Market Logistics Index 2021: The Top 10 (2020 position in brackets)

- | | |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1. China (1) | 7. Mexico (8) |
| 2. India (2) | 8. Vietnam (11) |
| 3. Indonesia (4) | 9. Qatar (7) |
| 4. UAE (3) | 10. Turkey (10) |
| 5. Malaysia (5) | |
| 6. Saudi Arabia (6) | |

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Optimising Production Logistics

A new survey reveals some surprising truths about the IT optimisation opportunity for transport logistics in manufacturing and production facilities. *Paul Hamblin* delved into the details.

Logistics is centrally linked to two fundamental core challenges - let's call them opportunities - that economies as well as societies face: digitisation and climate change. Both issues have a huge impact on how humans live and work today and in the future.

It's generally accepted that integrating technological innovations in logistics is one significant way in which countries and businesses can develop more sustainable, efficient, and resource-friendly economies. Some companies are already participating in this transformation; for instance, by working towards implementing a zero-emission internal logistics plan by a specific year.

With this ambition front of mind, a study, carried out between October 2020 and January 2021 by global software specialist INFORM, asked 121 German logistics and supply chain specialists, chosen at random, to answer the following questions:

- What do our company in-plant transport logistics look like? How are our processes organised? What is our transport volume and how are transport jobs executed?
- What is the importance of production transport management to the overall corporate process?
- To what degree is the company able to manage, optimise, and track transport jobs using intelligent systems?
- What does the logistics IT environment look like? What are the opportunities and challenges?

When INFORM carried out a similar survey in 2013, production companies did not have technologically advanced or optimised manufacturing logistics processes in place. Half of the surveyed companies managed their logistics processes on demand, and almost 41% had no way to keep record of transport orders. Only 18.5% used intelligent management systems. The survey wanted to ask: what, if anything, has changed since then?

Results in Summary

Transport Management is complex:

More than 100 transport orders per day must be managed by 71.5% of the surveyed companies. Because as few as 10 transport jobs can result in 3.6 million sequential transport orders, this means that the majority of businesses are faced with a complex transport planning situation. This is particularly true in the case of transport orders triggered at the last minute, which makes it harder to optimise efficiently. Typically, stackers (95%) are still used for transport in these cases, followed



Dr. Torsten Inkmann is surprised by the low number of companies using Cloud solutions.

by tugger trains and towing vehicles (34% each) and lastly driverless transport systems [DTS] (25%) - this last type has doubled since 2013, although the general breakdown of vehicle types has changed little from the 2013 study.

High relevance of on-site transport management: 76% of those surveyed find in-plant transport jobs relevant or very relevant to the overall success of the company. Only 10% completely agreed with the assertion that 'production is the core of the company with logistics only a necessary secondary function'. The evidence shows that the processes used by



TREND REPORT* THE LARGEST CHALLENGES FACING IN-PLANT TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT

*Size of surveyed companies (n=121)



logistics and production are inextricably interconnected and schedulers are faced with highly complex tasks. Enterprises with modernised production facilities designed for flexibility and resilience in production can no longer keep up with a logistics on demand model, as was still practised in 2013 by 50% of the surveyed companies.

Lack of clarity on costs: Despite the recognition of in-plant transport relevance, two thirds of companies never record the costs they incur for individual transport jobs, or they simply assign them to a general cost centre. Just 7% of those surveyed were able to provide information about the costs of individual transport jobs when asked. This result suggests that optimising in-plant transport management is perhaps not as high a priority for these companies as it perhaps should be.

The main challenges: Respondents named the following as their three largest challenges facing in-plant transport management: increasing productivity (80%), adhering to schedules (73%), ensuring reliable supply to production (65%), and achieving greater ability to plan (34%).

How they would fix it: The companies surveyed identified the following as the most critical solution strategies over the short to medium term: JIT/JIS supply (48%), driverless transport system (DTS) implementation (47%), and transport control system implementation (42%).

The logistics IT opportunity: 83% of companies find logistics systems relevant or very relevant to the success of in-plant transport management and thus the success of the company. Yet, most companies use only warehouse management and ERP systems for transport control and material flow tracking. At least 80% of those surveyed do not use technologies with intelligent functions such as realtime management, algorithmic optimisation, or planning against tangible limited capacities. This low figure backs up the argument that these firms are not seriously looking at optimising in-plant transport management as much as they could be.

The Cloud paradox: Exactly half of the companies surveyed are open to cloud services for in-plant transportation management, yet paradoxically only 5% of the surveyed companies currently use these types of systems.

Survey reaction

Dr. Torsten Inkmann, SVP Manufacturing Logistics Division at INFORM, is particularly surprised by the low figure of companies using cloud-based systems. "The fact that only 5% of those surveyed use cloud solutions for in-plant transportation management is something I find quite remarkable," he suggests. "Furthermore, only 50% are open to cloud services. Are these companies worried about possible risks regarding data protection or do they simply not see the advantages?"

"The fact is that it is almost impossible for most companies to meet the same high level of IT that professional hosting providers achieve. The core competence of a company focused on internal production is definitely not the operation of IT systems. Professional providers can offer much more in terms of flexibility, scalability, and speed. These, in turn, improve conditions for production and logistics. I hope that the added value potential cloud solutions offer will become much more visible in the future."

Inkmann welcomes the widespread recognition that logistics and production are now seen as interconnected, rather than treated as separate functions. "It appears to me that the perspective has changed, even if the actual implementation of transport control systems by companies is not as far along as we might like it to be," he reflects. "The question is, what has hampered implementation in the past? High investment costs? Pay-per-use models could offer solutions in such cases. Or no time for IT projects? The number of resources needed to implement such a system can be drastically reduced by using tested, scalable standard solutions, hosted by the cloud if desired."

www.inform-software.com/intralogistics-study

Supply Chain Visibility

The recent incident in the Suez Canal showcased the vulnerability of the waterways used in global trade and international supply chains. International companies have to be better prepared for other possible black swan events. What can beneficial cargo owners do to mitigate risk in the supply chain, particularly in the ocean freight space? A recent Webinar, moderated by *David Priestman*, debated how supply chain visibility and transparency can help to overcome such crises in the future, asked how shippers plan to mitigate risk using technology and discussed critical elements to drive supply chain excellence in spite of disruption.



PANELISTS:

- **Thomas Kofler**, VP Sales EMEA, ClearMetal (pictured)
- **Kejo Van den Hauten**, Global Logistics Manager, Imerys Graphite & Carbon (French mining company, customer of ClearMetal)
- **Matheen Sait**, Physical Distribution Manager, 3M Europe

ClearMetal is a San Francisco-based SaaS supply chain visibility provider focusing on delivering data quality and accurate information on global ocean transportation. The platform aims to bring transparency, analytics and milestone predictions on container moves on the ocean. It does this by creating a continuous delivery experience for users.

Q: How do we define 'supply chain disruption'?

A: Disruption causes you to think and act differently for more than just 1 shipment. It is an event with negative consequences on performance and process throughout the supply chain.

Q: What was the impact from the Suez Canal blockage on your company? How did you manage the situation and understand the impact?

A: For Imerys it had an immediate impact on shipments as 70% of total volumes go from Europe to Asia, mostly by sea. Luckily their nearest vessel was going north on the canal at that time. It would have been impossible to understand the impact without visibility technology, especially as many of their bookings are still done manually. 3M urgently sought transparency directly and via forwarders on whether their products were on the Ever Given or in the queue, using a hybrid process. It took a few days to collate everything. They sought visibility at shipments level and then drilled down to order level and sku level. From that the company could project delays.

Q: How did you inform staff, customers, partners and suppliers about the huge delays that might come?

A: At 3M staff initially talked internally to determine which orders and which customers were affected. They could then discuss supply alternatives and replenishments daily. Imerys had a consolidated overview of affected deliveries. It was important to make customers aware of the magnitude of the delays. Being able to inform customers quickly and fully was appreciated. Speculation should be avoided. The company had already shipped cargo by rail to China, so had mitigated that due to previous shipping delays.

Q: How can technology help to mitigate the aftermath of such events, in terms of visibility of where the cargo is?

A: Technology cannot prevent the incident but it can provide correct, vital data and visibility on shipments. Stakeholders can then be proactively informed, with good response times. A good set-up can mitigate risk and provide immediate clarity so freight alternatives can be chosen in the right volumes, early and at a reasonable price.

Q: Looking generally now, how does data quality and accuracy play an important role in visibility?

A: The more accurate and complete data and information is, the better companies can manage operations. Initiatives can optimize logistics processes and create value and advantage by trusting accurate information. Cost optimization in regards to detention and demurrage is achieved.

Q: Does having one single source, on a global platform, where all information about shipments are available and updated help planning?

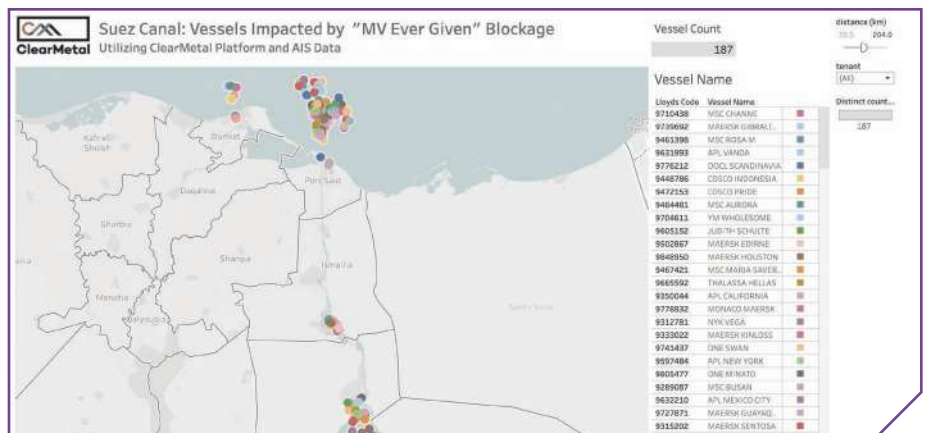
A: It makes it easier to have a global picture and make informed decisions. Without it you can have trouble with 'pain points', lags and indecision. Getting real time data, with detail, from shippers and forwarders in one place is a worthwhile challenge. 5 years ago this was not possible.

Q: Could having visibility and access to shipping data have helped to manage the crisis?

A: Imerys had that data available, with offline support from ClearMetal, so was quick to act. Within 24 hours ClearMetal was able to identify all their customers' containers in a 200km radius of Suez.

Q: Do you see value in having visibility, not only for risk mitigation but also for optimization?

A: Imersys used to assume things based on notifications and could not manage flows and costs so well. Real risk mitigation involves planning ahead, for example having more stock security for key products like microchips. Multiple sources are needed. Sailing, port and satellite data, plus historical patterns are useful too.



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Tapping into Voice Innovation

A manufacturer of luxury kitchen equipment has switched its voice system without halting operations.

Blanco, a company that specialises in exquisitely designed systems for kitchen water hubs in private households, has been working with pick-by-voice in its warehouse operations for around 13 years. With Lydia Voice, the company is now banking on a new complete package of both software and hardware, along with AI-supported voice recognition, integrated directly into its existing SAP system. Blanco is pursuing a 'smooth migration' strategy entailing a gradual changeover from the old voice system to Lydia Voice and the step-by-step replacement of old devices. Both solutions are currently running in parallel. The result: maximum system availability, fewer picking errors and a voice system changeover without any interruptions to operations. What is more, Blanco staff working with Lydia Voice are now free to choose which new hardware they would like to use, providing yet another major boost to employee satisfaction.

Whether it's the classic stainless steel models or the elegant Silgranit varieties, Blanco sinks are in great demand among customers seeking luxury kitchens. In order to optimally fulfil the wishes of its customers, the manufacturer offers a successful range of holistic system solutions for the water hub. These Blanco UNIT systems can include all the main components – from tap, innovative 'drink systems' and sink to waste disposal system – and thus work in perfect harmony. Founded over 90 years ago, the company is today one of the world's leading sink and tap manufacturers.

Round-the-clock delivery

The hub of Blanco's global distribution operation is the logistics centre in Bruchsal, Germany. Spanning an area of around 8,760 m², the site is home to a high-bay warehouse with room to store around 18,000 pallets. All products relating to the kitchen water hub – such as the sinks



produced at the plants in Sulzfeld and Sinsheim, Germany, and Most in the Czech Republic – are stored here in an automatic high-bay warehouse until they are delivered to customers. In addition, quality inspections are performed at the logistics centre before the products are put into sets for each individual customer. The replacement parts warehouse can also now be found on the logistics centre premises. Processes therefore need to be highly flexible and in perfect alignment. Blanco stocks a wide range of products to ensure swift and seamless deliveries to its customers. While an automatic retrieval conveyor belt system ensures that replenished stocks arrive from the high-bay warehouse, orders are put together manually with the aid of industrial trucks and a pick-by-voice system for paperless picking.

Blanco has been utilising voice recognition in the warehouse for around 13 years and is therefore extremely familiar with the technology. However, the system it was previously using reached its limits, in part because customers are demanding ever greater flexibility when compiling orders. Blanco then set out to find an alternative. Following an initial discussion with EPG (Ehrhardt Partner Group) about its experiences, the company was impressed by Lydia Voice and how simple it is to implement. With no time-consuming voice training required, staff can work productively from the very start. In addition, the software is available with a wide range of ergonomic hardware. With Lydia Voice able to be directly integrated into Blanco's existing SAP system, the solution also ensures rapid responses and enhanced process efficiency.





"We opted to go with Lydia Voice for a number of reasons," explains Thomas Ritter, Senior Manager and Head of Order Fulfilment at Blanco. "For example, switching to a speaker-independent system saves us time with staff training, which therefore gives us even greater flexibility to adjust our capacities in line with demand. The old system often asked staff to repeat their commands, which of course costs time. Lydia Voice offers much more reliable voice recognition." The latest version of Lydia Voice – which is also now in operation at Blanco – works on the basis of neural networks and deep learning technology. This provides a substantial boost to voice recognition reliability and ensures a recognition rate of 99.9%, even when staff speak in a strong dialect or accent. Service and support also plays an important role for Blanco. During the first 12 months after Lydia Voice went into parallel operation, there was only one service request – and it was responded to on the very same day.

Michael Pazur, Sales Manager Voice at EPG, worked on the project from day one and knows just how important it is to assess the current situation and provide advice. "Every project involves a great deal of process consulting work. As Blanco was already using a pick-by-voice solution, we were able to build on this process and the existing voice dialogues in SAP. By directly integrating Lydia Voice into the existing SAP infrastructure via a pre-defined interface, our customers

save time and can independently add or modify processes and dialogues at any time. We only needed 16 project days for the whole system changeover at Blanco, and that included training the SAP developers and putting the system into operation on site." Thanks to this smooth integration with parallel support for the old and new systems, operations were kept running at all times.

Staff productivity from Day 1

Order picking staff were able to start working with the new system following a brief introduction and did not require any voice training. The majority of the dialogues were taken over from the old system. The pleasant voice used by the

Lydia system and the enhanced voice recognition reliability it offers ensured a high level of acceptance among users. "Compared with our old system, the new hardware terminals are a lot easier and nicer to use. Our staff also have the flexibility to decide which headset is best for them," says Ritter. In addition to the headset and the Voxtel mobile voice computer, Blanco also opted for the Lydia VoiceWear order picking vest. All voice components are already integrated into the innovative and ergonomic vest. "I was a little sceptical at first as to how well the pick-by-voice vests would go down," explains Ritter. "But communication works, even with forklifts running in the background. And even on hot summer days, they're more comfortable to wear than headsets."

Happy colleagues

After using the system for around a year and having expanded it, both the company and its staff are extremely happy. "The cooperation between the two companies really has been top class – from the project development phase and operational launch to the aftersales service. EPG delivered everything swiftly and to our satisfaction. A highlight for us was the way the old and new systems worked in harmony. Thanks to Lydia Voice's improved ergonomics and efficiency, employees can now pick more orders and handle greater volumes, giving us much greater flexibility in dealing with fluctuations in orders compared with our old voice system," says Ritter.

www.lydia-voice.com



Digitising Vaccination

Advanced logistics technology is critical to staying ahead of new COVID-19 variants, argues *Daniel Dombach*.

Logistics challenges such as supply chain gaps, vaccine output variability and a lack of transparency from fragmented healthcare and administrative bodies have delayed and disrupted vaccine drives in both developing nations and the wealthiest European countries. Consequently, advanced logistics and tracking technology has become vital in helping to overcome these difficulties.

Every step in the vaccine distribution process – and each handoff between suppliers, distributors, logistics providers and administration site staff – increases the risk of vaccine damage, delay or even loss. But with the right internet of things (IoT) technology in place to maintain first-to-last-mile supply chain visibility, many of these issues can be mitigated.

For example, affixing wireless track and trace devices such as RFID tags and electronic data loggers to the pallets and packaging used to ship vaccines can enable both location and temperature data, respectively, to be collected and shared among those charged with logistics planning and reporting. Depending on the type of technology used, the data may be aggregated and distributed via the cloud in easy-to-understand graphs. In other instances, the data might be available for download onto mobile apps via Bluetooth enabled devices upon arrival at a destination. Either way, location technology is key to achieving:

- Fast confirmation of shipment status at every hand-off point.
- Enhanced teamwork across multiple logistics and healthcare providers.
- Better identification and resolution of bottlenecks impacting vaccine distribution and administration.
- Confidence in the performance of the cold chain.

However, logistics monitoring – and vaccine temperature monitoring – doesn't stop once vaccines arrive at their final destinations.

Readers know about 'last-mile' logistics. But when it comes to achieving an efficient vaccine rollout, it's critical to recognise that this extends beyond the doorway threshold and all the way to the vaccination station, which could be inside a grocery store or an individual's vehicle in a car park. Therefore, healthcare providers and others hosting vaccination clinics must have the same visibility into distribution operations as traditional supply chain logistics managers. Furthermore, they need technology tools that allow them to securely collect, store and share patient records (i.e. vaccine credentials), daily vaccination figures, potential side effects of various vaccines, fluctuating supply levels (to include inventory use/waste), and even storage temperature once the vaccines have been delivered.

That's a daunting challenge when point of care facilities in national vaccination drives can range from the largest hospitals and sports stadiums to local pharmacies, schools and places of worship. Not all of these sites traditionally have the technology resources needed for real time data collection – and not all are digitally connected to government and public health agency databases (yet).

How do we link them all to establish a baseline system of high-quality data accessible across such diverse administration facilities?

In a perfect world, every site would have mobile computers, tablets and wireless printers built for healthcare or enterprise use. RFID-enabled mobile handhelds can quickly capture data about vaccine inventory and other

medical supplies (i.e. needles and personal protective equipment) that have been properly tagged. Barcode scanning devices can help staff retrieve a patient's data to confirm identity, synchronize records and even read data on a vaccine credential to confirm first dose information before a second dose is administered. The less time spent on manually completing paperwork, the more time staff can commit to other high-value tasks that are key to increasing vaccination appointment volume. Also, automating data capture like this reduces the risk of data input errors and misinformed patient care actions.

Of course, the digital capture and distribution of information captured by electronic data loggers located in freezers and refrigerators also makes it easy for facility staff to monitor and verify that the proper temperature is being maintained for vaccines on hand without having to physically check the temperature on a regular cadence.

Cutting edge artificial intelligence (AI)-based prescriptive analytics solutions can also be deployed with workforce management applications to quickly forecast first-dose demand, inform second-dose appointment planning, and help define both supplies and labour requirements as vaccine availability and appointment volume fluctuate.

Daniel Dombach is Director, EMEA Industry Solutions, Zebra Technologies

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Making Rugged Affordable

One imaginative provider is making rugged mobile computing increasingly affordable for SMEs. *Paul Hamblin* talks to *Michael Willett* of Panasonic Mobile Solutions.

Mobile computing solutions are making huge headway in boosting efficiency and visibility in the warehouse and logistics sector, but there is still a long way to go. Smaller companies in particular are wary of potentially high investment costs and can be unwilling to challenge existing processes, even if some of those processes are quaintly, how shall we put it... old-fashioned.

Michael Willett, the new key account manager UK and Ireland for retail, transport and logistics for Panasonic's Mobile Solutions Division, says the company's Toughbook range - comprising digital tablets, notebook PCs, handhelds and accessories - can bring serious cost and time savings to companies adapting to fast-changing consumer habits. "Logistics needs are changing, driven by the demands of online shopping and the new technology associated with it. Yet hundreds of companies are still using paper-based systems, some of these firms being household names. Sure, they are offering good services, but there are pain points behind the scenes," he points out.

Some firms are sometimes not fully aware of the difference a digital transformation can make, he argues. "They've had a successful system in place for many years. But they haven't actually

calculated the difference those errors and delays are making to their overall costs, and how much of an improvement the new technology can bring."

Willett, an Android OS specialist and supply chain optimisation veteran of many years standing, including 10 years with Zebra, understands how hard it can be to take that first step, particularly in smaller, perhaps family-owned hauliers and warehousing providers without the bandwidth to prioritise such activities. His mission is to make it as easy as possible for managers to dip a toe into the water without fear and, crucially, without scary investment.

"I completely get that some companies don't have the resources to take on a full proof of concept," he promises. "We will be very flexible early on in creating a proof of concept that is appropriate to the organisation and its budget. They might only have 20 or so potential users, which from their perspective is a very heavy investment. But once you get a clear sense of the cost savings digitised systems bring you, the case builds up very strongly."



How will he go about starting that process with a potential customer? "It's about giving them a hand to hold, helping them through the process. So we'll offer them demonstration equipment, get the kit in their staff's hands, we'll use tracking analytics to enable them to see themselves the ease of use as well as to calculate the potential savings."

The payment model is particularly attractive, he says, because Panasonic is offering a unique Toughbook-as-a-Service payment model. "Everyone looks at price, and rightly," he says. "Toughbook-as-a-Service includes service contracts, accidental damage protection, security patches for the duration of the contract, Android OS, wrapped up in an affordable monthly cost. It means that top of the range technology is not out of their grasp - and it's affordable."

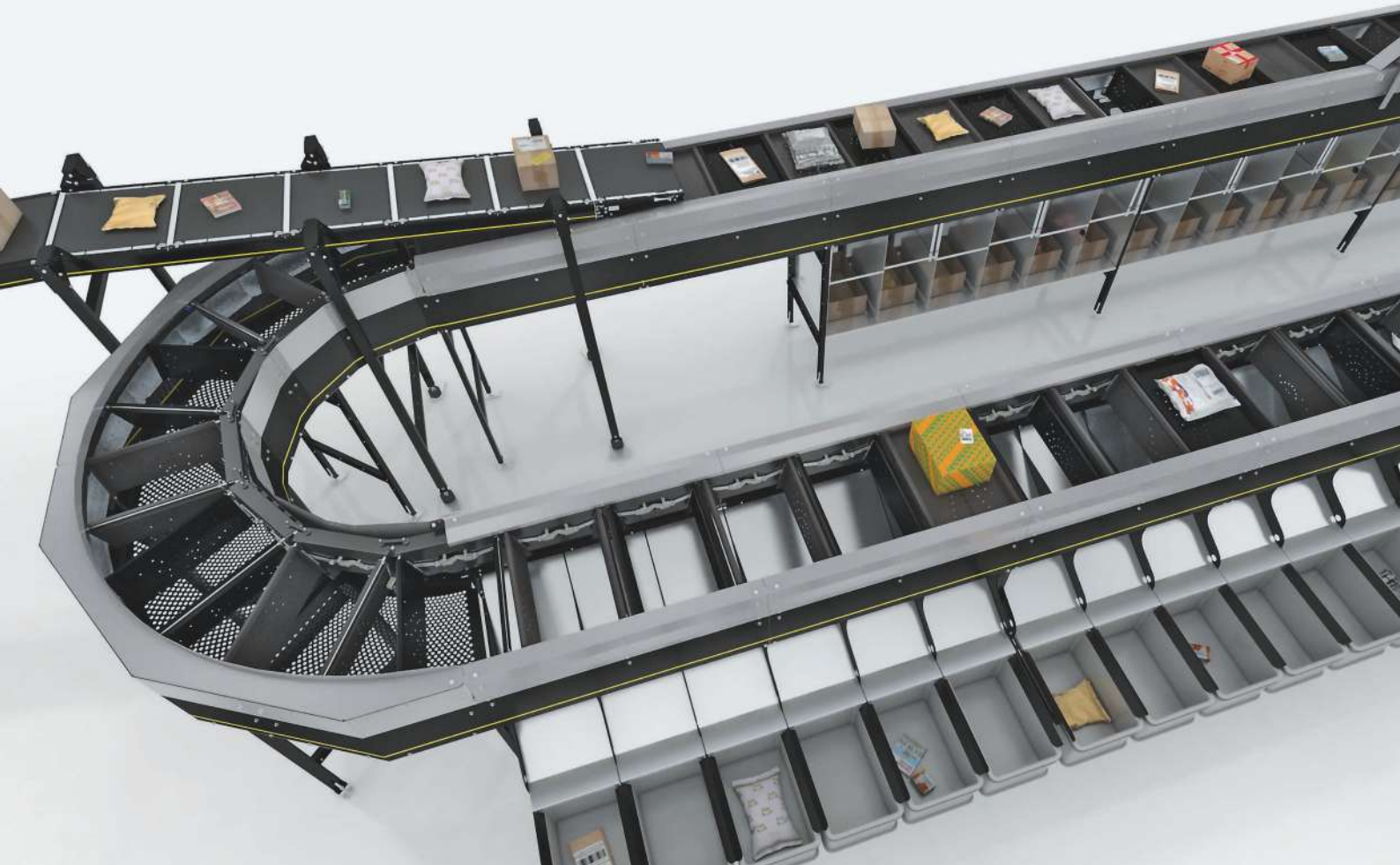
Flexibility is key. "We are looking at their processes and seeing opportunities to digitise in a user-friendly manner. We have software and software developers available to help, which gives us an extra something others that cannot do. It's a time-honoured phrase, but we are a one-stop shop."

Speed of implementation is another plus - Michael Willett says that a 30-day lead time is now commonplace.

Toughbook is an option for the long term and Panasonic are with you at every step, he promises. With heavy investment in Android, with demonstrable commitment to service back-up as well as the hardware and with new application development continually upgraded into client packages under Panasonic's 'Omnia' commitment, customers are promised premium quality, service and product lifetime.

<https://business.panasonic.co.uk/mobile-solutions/>





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Overcoming Obstacles

Warehouse automation offers a dilemma - you know it's coming, but you're not sure where to start. A major player in the sector recently offered some advice. *Paul Hamblin* tuned in.

Warehouse managers and decision makers already know that automation works. They also know that it's highly likely that the flexibility it potentially offers versus manual labour can bring them more speed and productivity. So it's a no-brainer to look at the options. The trouble is, it's a complex, scary process. So, when do you dip your toe in?

STILL experts are hearing you. The German-based materials handling specialist claims that the number of requests it is receiving to help with the restructuring and creation of Smart warehouses reveals a strong appetite for automation technology. In an accompanying survey it carried out with 150 STILL customers, 7% wanted their fleets to be completely automated by 2025, in just four years time. Promisingly, half of the respondents said they expected around half of their fleet to be fully automated in that period, also showing strong ambition. Yet the baseline numbers revealed that at the present time, 57% of respondents still had a fully manual handling operation.

It made sense for STILL to crystallise what is holding those same customers back from taking the first step. Their research revealed four main 'obstacle' cluster headings, which were explained in the webinar by Marina Hein, Senior Director, Advanced Applications and Noë van Bergen, Head of Automation Solutions.

Top of the list of four was an anxiety around processes, with many stating that they believed their site processes were simply too complex for automation to cope with. Second was a wariness around the maturity of the technology, with respondents stating that they didn't want to be a 'guinea pig', exposing their business to solutions that may not yet be proven. Third was a concern about the size and commitment of the investment required. Fourth was about guidance on where and when to start the process.

Obstacle 1: Complex Processes

Tackling the first, Noë van Bergen outlined a series of use cases which revealed the extent of automated capability in the warehouse environment that STILL can offer and with which the company believes it can optimise any process. Fully automated solutions include a tugger train, usually used to supply assembly areas and for internal transport. Reach trucks optimise the storage and replenishment of pallets, often to substantial racking heights. A Very Narrow Aisle (VNA) truck usually stays within the racking system of an area optimised for intensive use of space, interfacing with a pallet stacker when goods are moved out of the the VNA shelving, to, for instance, the Outbound drop-off. Autonomous picking trucks will support a faster and more ergonomic picking process by working alongside a manual labourer and precluding the need for the worker to drive, mount and dismount from the vehicle.










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Marina Hein outlined the series of questions or prerequisites that will help determine which of those solutions might make a worthwhile difference to customers. For instance, what loads the trucks will be carrying and in what environment - how is the space available used, what is the quality of the floor surface and is, say, dust dispersal a major factor? To consider payback on investment, is your operation single shift, multishift or 24/7? (Tip: It's when you go beyond single shift that automation economy really starts to kick in.) Then there is fleet size - yes, you can start off with a single autonomous truck, but automation does come with fixed costs which could perhaps be shared more economically when spread over a larger fleet.

Obstacle 2: Technology Perception

Next, Noë van Bergen turned to potential customer fears about the perceived immaturity of the technology. He pointed out how long the base AGV model has been around, before describing its huge recent advances in flexibility, ease of use and smooth, high-speed implementation. Far from relying on ground and wall-fixed triangulation points to guide the vehicle, STILL automation is equipped with Simultaneous Localisation and Mapping

(SLAM) technology, which allows the vehicle to move around in changing environments, without the need for fixed navigational infrastructure. Usually using cameras and laser scanners, the fleet is constantly capturing and relaying the latest image of the warehouse and exchanging information between trucks via a traffic management system. In short, if a pallet is left in front of a pillar, the trucks can see it, an alarm is raised, the pallet can be moved. But the navigational system is not obstructed in those circumstances, and if the warehouse is to be reconfigured to suit changed use, there is no time-heavy need to re-install inflexible triangulation points. SLAM technology stays on the move.

Obstacle 3: Investment

Moving on to obstacles to action based on investment and finance question marks, Marina Hein suggested that it is quite normal to have difficulty in assessing orders of magnitude when embarking on such a project. Each budget will differ according to circumstances, but taking a broad price of €60-70k for the smaller new models and roughly €200-220K for the largest VNA machines does allow a very rough starting point for calculations. In addition to base trucks, potential

customers should also bear in mind potential extras such as automation kits, integration, racking, conveyors and extensions. Non-financial benefits, a key part of the equation, include reliable continuity (versus the unpredictability of manual labour), safety, process diagnostics and Lean plusses. ROI factors include shift quantity and fleet size, but van Bergen claims that four years is not a bad benchmark.

Obstacle 4: When to Start

Finally, the 'when to start' conundrum. Marina Hein urges you to choose the right partner, because trust and accountability are needed on both sides and you are likely to be working together for an extended period. STILL works as follows: an intralogistics consultant will look at your warehouse and working processes with you and will define a rough concept, which they promise will definitely not be a complex one at the beginning. A sales engineer will then take over (NB: you'll start at the sales engineer stage if you're clear in your own mind what you want) and if you then proceed with the project, a STILL operations manager will take over as your onsite contact, dedicated to ensuring smooth operations and any adaptations suggested by the implementations process. Once execution is complete, a service technician from STILL will be available at all times for any needs that arise.

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MOVING YOU FURTHER

Multidirectional Mettle

An Austrian-based aluminium specialist found that the 4-way concept makes a real difference to its operational processes.

Hammerer Aluminium Industries (HAI) employs a workforce of 1,600 at its eight sites in Europe, and the company's activities include supplying high-tech aluminium profiles and finished components as well as carrying out highly efficient recycling processes. It is now using three multidirectional forklifts from the Irish manufacturer Combilift, which ensure the safer and more efficient handling of extrusion billets at the company's HQ in Ranshofen, Austria.

The trucks have been in operation for about six months now, replacing the previous sideloaders, which, according to Christian Ertl, Group Manager of transport logistics casting "had not exactly impressed us with their track record of reliability". Ertl and some of his team from HAI's finishing and loading division visited a steel processing plant in another part of Austria where Combilifts had been in operation for some time to check out their capabilities and get the drivers' opinions.

"We like to involve those who will actually operate the trucks in the decision-making process," said Ertl. "After seeing them in action we all agreed that Combilift's products fitted the bill perfectly. The advantages of the 4-way concept that combines front and side loading technology are significant compared to conventional forklifts. The ability to turn the wheels with just the touch of a button to change the direction of travel is of great benefit, particularly in the packing station, where space is pretty limited."

Two 14t capacity C14000 models and an 8t C8000 truck, all diesel powered, were chosen as the best solutions for the tough operational requirements at HAI. The 7500mm long and 1200mm deep bundles of billets, which can weigh up to 7000kg, need safe and efficient handling inside in the production area and packing station as well as stable transportation to the interim storage area outside. They also need to be able to cope with an intensive 4-shift schedule and clock up operational hours of around 3,000 a year per truck.

Space is not only at a premium in the packing station but elsewhere on the premises, including the outdoor storage area, where the billets are stored on cantilever racking up to a height of 3m, as well as the HGV loading zone. To maximise the available space, a guided-aisle system was implemented between the racking, enabling operational aisle widths to be narrowed down to just 3620mm. Telescopic forks, which can reach across the whole of the trailer bed, were fitted to the C14000 models to enable loading from just one side, once again enabling best use of space.

One of Combilift's acknowledged strengths is its ability to customise its products according to specific individual requirements, and this was



the case at HAI too, to make the daily tasks of the drivers as straightforward as possible. Features included in HAI's fleet include a reversing and fork camera, air conditioning, hands-free phone and an air-suspension comfort seat. The high cab position guarantees maximum safety as it offers a clear overview of the load, the forks and the direction of travel.

Ertl sums up: "These robust and powerful trucks from Combilift now ensure an efficient and more cost effective operation. Thanks to the cooperation with the manufacturer as well as the excellent advice from Wiener Stapler- und Fördertechnik, we were able to find a handling solution that meets all of our requirements."

www.combilift.com





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Ratings Winner

A new tyre range for medium intensity material handling benefits from exciting technology and a unique rating system.

Trelleborg Wheel Systems has launched what it calls a “next generation” forklift tyre, the XP800 range, which it says gives outstanding performance in medium intensity material handling applications. Trelleborg has introduced a rating and labelling system to help customers ensure they have the right tyre for the right application.

Luca Sabelli, Product Manager Material Handling at Trelleborg Wheel Systems, says: “In today’s multitude of material handling operations, having the right solution is key to maximising efficiency. At Trelleborg we have developed a unique rating system with easy to recognise labels to help customers to effortlessly identify which tyre suits their needs according to the application’s intensity. The XP800 is specifically designed to be the perfect choice for medium intensity applications, delivering a solid performance and minimising downtime to keep costs under control.”

Trelleborg defines its rating system under which it recommends use for its tyres according to the following key criteria headings:

Load Capacity: Trelleborg tyres are compliant with the load carrying capacity recommended by the main worldwide technical organisations.

Working Time: Continuous use of solid tyres without stopping can potentially cause a build up of heat and reduce the lifespan of the tyre.

Average Speed: High speed may cause internal stress and deformation leading to uncontrolled temperature which compromises tyre performances.

Cycle Length: High distances do not allow the tyre to dissipate the heat produced during operation. This can create dangerous separation within the tyre.

Cornering: Repeated vehicle cornering causes excessive torque on the tyre increasing the likelihood of deformation.

Tread design

With its advanced tread design, the new XP800 enhances both indoor and outdoor performance to ensure maximum productivity. Its innovative design features an extra wide tread and unique profile for minimised vibrations, enhanced handling and excellent stability in indoor applications, while the lateral block design with deep lugs optimises traction in outdoor areas. Its extra deep tread increases tyre longevity for maximum service life. Characteristics of the tyre include: central wide contact area with ‘zig-zag’ profile to minimise vibrations and enhance handling capability in indoor applications; lateral block design with very deep lugs to provide optimum traction in outdoor applications; extra deep tread depth to increase longevity and ensure maximum service life;



extra wide tread width to ensure excellent stability; protruding rim protector in order to minimise damage to the wheels.

Two compounds

On the inside of the XP800, a revolutionary construction technology features an innovative fibre compound layer along with an optimised tread, to provide outstanding performance in a sustainable way.

The XP800 is available in two different compounds: *multipurpose*, a standard black compound to ensure very good wear, rolling resistance and overall performance; *non-marking*, a specialised white compound to optimise heat dissipation and keep floors clean and mark-free.

Trelleborg’s XP800 range will include multiple sizes covering low aspect ratio and 20-inch tyres for more severe applications, meeting the complex challenges of material handling operations.

www.trelleborg.com/wheels



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Friendly Forks

Ingenious innovations in fork technology are making a big difference in reducing harm to goods and personnel in the logistics environment. They improve handling speed, too.

A common problem in organisations where several different pallet sizes are used, for example in the packaging, paper, beverage, and furniture industries, is that it is hard to find the optimum length of forklift forks. If too long, they will protrude through the rear of the pallet upon insertion and catch any load located behind it when they are raised. This will damage the pallet and possibly the product, while in the worst case-scenario, there is a risk of serious injury to personnel. Too short, and you potentially have an unsafe, ill-balanced load, with similar threats to goods and personnel.

Meijer Handling Solutions has introduced its KOOI ReachControl, a system that includes a flowmeter (base unit 100x80x60 mm) and an app to operate it. This flowmeter can detect the amount of oil flowing through the reach forks. Specially developed software can be read using an app compatible with standard Android or iOS smartphones. The more extensive version of the KOOI ReachControl features the ability to stop the outer sleeves at certain set lengths, and offers at least 8 presets.

Customers can enter the variables themselves and allocate a specific name to each setting. The system can be mounted on any telescopic fork as no modifications to the reach forks are required.

Without the automatic stop function, the system can be rapidly installed and information is transmitted by means of a Bluetooth signal.

The auto-stop system features a special valve. In addition, a power supply is required because otherwise the battery in the KOOI ReachControl would run down too quickly.

Although the app can be downloaded to any modern smartphone (iOS/Android), Meijer Handling Solutions recommends purchasing the specially developed 5" colour monitor because this can be connected to an external power supply and features a sturdy casing.

Safe and level forks

KOOI Deflection system is a smart device that helps the forklift driver to level the forks horizontally. It is extremely useful for applications such as double-deep pallet storage. If a load is moved forward with a reach attachment like telescopic forks or a pantograph, it will show the entire tilt. The information submitted includes the deflection of the attachment, mast and even the compression of the tyres.

The forklift operator often has no idea how much this deflection is, because this operation takes place out of sight of the driver. The sensor in the KOOI Deflection system informs the driver how much deflection must be compensated by the tilting function of the forklift (mast or fork carriage tilt). In this way a safe working method is created and

the load remains horizontal on the pallet, thereby preventing damage to pallets, rack and/or decking material. The tilt indicator can also help improve handling cycle time by allowing the lift truck operator to work faster as the operator always know if the forks are level prior to entering into the pallet.

KOOI Deflection system is a small sensor which is mounted completely inside the nose of the telescopic forks. Because it is completely enclosed in the front of the KOOI ReachForks, the sensor cannot be damaged and shows the maximum deflection. The sensor works via Bluetooth® and can easily be replaced if necessary.

The sensor can to be integrated into standard lift truck forks, but only on request because the position and strength have to be calculated.

Meijer says that the KOOI ReachControl is already available and the KOOI Deflection system will be launched very soon, making use of the same app.

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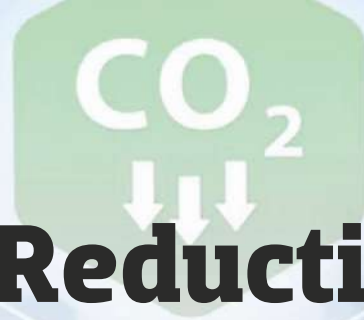
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Auditable Carbon Reduction

Businesses using sustainable fuels such as bioLPG for their FLT fleet can access independent verification of CO₂ savings. *Andy Kellett* explains.

As many companies, large and small, now have voluntary carbon reduction targets in place, being able to capture all savings accurately and consistently is important. All stakeholders need to be certain that claims made about carbon savings are indeed true.

When reporting using the Greenhouse Gas Protocol for instance, you must use an instrument that meets the Protocol's quality criteria, as evidence of any renewable energy consumption. External schemes that issue Renewable Gas Guarantees of Origin (RGGOs) and distribute them securely to those purchasing the relevant fuel, is one way to ensure this information is easily accessible and third party verified. It also gives transparency to the manufacture and supply chain from start to finish.

Calor offers a blend of bioLPG and conventional LPG to customers who operate FLT's. Because BioLPG is a renewable fuel made from a blend of waste, residues and sustainably sourced materials, it can bring carbon savings of up to 32% achieved by using a mix of 40% bioLPG and 60% conventional LPG, compared to using conventional LPG alone. To provide certainty of the amount of savings made, Calor works with the Green Gas Certification Scheme (GGCS) to deliver RGGOs to customers who switch to our bioLPG tariff. This partnership provides an objective means of



tracking transactions of green gas through the supply chain. Through the scheme, fleet managers can also access certificates of their RGGOs to use when auditing their environmental impact.

To begin the process, the companies producing bioLPG provide an International Sustainability Carbon Certification (ISCC) Proof of Sustainability document that verifies the carbon savings and that the feedstock - used as a base for its BioLPG - is from a sustainable source.

The quantity of bioLPG delivered into the country as part of that particular consignment is then logged by the GGCS, creating a bank of RGGOs available for companies, like Calor,

to issue to its green customers on a bioLPG tariff. The system automatically calculates the amount of RGGOs for the customer depending on the volume of gas they receive, and gives the customer access to the GGCS website, from which a recognised certificate detailing the carbon savings can be downloaded.

This smart system ensures certificates and carbon saving calculations are third-party qualified, fully auditable for customers and monitored by the GGCS. Moreover, it guarantees that the RGGOs given for the bioLPG that customers receive has not been double counted or double sold. The process is done automatically and has the added convenience that certificates can be downloaded as and when needed, rather than having to wait for quarterly or half year points.

With visibility of environmental choices so important, opting for a supplier with a system like this in place means customers can prove their reduction in carbon emissions from day one. As an added benefit, the figures can be audited against environmental targets, so that bioLPG customers can show their own clients, with confidence, that they are taking action on building a more sustainable future.

Andy Kellett is National Account Manager FLT's at Calor

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AMR Parcel Sorting

UK supermarket chain Asda is the first to adopt an intelligent AMR-led parcel sorting system at its Yorkshire DC. *Paul Hamblin* finds out more.

When executives from UK supermarket chain Asda dropped by at the booth of AMR (Automated Mobile Robot) supplier Geek+ during a trade show in 2019, neither side could have predicted that it would lead to a first-of-its-kind project implementation in the UK.

“After several months of engagement between both teams, in 2020 we decided to setup a Proof-of-Concept type demonstration area for Asda to get some better understanding on Geek+’s capabilities & Asda’s requirements for future projects,” Lit Fung, VP and Managing Director of Geek+ APAC, UK and Americas, tells *Logistics Business*. “With the success of the POC project, Asda decided to proceed with the first robotic sorting project of its kind in the UK later in 2020, which was delivered the same year.”

The project comprises an intelligent sorting system in Asda’s distribution centre. Sixty robots have been placed into the supermarket’s South Elmsall, West Yorkshire DC, allowing 2,000 parcels to be sorted each hour with 99.99% accuracy through its Asda toyou service.

First time technology

The installation marks the first time the technology has been used in this way in the UK. It supports an increase in capacity for Asda toyou’s services as demand for parcel collection and returns services has, for obvious reasons, grown at pace in the last 12 months. At the same time, Asda toyou has expanded the number of retailers it supports. Over 100 are now available via the service, which has seen it process 65% more returns than at the start of 2020.

The project was implemented by AMH Material Handling, alongside Geek+. By integrating S20C robots into the existing ALS sorting system, it has provided Asda toyou the ability to respond to rapid changes in order volume and continue to provide excellent services during periods of peak demand.

Quick implementation

Some decision-makers are wary of automation, partly because of fears over cost, but also because they fear long implementation times and disruption to existing processes. What was the lead time on Asda from project sign-off to project go-live?



“It took Geek+ around 16 weeks from project sign-off to project go-live in this project,” says Lit Fung. “It included these action items: first, blueprint discussion & sign-off, then hardware manufacturing. Then came software integration and development, followed by shipping, onsite delivery, installation and implementation, training and our Hypercare post-go-live support.”

Lit Fung adds: “The process for intelligent sorting is pretty straightforward. By letting a network of AMRs transfer incoming parcels from workstations to cages of corresponding destinations, we can improve accuracy and efficiency while also making the process more ergonomic for warehouse employees. With no need for fixed platform development, it makes it easy for Asda to scale operations in line with business growth. All they have to do is adjust the number of robots and destination chutes.”

Adrian Carter, Sales Director at AMH Material Handling, says: “We had a lot of fun delivering the solution as Geek+ sorting robots are a highly flexible technology that can be integrated and customised to work with existing equipment on customer sites, such as conveyor belts or other robots. It provides us a powerful tool for optimising sorting operations according to the specific needs of each customer. And, as an integrator, AI-enabled robotics solutions add a new dimension to our services as it allows us to continuously support our customers according to changes in business needs.”

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Flower Power

A Dutch-based global flower supplier has a shoe sorter at the trusted centre of a fully automated handling system.

"The sortation and conveying equipment from MHS (formerly known as VanRiet), orchestrated by the powerful WMS/WCS, delivered and integrated by Actemium, provides real-time insight into the processing of all orders in order to deliver the right flowers, plants and accessories to our customers on time," says Ruben Hoek, export director of Hoek Flowers B.V. "Thanks to a doubling of efficiency, we can now process many more orders and adjust our capacity more flexibly to customer demand."

Strong ambitions

Rijnsburg-based Hoek Group is a family business that, after opening a flower shop in Katwijk in 1979, has grown into a group of internationally operating trading companies in flowers, plants and accessories. "We have invested in a new sustainable building with modern technology to continuously realise our growth ambitions," says Hoek. "This new building houses all activities that were previously carried out at five separate locations by the hands of 200 employees.

This ensures a more efficient integration. In order to increase both the efficiency and flexibility of our logistics, we have deliberately opted for a mix of mechanised, robotised and partly manual order processing."

For the Hoek Group, the lead time from receipt from auction to order processing is essential. "We supply flowers and plants to florists, wedding and event planners in 53 countries," says IT Manager Marcel van Egmond. "For example, customers from the United Kingdom who order until four in the afternoon will already have fresh flowers and plants in their shop the next morning. Based on smart algorithms, orders are scheduled, all ordered products are picked in the storage area and placed on the conveyor system."

"After order picking, buckets of flowers are transported to the packing area, or directly to the build-up area for the orders," continues van Egmond. "In the packing area, the buckets are sorted and buffered by order and some of



the flowers are packed. Then they are transported back to the construction area. As a final process, all boxes and buckets in the build-up area are sorted to the correct set-up location and placed (set up) on carts in preparation for shipment."

Winning together

MHS, part of a broader project consortium with Actemium, Denc and Van Rijn, designed, created and installed - together with Hoek Group - this state of the art integrated conveying and sorting solution for flower buckets and boxes of a wide variety. The heart of this mechanised operation is the WMS/WCS, designed and delivered by Actemium. It is the driving force behind the complete integrated picking and packing process.





Aorta sorter

The strong aorta of the system is the MHS HC Sorter, the leading shoe sorter equipment available in the market. The system comprises an expedition area and buffer sortation area, both equipped with the MHS HC Sorter. The expedition sorter has a total of 18 exits, including a no-read exit and one feeding the reversed empties-flow, supplied by Van Rijn. The buffer sortation area, designed to maximise flow and output in the picking and packing process, has a sum of 81 chutes, including a no-read. 80 exits are divided over 10 different (re) packing stations.

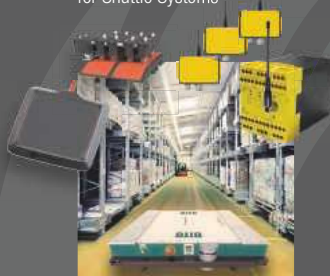
Hoek Group has about 2,200 containers with flowers, plants and accessories in stock, of which about a third are sold daily. All orders are collected at about 4,000 pick orders per hour. This is done via the WMS/WCS as the orchestra leader, partly manually and partly mechanised with Rail Guided Vehicles (RGV). "We have more than doubled the efficiency of order picking with this mechanisation and automation project," concludes van Egmond. "We will further increase efficiency by deploying 25 extra RGVs, among other things. Other advantages of the system are the ability to prioritise order processing more flexibly, a better insight into the required personnel capacity and more controls to prevent errors in deliveries."

Hoek Group works closely together with MHS Lifecycle Performance Services on the continuous optimisation of the installed equipment, as the Dutch company keeps being in the fast lane of growth and is looking into a solid future. The MHS motto - 'We Win Together' - couldn't be more appropriate here.

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Fit For The Future

Swiss conveying specialist Interroll has invested strongly in its global future, with a product suite to fit its customers' fast-changing ecommerce needs. *Paul Hamblin* hears more.

For many years, the Interroll Group was synonymous with conveying technology, in the form of its drive roller and drum motor manufacturing excellence. It's now clear that the Swiss organisation will become known for a much wider spread of products, perhaps most notably in the logistics sector for its platform of sorter options and a new smart pallet mover. Jens Strüwing, Exec VP, Head of Products and Technology, explains that its product strategy is driven by the strong shift in habits and behaviour occasioned by ecommerce. Some estimates claim that the pandemic has accelerated online migration by five years and to illustrate the point Jens Strüwing says that Amazon and Alibaba, the two biggest global players, are both up 50% in the past year while, quoting an example closer to home, even his own parents, aged 80+, think nothing of buying several items per day online for home delivery.

Interroll's response, he says, has been to invest in both products and capacities, the latter being crucial if the firm is to meet the shorter lead times its customers now demand. The company can back up its ambitious words with some impressive actions. It has doubled capacity at its Hiram, USA plant and a 25,000m² complex at Suzhou (nr Shanghai, China) is currently under construction. Meanwhile its Centre of Excellence for software and electronics is now open at Linz, Austria.

Product lifecycle is divided into three portions. First, Development, in which proven solutions will continue to add value to the changing needs of the customer base. The use of that word 'proven' is not accidental. Products are not tested out in the market with customers - they are proven in-house before they go into that market. Second, Production, supporting customers with state-of-the-art systems that have come through a rigorous development phase. Third, Service which means caring for customers in a way that provides full comfort, maintenance and updating facilities before such matters are sought by the customer.

Interroll's philosophy, says Strüwing, is focused on the challenges it observes being faced by logistics providers. Consumers want speed, reliability and, increasingly, personalisation. "We've all bought from Amazon Prime, maybe three times per day, so we expect three different small packages to arrive independently," he muses. "The supply chain structure increasingly focuses on smaller packages."

Product Marketing Manager Irma Slavinskaite reveals that the brand-new Split Tray Sorter (MT015S), launched in March this year, is the result of this assessment. It is devoted to low-weight, (up to 12kg) small-size parcels with a very high throughput at a conveying speed of 1.5 metres per second and 10,000 parcels per hour. "It is also a great option for smaller companies switching from manual to automatic operations," she adds. The Split Tray Sorter complements its Vertical, Horizontal and High-Performance Crossbelt models, the last of which permits parcel carriage of up to 50kg.

She adds that quality, simplicity and speed are watchwords of the portfolio, with modularity, scalability and easy configuration all to be expected alongside the clear necessities of safety and reliability.

Digitalisation is, as you'd expect, an important word for Interroll, with preventive maintenance already a key USP. "But digitalisation must add value to the product," says Jens Strüwing. "As someone once said to me, 'a bad non-digital product is still a bad product if it becomes digital.'"

Given the growing breadth of its solutions, does Interroll have long-term ambitions to become a full system integrator in its own right?

"No, not at all, and I want to make that statement very clearly," Jens Strüwing tells me. "We want to be an independent development and production company. We have a customer base made up of system integrators and OEMs. We want to do business together with them. So let me make that message very clear."

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Modular Marvel

Germany's largest supermarket chain is updating its food logistics with the help of Cimcorp.

Edeka Rhein-Ruhr's ultra-modern DC at Oberhausen-Waldteich is the largest construction project in the company's history. Creating around 1000 jobs, it will have a total floor area of 90,000m² (13 soccer pitches) and will go into operation this year, with 400 trucks a day supplying 400 Edeka branches and 400 other-brand stores in North Rhine-Westphalia.

The new DC will offer space for around 16,000 different dry, frozen and fresh product lines, most of which require different temperature zones. Cimcorp's technology ensures reliable order picking for fresh products such as fruit, vegetables and dairy products.

"For us efficiency, costs and ergonomics were decisive when we decided on Cimcorp as an experienced automation provider for our fruit and vegetable distribution," explains Peter Bayer, project manager for logistics and organisation at Edeka Oberhausen. "Since millions of people rely on the safety of their food, everything from the field to the table has to be perfect. We expect an extremely high availability of fresh products from Cimcorp, as these are extremely time-critical and sensitive."

Kai Tuomisaari, Cimcorp's Vice President, Sales, adds: "When dealing with food, and especially with perishable products, accuracy and reliability are essential. The simplest rules of first-in-first-out methods add up in securing consumer safety. Automation also secures employee safety, because robots do all the heavy lifting and repetitive tasks that often lead to debilitating injuries."

Reliable food handling climate

The facility has different temperature zones for fresh, frozen and dry foods. Cimcorp's fresh food solution has two climate zones: +7°C and +12°C for fruit and vegetables. "The order includes several independent automation modules controlled by Cimcorp software, which integrates various technologies into a seamless system," says Tuomisaari. "If one module is out of service for a while – for example, when cleaning is performed – the other modules run independently to ensure a reliable material flow."

Overhead gantry robots handle food crates stacked on the floor so there is no need for an expensive shelving system. This is also essential for food safety. "Even with the most modern and safest handling of fresh food, you cannot avoid some perishable parts like stems, leaves or individual grapes from leaking out of the crates," explains Tuomisaari. "With Cimcorp's solution, all of this is noticed on the floor and is easy to see – therefore easy to clean. During cleaning, crates can be moved to another module or stacked under the gantry robot to clear the floor."

Meanwhile, around 1,200 fruit and vegetable items for the 1,488 supermarkets in the EDEKA Minden-Hannover region are freshly picked and delivered daily to four logistics centres. Two of these, at Lauenau and Freienbrink, which supply up to 1000 stores per day, are to be modernised with minimal disruption to daily operations and without risking food safety.



In Lauenau, the automation will be installed in the existing logistics centre, which has been fully operational since 2014. The volume is higher in Freienbrink, where three fresh food modules in total will be installed. The modular structure speeds up this process: when the first fresh food solution is in operation in the existing facility, the next two will be implemented.

"When fully operational, modularity guarantees maximum functionality of the system through redundancy," says Jarno Honkanen, Director of Solution Development at Cimcorp. "The individual module can be emptied - for example during cleaning - without interrupting the entire flow of materials in the logistics centre. During cleaning, crates can be moved to another module or stacked under the gantry robot to clear the floor. The empty floor is easy to clean, which ensures a high standard of hygiene," says Honkanen.

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Innovation by Nature

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'From nature for people'. Since 1935, Wala Heilmittel, based at Bad Boll in Baden-Württemberg, Germany, has been developing and selling preparations of natural origin. These include medicines according to the anthroposophical teachings of Rudolf Steiner, as well as body care products and cosmetics under the Dr. Hauschka brand. The company is growing continuously, and today employs around 950 people, with an annual turnover of €120m (as of 2015).

Business expansion also demanded a need for new logistical structures. The capacity limits at the Bad Boll headquarters had long been reached and external warehouses had to be rented: an ineffective situation requiring a lot of organisation, time and money. In order to increase efficiency, Wala decided to build a new distribution and logistics centre in the neighbouring town of Zell. Under the direction of Swisslog, Wala built an automated warehouse for 26,000 products on a floor space of 16,000 m². The facility houses both production materials and finished goods.

Fast ROI

Wala's new distribution and logistics centre went live in 2018. It significantly increased the company's productivity through modern, high-performance logistics technologies, reducing error rates and achieving a convincing degree of space utilisation thanks to its compactness. All of these factors allowed Wala to achieve a rapid return on investment.

The new site combines several Swisslog technologies under one roof, using both pallet and light goods technology. The solution includes an automated pallet warehouse in silo design, single-deep, with 12,000 storage locations and four Vectura storage and retrieval machines (SRMs) connected to the ProMove pallet conveyor system. In the light goods area, there is an automated small parts warehouse (AS/RS) for 13,000 totes and trays, also in silo design and with three Tornado SRMs. Swisslog conveyor technology QuickMove completes the solution.

Remarkable Efficiency

A special highlight of the new Wala distribution and logistics centre is its CycloneCarrier warehouse. The innovative shuttle system from Swisslog with the latest generation of technology stands for the highest throughput rates and availability. Storage, order picking and consolidation of orders achieve a

remarkable level of efficiency. In one hour, up to 1,000 storage and retrievals of transport units per aisle are possible. At Wala, the CycloneCarrier is designed as an intelligent buffer system with 1,200 storage locations and ten shuttles operating across two access levels. Shelving and a connection to the light goods conveyor system with storage and retrieval lifts complement the CycloneCarrier system.

Finally, Wala's new distribution and logistics centre comprises 12 order-picking workstations including flow racking, platforms, and another Tornado stacker crane.

Within a SAP-EWM environment, the distribution and logistics centre is controlled and monitored via interfaces with Swisslog's SynQ software. As a result, Wala has an overall logistics system that is sophisticated down to the last detail and takes both current and future growth into account. This logistics facility is highly digitalised and prepared for the requirements of Industry 4.0.

www.swisslog.com

DATA AND FACTS

Automated high-bay pallet warehouse: 12,000 bins, 4 Vectura SRMs

Automated small parts warehouse: 13,000 bins, 3 RBG Tornado

CycloneCarrier (shuttle warehouse): 1,200 storage locations, 10 shuttles

Conveyor technology: ProMove, QuickMove conveyor technology

Software: SynQ software with interface to SAP EWM



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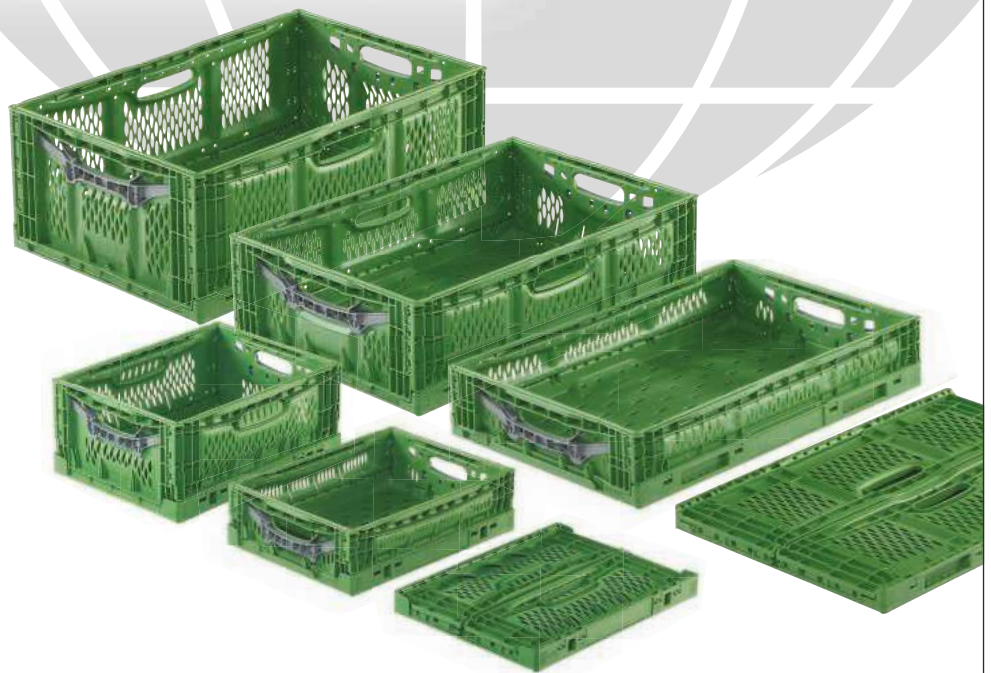
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The Robot Grocery Model

UK online grocery disruptor Ocado has been seen as a potential model for other fast-moving ecommerce providers over the past decade. But it could now be challenged by established retailers, says *Charles Allen*.

The past year has seen supermarkets and logistics firms make huge changes to adapt to the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic. One of these has been the expansion of supermarkets' online delivery services that have been built to meet skyrocketing global demand. Indeed, such has been the growth of traditional supermarkets that they are regaining the digital market advantage that online-only supermarket Ocado had built up over the last 20 years.

Ocado was early to home grocery delivery since the launch of its retail service, in partnership with Waitrose, in October 2002. Its recent capital raising, which saw it bring a further £1 billion through the issue of equity and another convertible bond to the table, took the gross total of new money to £2.7 billion, including from the partial disposal of its grocery business.

However, while this move may give it firepower to roll out automated delivery warehouses for its clients – a major step in the evolution of home grocery delivery – its competitors are also exploring solutions that make better use of the larger warehouse network to expedite deliveries. This has allowed for a much greater flexibility and more rapid expansion of capacity than Ocado's 'robots' that are based in a small number of automated delivery warehouses have so far managed.

Ocado's Customer Fulfilment Centre in Hatfield, Hertfordshire, is being surpassed by the automated facilities in Erith, Bristol and later in the year, Andover and Purfleet. These centres, its delivery hubs and 1,700-strong delivery fleet enable it to reach 74% of the U.K. households, compared to more than 90% at competing

supermarkets. But while the company has invested millions in pioneering this business model, it will be catching up during 2021 as its new capacity aims to match the delivery slots added by supermarkets over the last 12 months to meet increased demand.

The strength of the UK's major physical supermarkets is their vast network, which allows for shorter local delivery routes. They can set up smaller automated facilities for online shopping within existing stores much faster than specialists such as Ocado investing in massive, automated warehouses staffed by robots.

Ocado's 'robots' may cut staff costs and increase efficiency but each of the warehouses cost up to £30 million to construct, meaning that Ocado's network will still depend on trunking and local delivery hubs.

One of the main attributes of Ocado's model is that it can assemble a large grocery order in as little as six minutes. However, in almost all cases this doesn't translate into one or two-hour delivery times, as the large warehouses have to support a wide distribution area, usually with satellite centres. The pandemic has increased demand for larger-basket shopping, though the longer-term trend to more convenience and instant delivery seems intact.

To counteract this issue, Ocado has devised Zoom, a smaller, robotic fulfilment centre with a more limited assortment of products that can deliver quickly to a small catchment area. This was largely in response to the threat of other competitors such as Amazon, Deliveroo and Uber Eats expanding their offering into the grocery market.

It is important to note that Covid-19 has reversed a ten-year trend towards convenience shopping and smaller average weekly spend at supermarkets as more and more people shop online. Ocado had an average basket of £137 in the 2020 fiscal year, and £147 in the most recent quarter, which signals it is well-positioned for big weekly shopping spends but less well-equipped if customers switch back to convenience spending once more severe lockdown restrictions are lifted across the UK.

It remains to be seen what the pandemic's long-term impact on consumer habits will be, but it is likely to involve a much greater number of competitors vying for Ocado's main business than ever before.

Charles Allen is a Senior Analyst covering retail at Bloomberg Intelligence



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Brexit Requirements

It is now a legal requirement that every wooden pallet crossing a UK/EU border is ISPM15-certified. *Felicity Smith* discusses the impact the change has had on the market.

When the UK left the European Union at the beginning of the year, new legal requirements came into force governing the movement of pallets and other wooden packaging material (WPM). ISPM15 rules stipulate that all WPM must be heat-treated, and marked as such, before they can cross the border between the two now separate areas. The aim of the regulations is to prevent the possibility of harmful pests moving between countries – even though, after Brexit, the actual risk embodied by WPM remains unchanged.

The change in rules itself may sound straightforward; however, it has significant implications for the speed and efficiency of supply chains overall, as the vast majority of consumer goods are transported on pallets, from FMCG to pharmaceutical products. The new obligations may lead to inspections, which in turn may lead to unwelcome delays.

In the lead-up to the completion of Brexit, there was significant concern about the ability of the pallet and packaging industry to supply enough compliant pallets to meet demand. Trade organisations, including TIMCON in the UK and FEFPEB in Europe, sought clarity on whether WPM movements would remain exempt from ISPM15, under the different ‘deal’ or ‘no deal’ scenarios being discussed. But, with both sides holding their cards close to their chests during the negotiations, this was a lengthy and initially unsatisfactory process.

Then, in the final few weeks before the December 31, 2020 deadline, it became clear that, whatever type of Brexit would happen, the ISPM15 regime would be changing.

This led to a scramble to build up stocks of compliant pallets to ensure continuity of supply from January 1, 2021. Actions taken included increasing heat-treatment capacity – either through investment or running extra kiln shifts – and government intervention to allow heat-treated ISPM15 wooden parts to repair used pallets without the need to re-heat the entire pallet afterwards (called ‘exemption’ and ‘easement’ measures).

All EPAL pallets – new and reconditioned – are ISPM15 compliant as standard, and the UK & Ireland arm of the business reported sales increases of 13 per cent in the third quarter of 2020. Businesses wishing to eliminate completely the risk to their supply chains of delays caused by Brexit looked to build up stores of treated pallets to ensure they were ready for the change.

The work that the pallet and packaging industry carried out alongside UK government to prepare for Brexit apparently paid off. While the changeover in January saw parts of the import and export business struggle with the significant increase in administration, time and cost of a host of new requirements, non-compliance to the ISPM15 rules reportedly caused only relatively minor disruption. Most of the industry now believes it can satisfy customers’ demands for compliant pallets.

As Defra representative Will Surman highlighted at a recent TIMCON meeting, ISPM15 is now the norm and, while enforcement will continue with limited resources being focused on higher risk origins, the new rules for UK/EU movements are unlikely to be wound back.



Wooden pallets are used for the vast majority of essential supply chains including fmcg and pharma products.

In addition, with global warming increasing the possibility that invasive species will thrive more easily in new locations, we may find that ISPM15 requirements are in fact rolled out to the borders of further destinations – including intra-EU movements - in the years ahead. So businesses who have ensured they are compliant now should have a substantial head start for the future.

Heat-treated pallets bring additional benefit to businesses, too, as they are stronger, making them a better choice for high-value goods such as drinks or pharmaceutical products. They are less likely to fail and are longer lasting, so they can be repaired and reused many times. This is better for the bottom line and the environment. EPAL pallets are heated further to ‘kiln-dried’ levels - so these benefits to the companies using them are enhanced further still. They are safe for loads of up to 1.25 tonnes, independently audited and specified ‘as new’ when repaired.

Felicity Smith is national secretary for EPAL UK & Ireland.

www.uk-irl.epal-pallets.org



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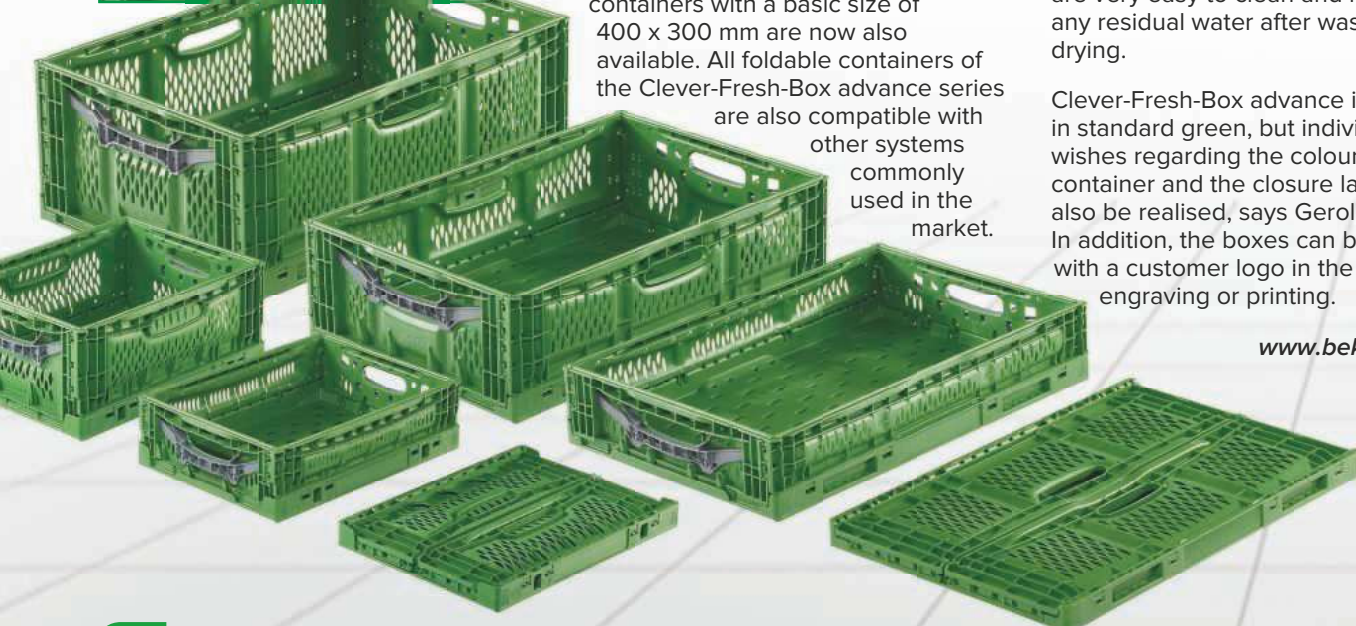
Folding Savings

The ability to slash volume within boxes and containers in the fresh produce sector offers savings in costs and efficiencies. German manufacturer bekuplast says it has the answer.

The 'Clever-Fresh-Box advance' folding container series has been used successfully in fresh produce logistics for many years, say bekuplast experts. The box volume for fruit and vegetables can be slashed by up to 84% simply by folding them together. Now the container series has been expanded: the sustainable folding containers are available in basic dimensions of 600 x 400 mm as well as 400 x 300 mm.

Reusable transport packaging has long been established for the storage and transport of fresh produce. But for some years now, there has been a concurrent search for transport packaging that can be reduced in volume.

The advantages of sustainable folding containers are obvious: In times of increasing price pressure, foldable containers offer unbeatable benefits.



After use, the empty containers are simply folded up. By reducing the volume of the container, space is saved during return transport, which has a positive effect on transport costs. At the same time, the environment is protected, because less transport also means a reduction in CO₂ emissions and other climate-damaging exhaust gases.

Specialist manufacturer bekuplast has been focusing on the development and production of foldable containers since the early 1990s. The company is one of the leading suppliers of volume-reducible transport packaging and is also a development partner and producer of the largest European pool service providers.

bekuplast's customers do not only include pool companies. The company also offers fresh food logistics containers for sale. For this purpose, the 'Clever-Fresh-Box advance' container series was developed. "The Clever-Fresh-Box advance has enjoyed growing popularity for many years, which is why we decided to expand the product series further," explains Gerold Wilms, Key Account Manager for the Fresh Logistics Division.

The folding container series is available in five different sizes. In addition to the classic basic size of 600 x 400 mm, containers with a basic size of 400 x 300 mm are now also available. All foldable containers of the Clever-Fresh-Box advance series are also compatible with other systems commonly used in the market.



When folded, the volume of the Clever-Fresh-Box advance is reduced by up to 84%. Thanks to special 'lift-lock' closure technology (see picture), the boxes can be quickly folded and unfolded fully automatically. The ergonomic closure is ideal for manual handling, but the folding box is equally suitable for automated processes.

The clever corner and base design makes the containers easier to stack and extremely resilient. The special perforation of the Clever-Fresh-Box advance ensures optimal ventilation of the fresh goods. To ensure that the fruit and vegetables are transported and stored particularly carefully, all surfaces are smooth and have no sharp edges. The hinged containers are very easy to clean and have hardly any residual water after washing and drying.

Clever-Fresh-Box advance is available in standard green, but individual wishes regarding the colour of the container and the closure latch can also be realised, says Gerold Wims. In addition, the boxes can be refined with a customer logo in the form of engraving or printing.

www.bekuplast.com

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Toy Story

Manual labour constraints were preventing an international logistics firm's opportunities to expand. Fast, fit-to-size automated packaging technology made all the difference.

From a 120,000 sq ft Kent warehouse, Global Freight Management Hersden Ltd picks, packs and despatches orders to both trade customers and direct to consumers, across the world. However in 2020, with the explosive growth of ecommerce, the management team quickly came to realise that their highly manual packing operation was a constraint on further expansion.

"We were limited by the fact that there were only so many people that you could get to work in a given space, for so many hours, to pack product," says Will Todd, Director and part owner. "We realised that we needed to introduce a level of automation to our packing processes if we were to gain the additional capacity required to take on new clients and develop the business."

But, for their largest client, Hornby Hobbies, the integrity and quality of the outer packaging was of critical importance, as many of their highly sought-after toys and models are purchased by enthusiasts and discerning collectors keen to retain the original product packaging in mint condition for 20 years or more. A crumpled corner or a scratch to the varnish can be a big issue.

Could automation deliver the precision and care needed to ensure full protection of the product? And would automation deliver the speed, throughput and productivity levels required to future proof the business?

The solution came in the form of Quadient's CVP Impact; an advanced automated fit-to-size packaging system, capable of tailor-making 500 individual cardboard packages per hour. Will Todd explains: "I read about the CVP Impact in the trade press. It sounded impressive, so I went to see one in operation and realised it was the way to go."

At the end of July 2020 Quadient's engineers delivered and installed a CVP Impact automated packaging system, complete with a twin feed for both 600 and 1000 mm cardboard to minimise off-cut waste – the first application of a twin feed CVP Impact in the UK. Will Todd says, "Quadient gave us a delivery date earlier than we were expecting. The machine was unloaded and installed, and within a day perfect boxes were being produced."

Quadient's CVP Impact is unique in that it has the potential to construct bespoke individual cardboard boxes to



the exact size of an ordered item at the rate of up to of 500 boxes per hour – combining multiple items, as required.

The CVP Impact measures, constructs, tapes, weighs and labels each parcel in one seamless process. The operator simply places the item(s) to be packed onto the machine and scans the order. The system identifies the order and automatically conveys the items to a 3D scanner to measure and calculate the minimum box size required. The cardboard is then cut and folded to create a snug fit around the goods and tape is applied on just two sides to secure the box. An in-line scale checks the weight against the order and, finally, the box is automatically conveyed to a label printer where a carrier compliant label is created and applied. The whole process, from start to finish, takes just 30 seconds with a custom made box configured every seven seconds.

"It's a fabulous piece of kit. It does exactly what was promised. It packs products in the most economically, environmentally friendly and protective way – at high speeds. The packages are perfect for shipping around the world," says Will Todd.

He points out that although their key reason for investing in the CVP Impact was extra packaging capacity to expand the business, there were several other important benefits too.

"As we are shipping out every order as a box made precisely to the optimum size for the order, we are now using less cardboard – probably around 30% less – which is good from both an environmental and cost view point," says Will Todd. "And as the boxes are right-sized, that means fewer pallets of boxes being shipped, less lorries on the road and lower emissions – which again brings cost savings."

www.packagingbyquadient.com



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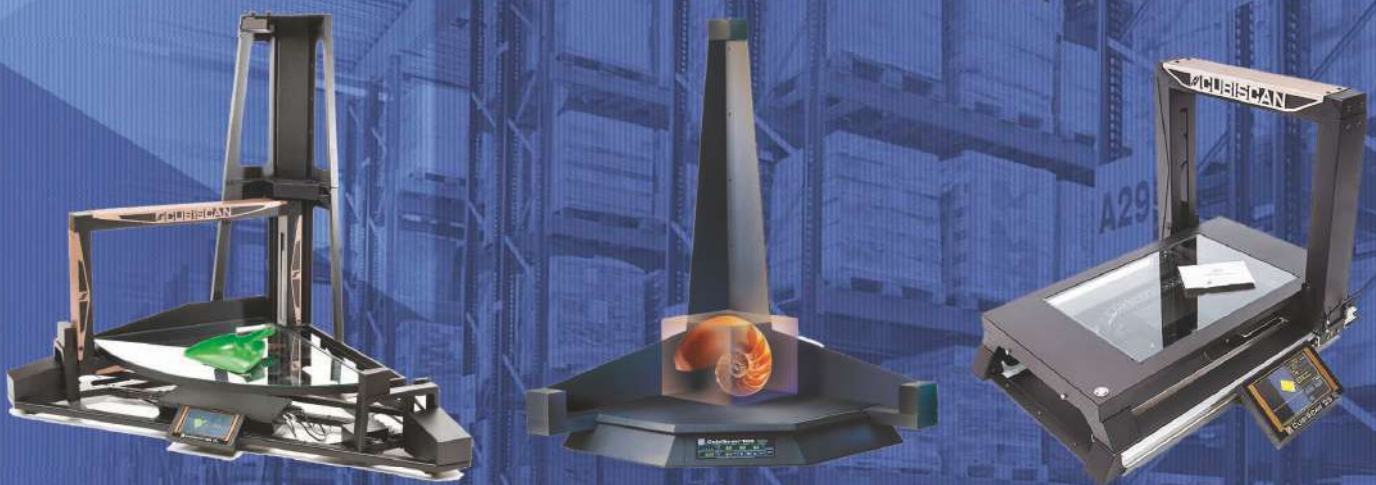
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Future-proofing Warehouse Space

How can decision makers better equip themselves to overcome future fulfilment and distribution challenges that have already left so many with minimal warehouse space?

Over the past year, food and other essentials have been subject to spates of panic buying which left some supermarket shelves out of stock almost overnight. And with most supermarkets now viewed as multi-functional retail outlets, buyers have continued this trend, leaving backroom staff working overtime to ensure more than just the essentials are still available. With this in mind, larger quantities of stock (and therefore more packaging waste) have been moving throughout warehouse systems – leaving little free space in the process.

Traditional retailers have also been affected by new consumer behaviours. After momentarily closing their physical stores due to the pandemic, consumers flocked to ecommerce and look to stay there, continuing their spending habits online. In fact, early reports show these trends look set to last with surveys finding that 82% of consumers will continue to shop online as opposed to visiting stores even after the pandemic calms down. This has left fulfillers with question marks over their packaging and logistics in general, with some forced to extend delivery and return periods to help manage these new peaks in demand.

Future-Proofing

For many logistics teams, their current processes simply aren't sustainable. The heavy increase in demand has left

warehouses and distribution centres sprawling to process and package orders in increasingly smaller spaces and windows of time.

Demand for warehouse space has also skyrocketed, by 51% in the first half of 2020 alone – highlighting the need for extra space. This presents a sustainability issue for the logistics industry and one that must be addressed sooner rather than later.

Yet, decision makers do have options – some considerably less expensive than purchasing additional warehouse space. Today's environmental technology is developed with these challenges in mind and can provide various benefits tailored to the particular needs of a warehouse or distribution space.

Although the layout and dimensions of a warehouse play an important role in mapping out space, specialised equipment such as automatic channel baling presses can help maximise it. By taking waste packaging materials such as plastic these machines can produce bales – weighing up to 1250kg – that can be returned into the recycling system whilst freeing up the space that was once taken by the waste. What's more, with a volume throughput of up to 40 t/h, this not only provides teams with a valuable space saving option but also improves the sustainability



of their processes through return on investment and even reduced electricity output.

Sustainably packaged

With the up turn in online purchases and fulfilment, packaging can quickly become a complicated problem for e-retailers – especially when dealing with return orders.

Smart packaging solutions offer decision makers a way of turning waste into packaging material. Cardboard perforators in particular can become a useful instrument in dealing with the rise of orders (and returns) by perforating used cardboard offcuts to produce recycled packaging.

With the real peak of ecommerce seemingly yet to come, perforators give users the potential to save thousands in what would otherwise be spent on new packaging – a lifeline for smaller and independent sellers preparing for an influx of returns. Implementing a system such as this not only saves on costs now but it can help retailers (both online and offline) make their logistics more sustainable moving forward. Traditional packaging material costs could soon rise as the industry manages these new purchasing behaviours.

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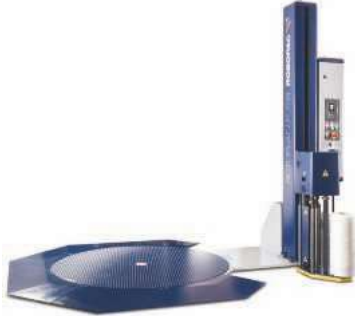




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Interim Success

SMEs should look to interim solutions for permanent change, argues *Leigh Anderson*.

During the pandemic many small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) have necessarily paused, postponed or cancelled their plans for long-term logistics and supply chain development. With lean workforces stripped to the bone through furloughs and redundancies, the emphasis has been on survival in a constantly changing business environment.

But as the economy reopens, challenges old and new will have to be addressed. The move towards ecommerce, and the need to adapt to a post-Brexit environment, has demanded responses in both supply and fulfilment arrangements, and there are new tasks in converting 'emergency' improvisations into sustainable and profitable business models.

Even in the best of times, designing and implementing fundamental change initiatives within the supply chain often requires a temporary strengthening of the technical and managerial ranks, bringing in new skills and expertise. Larger corporations may have the necessary human resources elsewhere in the business, but smaller companies may need to look externally.

That appointment often takes the form of an 'interim' – a professional with very specific skills and experience, working for a day rate as self-employed or as their own company. This is a proven way for SMEs to access the latest and most relevant knowledge, and of pushing through change while minimising disruption to normal business.

However, there is a widely held misconception that interim appointments are no longer appropriate, and that the 'right' way of meeting these short-term needs is through employment of staff on Fixed Term Contracts (FTC), rather

than buying a service from an interim. Largely, this is due to the postponed but now imminent introduction by HM Revenue and Customs of the 'IR35' rules.

These aim, quite rightly, to combat 'disguised employment' whereby long-term workers claim to be self-employed, thus reducing employer and employee National Insurance payments, and saving on sick pay, holiday pay and other benefits. But this has led many businesses to believe that trying to make the case for a 'genuine' interim appointment is just too difficult.

That is to confuse two different situations. Temporary cover, for example for maternity leave, or because someone has left unexpectedly and the firm wants to take its time in making a permanent appointment, is clearly employment and should be treated as such. But those aren't the situations where a firm should be looking to an interim.

The interim comes into his or her own where there are clearly defined objectives, results and timescales that require particular, sometimes unique, skills and knowledge. These will have a strategic focus around change management, crisis management, project delivery, and business transformation. Examples in the logistics and supply chain field might include re-orienting supply chains to achieve increased resilience; reconfiguring distribution operations for ecommerce; or setting up a European distribution operation to mitigate post-Brexit impediments to exports.

There are other advantages to taking the interim route. Although day-rates can look quite steep, they are less so when the full costs of employment (employer NI, holiday and sick pay, other employment benefits) of an FTC

POST-COVID-19



Leigh Anderson is MD at Bis Henderson Recruitment

are taken into account. For this, the company is accessing very specific skills that may not be available in the 'pool' of candidates for an FTC post.

Moreover, an interim will 'hit the ground running' and see the project through, using experience that they know is relevant to the task. An FTC candidate by contrast, however well qualified in managing supply chains, may have relatively little experience in creating or remodelling them, or in the company's particular line of business.

Both day-rate interims and FTC appointments can have their place in an SME's recovery strategy, but the company needs to be clear about what it is trying to achieve.

Bis Henderson Recruitment has extensive experience of both approaches and can help firms define their requirements and decide on their preferred strategy. We recognise that smaller companies have limited HR experience and resource and we can help with the selection process for both interims and FTCs.

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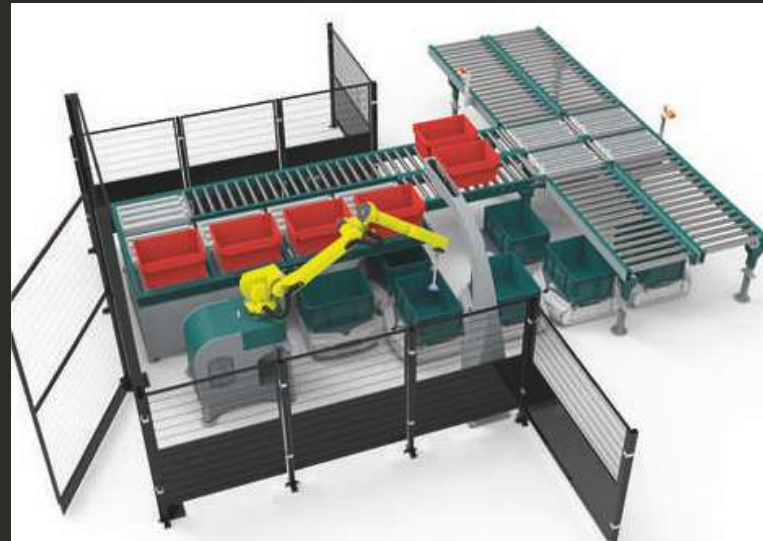
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LOGISTICS BUSINESS SHOW

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www.logisticsbusinessshow.com



VISITORS

Over 1500 visitors attended the debut virtual exhibition in February. These visitors remain registered for the next event, in addition to all new visitors who register between March and September. We expect over 3000 visitors for September.

As there will be no physical exhibitions or conferences until October at least, digital events like this present the only opportunity to meet new potential customers and partners. Visitors attend, free-of-charge, from all sectors of the logistics industry worldwide.

Visitor promotion targets supply chain decision-makers, including readers of *Logistics Business* magazine, as well as our social media contacts (including a 3300 Linked In group and 2800 Twitter followers), search engine results for logistics exhibitions and the extensive exhibition database of our partners C&H Maastricht.

LEAD GENERATION

The *Logistics Business Show* generated an average of 70 sales leads from the first event in February. The platform captures the data of all visitors to each booth, has a request-for-quotation system and messaging functions (chats and offline notifications).

EASE OF USE

Since lockdown everyone has become increasingly familiar with digital meeting technology. The cultural shift is permanent and exhibition visitors have adapted to online networking. Virtual is the way forward.

LIVE STREAMING

Exhibitors have pre-scheduled one-2-one video calls with visitors. The 'Let's Talk' function starts a live chat and gives video call options

NETWORKING

The exhibition features a networking lounge where visitors and exhibitors can make contact and discuss relevant issues.



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EXHIBITION HALL

There are 6 themes:

- Forklift & AGV Technology
- Handling Automation Systems
- Packaging & Pallets
- Software & Computing
- Transport Services & Equipment
- Warehousing Equipment

Visitors can browse the hall and search for specific requirements from a list of categories.

STAND DESIGN

Exhibitors can choose from a wide range of booth layouts. All booths are the same size and there is no preferential positioning.

STAND FUNCTIONALITY

Exhibitors can add products, services, videos and catalogues, as well as graphics. All booths have chat, messaging and networking facilities as well as live video calls on demand or by appointment. Exhibitors can assign sales staff to share stand management.



“Congratulations to you and the entire team on the successful delivery of the virtual exhibition. It was well prepared, well presented and filled a gap created by sheltering. I look forward to the second edition later this year.”

John Nofsinger

ROUNDTABLE PANEL DISCUSSIONS

There will be 9 live-streamed, hour-long panel discussions during the event.

These are moderated by our Editor, Paul Hamblin. They will be recorded and available to view on demand, plus the video files will be provided to the speakers afterwards.

The specific themes will be announced shortly and all exhibitors will be able to nominate 1 spokesperson to join 1 of the panels of 4 speakers. They will not make presentations or share-screens, just join a lively debate about technology, issues and trends. Viewers can raise questions.

There are 36 places available in total. You can playback videos from our February event on demand in the Panel Discussions page of www.logisticsbusinessshow.com

SPEAKERS AT OUR FEBRUARY ROUNDTABLE PANEL DISCUSSIONS:



Guy Courtin
6 River



Dominic Aelberry
VP EMEA, Conexiom



Wouter Satijn, MD
Joloda Hydraroll



James Ryan
Owner of Sentry Products



James Smith, MD
AutoStore UK



David Beguin
Sales Manager, BlueBotics



Simon Houghton
Sales & Marketing Manager, Geek Plus UK



Graham Bingham
Sales, Mushiny Suzhou



Vladimir Litoshenko
First Line Software



Rob de Ridder
Sales Manager, Ravas



Shaun Pretorius
Ammega



Hilton Campbell, MD
Interroll UK



Marcel van Schijndel
SAT Technologies



Matt Pedley
Gebhardt



Josh Brazil, COO
Ocean Insights



Pol Sweeney, VP
Descartes UK & Ireland



Fred d'Orsay
Southern Europe Sales Director, Bivolon



Viv Bradshaw
Head of Sales, Denso-Wave



Frank Rissler
Sales Director, EPG Voice Solutions



Gianluca Rossi
Sales & Marketing Director, Sitma Machinery



Andy Longrigg
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Louise Inglese
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You can watch these sessions live or at your convenience

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