

AEB saves stock and shoe-leather

Amada, the German subsidiary of the Japanese manufacturer of sheet metal fabrication machines, opened its Haan headquarters in 2009. A 1,500 sq m logistics centre was included on the site, storing 13,000 different lines. Around 108,000 replacement parts and accessories, representing around 30,000 packages are shipped every year; 70 shipments leave the warehouse every day.

But Amada had a problem: it had no visibility of its stock, there was too much reliance on cumbersome, labour-intensive manual systems, and the warehouse was so poorly organised that staff ended up walking huge distances around the site.

"When it came to logistics, we used to be pretty backward," admits IT manager Andreas Tänzler "It took too much time to create delivery notes and forward orders," adds Sabine Mertins, logistics and purchase manager. "There was no overarching logistics system to generate all the documents needed for our shipping and export processes."

Until last year, that is - when Amada implemented AEB Visibility and Collaboration

software, known as Assist4. Installation of Assist4 followed the success of AEB's customs management and transport and freight management packages, installed in 2011. Three packing stations have been set up in the warehouse to facilitate the preparation of orders. Every evening, loading lists are automatically transmitted to the transport service providers along with appropriate labelling.

Before installing Assist4, having a delivery note was no proof that the order had actually been despatched. Now users can enter the consignment number to see who picked and packed the goods, when, whether labels have been printed and whether the goods have left the warehouse.

In addition, all status updates, such as 'ready to ship' or 'goods issued', and all track and trace information provided by the 3PLs are transferred to the online

platform. This ensures that any employee, including sales and service personnel, are able to know exactly what is happening with every order.

Customers that have obtained partner status or signed special service agreements will soon be able to check shipping status themselves, but improved service is already being provided through greater visibility. "We can now respond to potential delays before it is too late," points out Sabine Penn-Destler, sales administration manager. "The system also allows us to evaluate the on-time performance of our service suppliers."

One more benefit from Assist4: by holding the relevant carrier data in the system, Amada can calculate freight costs - saving each of nine employees about 20 minutes a day - and improves invoice auditing, which in turn helps the company to monitor and control costs.

By Marcia Macleod



Teesport's new Navis terminal operating system allows PD Ports to provide greater visibility of containers, not just terminal staff and port management, but customers, too.

"Shippers can access the system and see for themselves when the ship hits the quay, when the cargo is offloaded and where on the terminal it is located," explains PD Ports MD, Frans Calje. "The old system could locate boxes - but the new one tells us where to put every box, depending on the size, type and weight of the container, type of cargo, when it is discharged, and so on.

"The consignee can then start to plan their supply chain. They can also choose whether to move the cargo to their warehouse or leave it on the terminal - for example, if their warehouse is full or transport is delayed."

Those with suitable commercial agreements can also estimate demurrage charges by knowing when cargo arrived and how long it is likely to stay at the port. Normally, says Calje, the terminal operator sends the invoice to the shipping line, but now PD Ports can determine who the box belongs to and invoice them directly for demurrage.

"We have arrangements with

about 45% of our total cargo base that will allow us to invoice them for demurrage charges, not the shipping line," Calje emphasises. "This will be more efficient for the shipper, because when they receive an invoice from the shipping line, they often don't know for sure what cargo the invoice is for or how long the box really sat in the terminal."

Calje admits PD Ports has been invoicing some shippers direct for a few years, but points out that it previously used a more cumbersome separate system, whereas the new software will allow invoices to be produced automatically.

Hard sell from Softship

"Never before!; 'Ground-breaking!' 'A major step forward!' Sorry, the exclamation marks are mine. But if you read the press release from German technology company Softship about its partnership with financial software provider Comarch, you would think no liner company or agency had ever integrated their operational system with their accounts.

According to Softship, the arrangement with Comarch marks the first time customer-facing services have been combined with back-office accounting in one single, seamless solution. I can't argue with that, as I am

not an expert on liner or liner agency software. But people have successfully integrated the two for some years. Indeed, one IT expert insists his agency employer did just that in the 1980s.

"The difference is that we offer tailor-made solutions for the shipping industry, and Comarch, tailor-made accounts, that include things like vessel accounting and voyage accounting," says Thomas Wolff, executive director of Softship Aktiengesellschaft. "And by joining forces, we can offer one solution, already integrated, that can lead to major cost savings."

Wolff adds that the system is

fully customisable to suit individual company preferences and processes. But doesn't that actually contradict the idea of one integrated solution? If it has to be tailored anyway, why not just take the user's preferred accounts package and integrate it with Softship at the time of implementation? Or take something like Oracle, the all-singing, all-dancing one-stop software-solution-in-the-box and tailor the operational modules to fit the shipping industry? It can't be that much more difficult.

If any IT geeks out there can see the solution through the chips, would they please let us know?

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New deal for small forwarders

Champ Cargosystems and Worldwide Information Network (WIN) say that a new integration deal will allow the world's independent freight forwarders to connect electronically to over 100 airlines and access a range of mature e-cargo services, including airwaybills, status information, availability and booking requests.

Champ and Worldwide Information Network (WIN) have integrated the latter's WIN 3.0 with Champ's Traxon cargoHUB platform. The deal was announced at the recent WCA Family Annual Conference Week in Bangkok and also to the World Cargo Symposium in Doha, where WIN managing director, John DeBenedette, said: "Although small- and medium-sized

New deal puts forwarders and airlines together



forwarders offer their customers many advantages over the multinationals, they still lack the sort of IT connectivity their larger competitors take for granted. This

new connection between WIN and CHAMP's Traxon cargoHUB levels the playing field and, in fact, sets the stage for the independents to leap ahead."

Customs firm makes the switch

Customs management company e-customs says it has become one of the first companies to implement BT's new CCS-UK 'Bureau'

connection. Ian Grant, business director of BT Global Logistics said the transition to the new system had gone very smoothly.

Rational!

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Bob Andrews, Managing Director, Globelink-Fallow

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