

Trouble at the loading dock

Gursh Atwal, account manager at AEB (International) Ltd discusses what time slot management (TSM) solutions can do to solve delivery bottlenecks



Issues at loading docks have been the cause of conflicts between shippers and transport partners for a long time. It seems quite unnecessary today. With all the developments in streamlining supply chains, digitising businesses, and advancing autonomous driving, it seems completely inappropriate to lack visibility of incoming deliveries, incur truck waiting times, struggle with staffing, or experience traffic jams in the yard.

Businesses need to realise that it's a fairly simple problem to solve. There are straightforward solutions available that integrate easily into existing IT landscapes, offer convenient, online access for transport partners, and deliver an excellent ROI. Smart time slot management (TSM) systems can solve bottleneck problems and deliver significant valued-added benefits for businesses.

Take cereal foodstuffs manufacturer

Brüggen. For years, trucks would arrive in an uncoordinated order and be processed in order of arrival, often resulting in very long waiting times, contract penalties, or demurrage charges. Then, two years ago, Brüggen introduced a TSM solution for streamlining all incoming and outgoing shipments.

Now teams at the loading docks can make the goods available in time for loading, because they know exactly which shipments are scheduled next. If not much is going on, the team leader can decide to send staff home. This would previously have been unthinkable, as nobody knew when the trucks would arrive. Costly overtime is a thing of the past.

Teams can also issue picking orders with much greater precision, ensuring that necessary resources are available when needed, e.g. the right number of workers, or the conveyance technology required to put away stock.

Additionally, Brüggen's transport partners benefit, too. As all relevant parties are connected now, they have developed an excellent communication network. Delayed trucks no longer have to join the end of the queue, but will automatically be assigned the next free time slot. The system offers complete transparency in line with access rights – across all used loading docks, timed collections and deliveries, as well as all booked and free time slots.

The objective of TSM solutions is to avoid peaks at the loading docks and to balance the number of loading activities. But most importantly, integrating these solutions into the overall intra-logistics process

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What is the situation at your loading dock?

Take a look at this checklist. If several of these points apply to your operations, it's high time to take a look at solutions that support your business and fit your current IT landscape with regards to seasonal fluctuations and industry-specific peak times:

- Long waiting times at loading docks, with information deficits between shippers and carriers
- Traffic jams in the yard or access roads. Claims for vehicle demurrage charges by carriers
- Collaboration with many different carriers
- High numbers of trucks with small loads
- Required lead time for the provision of goods
- Few loading docks and scarce personnel, but high truck traffic

also facilitates better planning and coordination of the entire logistics chain. The impact is even noticeable for Brüggen's sales department, which would receive enquiries about the whereabouts of goods. Everyone can now see the status at any time via an easy-to-access web-based platform.

Another example for the benefits of a TSM is demonstrated by Tudor Rose International, Europe's leading export market management company, and specialists in global brand building. Tudor Rose's custom developed in-house solution for the commercial and logistics side of its business was struggling to support growing business volumes efficiently. It was time for IT improvements.

The decision to upgrade the system kicked off a major project involving all business areas, from sales and procurement to operations and fulfilment. The company mastered its modernisation successfully: from order confirmation to final delivery – including time slot management. ■