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moving
solutions for intermodal logistics

"We need clear action from politicians: Pro-rail, pro-liberalisation, pro-combined transport"

It is primarily medium-sized, owner-operated freight forwarding and logistics companies that are involved in combined transport, with passion and a firm resolve to tread new paths. One of these pioneers is HOYER GmbH Internationale Fachspedition based in Hamburg. Founded in 1946, the company has been a shareholder and customer of Hupac for the last 40 years. An interview with Thomas Hoyer, Chairman of the Advisory Board, and Jürgen Matzken, Intermodal Supply Manager.

by Eckhard-Herbert Arndt


Thomas Hoyer
Chairman of the Advisory Board


Jürgen Matzken
Intermodal Supply Manager

You carry a substantial proportion of your freight by rail. What are the advantages?
Matzken: Combined transport is an integral part of our logistical concept. Its cornerstones are performance, service, flexibility and competitiveness. Other crucial factors for the choice of intermodal transport are the product characteristics and specific conditions such as environmental requirements or the state of traffic routes.

The chemical industry is the main customer. Which are the main transport axes?
Matzken: The North-West, North-South and West-South corridors are important for the existing business. There is great future potential on the West-East axis.

How do the shippers influence this decision?
Matzken: The shippers are expressing their demands clearly. Their focus is on competitiveness, efficiency and security, followed by reliability and predictability. Demand for environmentally friendly and resource-saving transport has been growing recently.

Your group has been a customer at Hupac for more than 40 years. How has the relationship developed?
Hoyer: I am very impressed to see how that intermodal operator has grown over the last four decades. As a committed medium-sized business, for many years we have found the Hupac Group with its medium-sized structure to be more than just a service provider but also a valued partner in active cooperation.

In fact the relationship goes further than that. HOYER has been an active member of Hupac's Board of Directors for decades. What are your priorities on that board?
Hoyer: For me it is primarily about a strategic exchange of ideas, with implications that go far beyond solving day-to-day operational problems. Of course, as one of the stakeholders on the Board of Directors, my main priority is Hupac, not a company that bears the name of HOYER.

You have invested heavily in combined transport. In 2002 you had 10,000 tank containers in your inventory, now there are 26,000 units.
Hoyer: The prospects for combined transport are still very good. Having said that, it must do more to face up to the current challenges of the market. There can only be a positive trend if combined transport delivers an acceptable service at fair market prices.

What future challenges must the industry overcome?
Hoyer: The biggest challenge is the increasing formation of monopolies. For example, combined transport operators are acting as freight forwarders, operating terminals and dealing with traction and the rail network. I think that is a very worrying trend. HOYER has always campaigned for the liberalisation and privatisation of the market, for example by founding Rail4Chem. What we are seeing now is a contrary development. We are pleased to have a private operator as a partner in the shape of Hupac.

The major intermodal operators are increasingly complaining about terminal bottlenecks.
Matzken: The terminals are congested throughout Europe. They are right to complain about excessive numbers of parked transport units, which severely hinder operations at the facilities. On the other hand, that is also due to inadequate capacity management. Then there are external factors such as late trains. What is more, many terminals have failed to adjust their infrastructure to customers' needs in good time. For example, many terminals still operate on the assumption that consignments will be picked up as soon as the trains arrive. But in reality things are quite different.

There are also bottlenecks on the railway lines. Is there enough expansion and maintenance happening in Europe?
Hoyer: Frankly, no. Making investments in times of crisis takes courage, foresight and strategic decisions. There seems to be a shortage of those things among the national railways that own the rail network.

How does that tie in with politicians' demands that more freight should be carried by rail?
Hoyer: You'd be better off asking the politicians that question – and they should respond with clear action: pro-rail, pro-liberalisation and pro-combined transport.

In Europe we are still miles away from a harmonised track pricing system on the railways.
Hoyer: The key factors are transparency and liberalisation. As long as monopolists control the market, there is no room for competition. Ultimately, only competition can bring comparability, harmonisation and good performance.

What do you demand from the EU Commission in terms of railway liberalisation?
Hoyer: It is astonishing that the market authorities take no action when national rail operators buy their private competitors and integrate them into their corporate structure. Where are the antitrust authorities when national rail companies achieve a dominant market position through acquisitions? The EU Commissions should take their responsibility seriously and take action.

In times of global climate change, the industry likes to talk about "more sustainability". Are your customers prepared to pay more for environmentally friendly transport?
Matzken: Combined transport is generally more attractive and offers better environmental performance than road haulage over long distances. That is one of the main reasons why Hoyer makes extensive use of combined transport.
Hoyer: But there are exceptions, too. The real question is who ultimately pays the costs. A full-cost analysis will quickly show that the costs of the environmentally damaging factors of road haulage are borne by the general public. What we need to do is change the general economic conditions in favour of environmentally friendly transport.

editorial

Just do it!

The European Commission has set itself some ambitious goals in the 2010 White Paper: 30% of long-distance traffic should be handled by rail by 2030, with a target of 50% by 2050. Yet the railway system enters the race with considerable handicaps. In many cases, national and geopolitical interests dominate the state-owned railways. As a result, whilst the EU calls for the creation of a European rail market, certain railways are delaying the implementation of liberalisation, harmonisation and interoperability; in fact they are raising the barriers even higher. The only winner in this game is the road; all of us are the losers.

Of course, the complex rail system will never match the flexibility of the road. The strengths of the railway lie elsewhere: large volumes carried safely over long distances. Yet the transport policy objectives are not an utopia if we use the existing potential for improvement and catch up with the road.

Hupac is a staunch supporter of railway liberalisation. Only this impetus can make the system competitive. Europe could do without the recast if the European Commission and Member States had implemented liberalisation with the necessary conviction. With a 10-point plan that we present in this issue of Moving and a call of "Just do it!" to policymakers and railways, we can improve the overall environment and secure the future of rail freight transport.

Bernhard Kunz
Managing Director of the Hupac Group

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The vicious circle of railway liberalisation

Europe needs an open, efficient market for rail freight transport if it is to achieve its transport policy objectives. Hupac aims to stimulate the future of the railways with a 10-point plan and a call of "Just do it!".

by Bernhard Kunz, Managing Director of the Hupac Group

Missed opportunities

There was plenty of optimism when the liberalisation process began more than a decade ago. The declared aim was to boost the railway sector by using competition as a driver of efficiency and market orientation. It seemed to be a success: many new railway undertakings (RUs) entered the freight transport market and on the axes where competition worked, the market flourished.

Hupac supported the opening of the market from the start, for example with the concept of integrated traction throughout Europe and the integration of various private RUs into the partner portfolio. The progress was unmistakable: interfaces were eliminated, improvements in productivity were achieved and costs became transparent and comparable. And it was clearly shown that it is possible to operate the rail system economically.

The number of private RUs still in existence today is all the more sobering. The young companies suffered greatly from the 2008 crisis, which led to much consolidation in the market. Forced to rely on the private capital market for money, the RUs faced liquidity problems during the crisis and were no longer supported by the banks. Such problems are unfamiliar to the state-owned rail freight companies, which survive despite large deficits on their balance sheets. These unfair conditions have done great damage to the liberalisation process. Instead of investing millions each year via the Marco Polo subsidy programme in new products, some of which cannibalise existing services, it would be more beneficial to use this money to create a fund to support the new RUs with loans, particularly during the start-up phase.

In other areas, too, the reality is far removed from the European Commission's aims. The introduction of the single ERTMS safety system remains uncertain: each country has its own version. A decision by the rail industry in collaboration with policymakers is essential here.

In terms of infrastructure, the major European freight transport corridors must be equipped with uniform standards for train length, weight and height. The Rotterdam-Genoa corridor should be the first to fulfil these criteria and guarantee efficient, harmonised operation once the Gotthard base tunnel is put into operation.

But that is still a long way off. Uncertainty is growing, making those involved less willing to take action. What happens if individual countries fail to comply with EU legislation and directives, or implement them too late? Who will compensate the rail industry for pointless investments or those made too early? In theory, those responsible would have to pay penalties or reduce track prices on certain routes. The EU has great responsibility for the rules and functioning of the overall system.

There is also turbulence affecting rolling stock. Maintenance costs have exploded following the tragic accident in Viareggio. Of course safety is the top priority. But before radical changes in the rolling stock maintenance concept are introduced by the national safety authorities, all of the stakeholders should be aware of the repercussions. Here, too, uniform action is required throughout Europe to prevent arbitrary and uncoordinated national standards. For example, the new standards for wheelsets have been introduced although the necessary capacity does not yet exist. This reduces wagon availability by up to 15% and causes losses of hundreds of millions to wagon carriers.

A threat to freight transport

Hupac is a staunch supporter of railway liberalisation, the only impetus that can make the system competitive. Yet the pendulum is swinging in the other direction – a threat to everyone, because a shift back onto the roads would cause traffic congestion and drastically restrict mobility. The costs to our national economies would be huge.

Persistent losses in cargo operations are prompting certain railways to change their strategy by focusing more on passenger transport and reducing freight traffic. In the medium term, this trend is causing shortfalls in the network. There is a need here for policymakers to ensure that capacity is reliably provided for freight transport. Only the separation of infrastructure and operations can ensure that infrastructure is not developed as a priority for the segment in which the railways have the greatest interest. In freight transport we need infrastructure to run 750 metre-long, 4 metre-high and 2,000 ton trains without technical and administrative obstacles, which will increase productivity and eliminate the losses. This requires investment in the European rail network, particularly on the new freight corridors. We also need efficient and successful rail partners. It would be fatal to fall back into the trap of the past, when tariff increases were used to make up for a lack of efficiency. That would be the beginning of the end – a real vicious circle.

Railway liberalisation: Just do it!

In the current economic crisis afflicting whole countries, investments in railway infrastructure are increasingly being reduced or cancelled. If we are to attract private capital, we must make the rail market more attractive. Many investors had placed great hope in the liberalisation, but the gap between the standards and their actual implementation caused a great deal of disappointment.

Europe could do without the recast if the European Commission and the Member States had implemented the scheduled measures with the necessary conviction. With our 10-point plan and our call of "Just do it!" to policymakers and railways, we can work together to create the conditions for the success of rail freight transport.

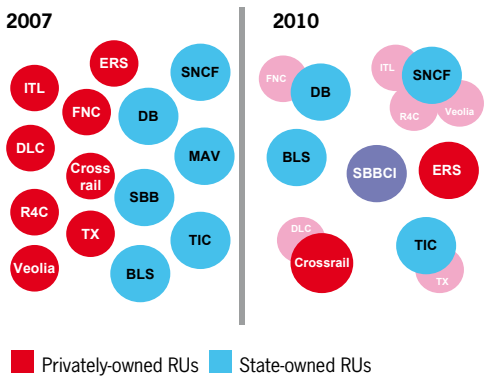
10-point plan for railway liberalisation

	Measure	Comment
1	From 25 national safety authorities to 1 European railway agency	Great potential for cost savings
2	Mandatory timetable for introducing the agreed measures	Penalties or lower train path prices in case of non-compliance
3	Harmonisation: pilot projects on EU freight transport corridors	International conventions, mutual recognition for rolling stock, safety system ERMTS
4	Focus Marco Polo subsidy programme on liberalisation measures	Clear focus on liberalisation as the strongest impetus for rail freight transport
5	Free access to shunting yards	Essential for wagon-load transport
6	Fair rebate system for energy costs	Equal conditions for incumbents and new railways
7	Eliminate administrative obstacles	NO to the new EU Customs Code for transit through Switzerland
8	Regulatory body with far-reaching powers	Any liberalisation is only as good as the powers of its regulator
9	Fair and harmonised track access pricing	Resolve conflict between passenger and freight transport
10	Separation of infrastructure and operations	Develop and operate infrastructure in line with transport policy objectives, curb special interests

Entry barriers for RUs: a major handicap in comparison to the road

Investments in rail freight traffic		
Purchase of traction means	300,000 €	3.5 mio. €
Purchase of multi-system traction means	300,000 €	4-5 mio. €
Delivery terms	6 months	12-24 months
Countries covered by request for homologation	27 countries	1 country
Costs for the 1st homologation	60,000 €	1-2 mio. €
Time frame for the 1st homologation	< 6 months	> 18 months
Time frame for the 2nd homologation (cross acceptance)	0	< 18 months
Costs for on-board signalling system	0	0.5-1.5 mio. €

Private RUs in transit via Switzerland: wave of consolidation is inhibiting the opening of the market



Harmonised pan-European systems are urgently required

There are considerable differences in the competition between road and rail – railways must become even more attractive.

Most experts agree that the volume of freight within Europe will increase substantially in the next 20 years. So ways and means must be found to handle this volume as efficiently and ecologically as possible.

Rail and road, which together account for approximately 90% of the transported freight volume, have been in unequal competition for years. In theory each transport system should use its inherent advantages and contribute to a sensible whole. But there are considerable differences between the two main modes of transport in terms of their competitiveness.

The formation of the European Union brought a number of substantial advantages for the road. In contrast, liberalisation of the railways began much later and is still in its infancy in many areas today. Whereas a truck licensed in Sweden or Italy can travel freely throughout Europe, the system of rail transport is tied to a rigid and complex transport network. Every locomotive must be individually licensed for each country, because Europe's railways face dozens of different signalling and safety systems, licensing regulations, voltages and operating regulations. In contrast, the technical regulations within Europe for road vehicles differ only in terms of detail. The costs of licensing are also miles apart. European rail freight transport thus urgently needs harmonised operating systems.

There are also considerable differences between road and rail in terms of rolling stock maintenance. Whilst a truck can rely on a well-developed service network on its journeys through Europe, rail wagons often need to be driven over long distances to the workshops. In this sector, the opening of the market is still in its infancy. "We need more maintenance workshops close to terminals so that we can make wagon maintenance more efficient and, most importantly, cheaper," says Hupac's managing director, Bernhard Kunz.

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“Hupac brings private drive”

To maintain an open market in transit through Switzerland – that was the declared aim when Hupac took a share in the new SBB subsidiary for international freight transport as at January 2011. The focus on efficiency and productivity is bearing fruit. An interview with Michail Stahlhut, CEO of SBB Cargo International.

by Gerhard Lob

Michail Stahlhut
CEO of SBB Cargo International

SBB Cargo International took up operations at the start of 2011. How is the company doing after its first few months?
We are on schedule, which might be a surprise given the economic trend and the euro-Swiss franc issue. Our planned target is to run 30,000 trains this year. At the moment we are well on the way to achieving that target. This year we have centralised all activities in Olten. Of course there were a few teething problems there but those difficulties can be solved.

Hupac has taken a share of 25 per cent in SBB Cargo International. What has been the effect of that?
One might have expected other customers to respond negatively because the main customer Hupac is now represented among the shareholders. But that was not the case. The situation is like a sporting contest. The customers want the most efficient company on the North-South axis, so the composition of the shareholders is a secondary concern.

So the customers accept the new situation?
Absolutely. We have even seen our customer base grow. That may be because we are no longer perceived merely as a state-owned company but also as a business with a private drive.

Quality – on-time delivery – is the key factor for combined transport customers. Once again, there were serious quality issues in summer 2011.
Surprisingly, quality was higher this year than last. But the level is still not high enough for us to be satisfied. We had some unexpected infrastructure failures along the entire corridor A: construction sites in Oberhausen/Emmerich, then there were cases of damage at Mainz, as well as accidents in Baden-Württemberg, not to mention the fire in the Simplon tunnel and the planned noise reduction measures in northern Italy.

Where do you see potential for improvement?
In terms of coordinating the construction sites in particular, it would be important to have uniform and cross-border management for each corridor. That is also what the EU is calling for.

Rail freight transport is having a tough time in Italy. How are you doing there?
You never get anything for nothing. But even in Italy we have a relatively stable system. There are some troubles, though: south of the Alps we have to run train lengths under 600 metres, in some cases around 500 metres, whereas we can run trains up to 750 metres long in the North. At the moment that is still workable, but we will have a major issue to solve when the new Gotthard base tunnel opens, if not before. Then we will have a flat railway and our trains in Italy will run into the wall that forces us to reduce the load on them.

In fact the problem is not just the train length but the tonnage too...
...that's right. We would like to run trains with a tonnage of 1,600-2,000 tons per train. At the moment we cannot do that on the existing mountain route.

The strong Swiss franc is putting pressure on Swiss combined transport companies. Costs are incurred in francs but the market pays in euros. How dramatic is the situation?
The franc situation is a drama – one that affects all Swiss companies. As a Swiss company, we create added value for modal shift and are doing so even from our headquarters in Switzerland.

What sort of action can you take without losing transport to the road?
You can become more efficient by deploying your full resources more systematically or in a more cross-border way. For example, it should be easier for train drivers to move around when abroad. Every day we look at what we can do better.

The economy is stagnating. What does that mean for your company?
We have to learn that there is more fluctuation in the market. The state intervened in 2008, but now safety nets are being discussed again. In any case, we are assuming greater fluctuations in our business models. That is no easy task, because you cannot keep switching a rail company to “stop and go”. You have to give the company room to breathe, so to speak.

Shifting freight transport from the road to the railway is a big issue in Switzerland. Rail freight transport has a share of 65 per cent – quite high in comparison to Europe. Do you see further potential?
At SBB CI we are not just out for turnover and market share. That is not attractive by itself. We want a good slice of the pie but we want it to taste good, too. As a Swiss company we stand for a quality statement and high precision. The market participants are aware of that.

You are essentially concentrating on the Rotterdam-Genoa corridor. Have you never thought about expanding the market in East-West traffic, as Hupac is doing?
Every corridor means start-up expenses and questions about licensing requirements. We may be able to make extensions in the Benelux area, but our focus remains on Germany, Switzerland and Italy. It would be wrong for our small company if we had too many growth ideas today, for example towards Russia.

Let us return to the Gotthard base tunnel, set to open in December 2016. Do you have the right equipment?
The technical conditions are hugely important for our considerations. The infrastructure contractor has still not given a definitive answer to many questions. Issues like humidity, residual gradients, air resistance and temperature gradients have an effect on the rolling stock. What happens in a cold winter when the temperature is minus 10 degrees outside and up to 50 degrees in the tunnel? We will have to see whether that is feasible with the existing rolling stock.

Combined transport relies on close cooperation between all partners in the logistics chain – from the shipper to the final consignee. Which interfaces do you think can be optimised?
The logistics system that we have selected with our customer Hupac is an efficient one. But we can certainly do more to industrialise the collaboration. That includes coordinating all of the time stress points like terminals at the start and end, the subsequent track slots and the respective resources in between. I think that the system is crying out for better coordination of the infrastructure along the corridor, by which I mean the terminal structures and track infrastructure. It is important always to handle the same thing in the same structures in succession, rather like a Swiss ski lift.

What are the major strategic objectives for SBB Cargo International?
Our aim would be to establish our own team of train drivers. At the moment we hire a lot of drivers from the parent company, SBB. The next step would be to promote the industrial production I mentioned earlier, which means winning our customers over to the idea. Our general aim is to offer the best service at the best price.

SBB Cargo International in brief

- SBB Cargo International connects the North Sea ports with Italy; complete interoperability and in-house production.
- In the first half of 2011, SBB Cargo International ran more than 15,000 trains in total. Each train is equivalent to 20-25 trucks.
- The company has around 600 employees working in three countries.
- It uses more than 120 locomotives to carry freight wagons for its customers.
- SBB Cargo International was founded in 2010 as an independent company. The shareholders are SBB Cargo (75%) and Hupac (25%).
- SBB Cargo International is an independent RU: licensed as a rail freight company in Switzerland, Germany and Italy.

news

New ILU code

In July 2011, a new coding system for loading units in combined transport in accordance with the EN 13044 standard was introduced. The ILU system is similar to the BIC code used worldwide for containers. As of now, combined transport customers can apply for their individual owner code at www.ilu-code.eu. All loading units must feature the new ILU code by 30 June 2014. In future, loading unit manufacturers will be able to codify the individual loading units and issue the yellow coding plates themselves. The existing yellow coding plates are still valid until 30 June 2019.

MORE INFORMATION AT
www.hupac.ch/new-ilu-code

Prototype of a new multi-pocket wagon

At the end of May, Hupac presented the prototype of a new double wagon for the transportation of pocket wagons and containers, optimised for Alpine

transit, in collaboration with the Ticino rolling stock manufacturer, Ferriere Cattaneo. Derived from the MEGA wagon, it features an increased load capacity and greater mileage. Environmental performance has also been improved: a combined synthetic pad and disc brake makes for lower noise levels. Testing of the prototype will run until the end of 2012.

MORE INFORMATION AT
www.hupac.ch/multi-pocket-wagon

Expansion of the Hupac headquarters

In December, the first employees of the Hupac headquarters will be able to move into the offices at the expanded premises in Chiasso. The four-storey complex adjacent to the “old”, still in use building offers plenty of space for the future development of the combined transport operator.

moving

“We stand by our growth strategy”

The economic downturn is dampening the mood, but Hupac is convinced of the future of combined transport. An interview with Peter Howald, the Hupac Group’s Director of Sales & Operations, about new markets and proven strategies for crisis management.

by Kurt Bahnmüller

Peter Howald, Director Sales & Operations of the Hupac Group

Transalpine freight traffic increased by 9.5% in the first half of 2011. Can the set target of 10% growth for 2011 be achieved?
We could have achieved even stronger growth if we had not been hindered by bottlenecks in the rail system as a result of accidents, severe weather, strikes and construction sites. The second half of the year depends greatly on the development of the economy. We would be satisfied with a 6% increase in traffic volume.

What are the consequences of the strong Swiss franc for Hupac?
European transport is transacted in euros, but we incur much of our expenditure in Swiss francs. As a result, our revenues are falling significantly. Yet it would be wrong to hope that we could counter this trend with short-term measures. The benchmark in combined transport is the road.

Where do we still have opportunities to counter the trend?
There is still potential in terms of productivity in rail operations, but other cost optimisations could also be made.

Could we also improve efficiency in fleet management?
We are working on that. One option is to affiliate the maintenance workshops more closely with the terminals. We could certainly make progress in that area. We have a maintenance workshop at our terminal in Busto that maintains the wagons while they are at the terminal.

The economy has cooled off since September. How is Hupac responding to the falling volumes?
We stand by our growth strategy. We are convinced that combined transport has great market opportunities in the medium and long term. As in the 2008/2009 economic crisis, our priority today is to maintain the existing network for our customers. After all, we know how hard it is to regain the volumes that we lose to the road. If demand falls as a result of the crisis, we will adjust our capacity or offer alternatives for little-used connections.

The freight volume in non-transalpine traffic grew by more than 14% by the end of June. One of Hupac’s aims is to promote maritime transport more strongly in future. What plans are we pursuing here?
Our aim is to focus maritime transport more strongly on destinations that fit into our network. However, this traffic should run in pairs as much as possible, which is not always the case in maritime transport.

There are specifications in terms of transporting the goods from the ports...
Some ports stipulate that a higher proportion of incoming goods must be transported onwards by rail in future.

One growth market is combined transport towards Eastern Europe and onwards to Russia and Asia.
We see a positive trend in Eastern European countries. For Russia we have adopted a common strategy with our long-standing partner, Russkaya Troyka, which runs whole trains along the Trans-Siberian route each week. In the past year we have transported around 3,000 containers between Western Europe and various Russian destinations.

Intermodal Express LLC was founded in Moscow in July. What aims is Hupac pursuing with the Russian subsidiary?
We want to link the networks of Russkaya Troyka and Hupac more and more closely, with operational and commercial support from our branch in Moscow. Even today we operate regular combined trains between the hubs in Slawkow and Moscow.

The first two Hupac test containers arrived in Shanghai in November last year. What are the reasons behind these Far Eastern activities?
The industry is interested in a continental alternative for certain goods, e.g. hazardous materials, to diversify traffic flows and achieve greater stability. In addition, more and more industrial companies are settling in the hinterland of China, which brings them closer to Russia and Europe. Rail can offer interesting alternatives for specific goods from these regions. We are convinced that the overland route between Europe and the Far East can become an interesting growth market for combined transport in the medium term.

Hupac and SBB Cargo International have been working closely together since the start of this year. How has this activity developed so far?
The consistent rationalisation and standardisation of processes has proved a success. Putting aside the topical issue of the Swiss franc exchange rate, we assume that we can meet the targets set for this year. SBB Cargo International has already established itself very well in operational terms. This proves that we are on the right track.

Integrated IT for a reliable service

At any time, the customer wants to know where their expected shipment is and when it will arrive. But a reliable Tracking & Tracing system is far from the only task for the IT specialists at Hupac.

Transport depends largely on the coordination of different interfaces within the value chain. “Information technology is one of the most important assets for us as a combined transport operator,” says Aldo Croci, responsible for the overall IT structure of the Hupac Group together with his 10-strong team.

Work began very early to establish a centralised system connected to the headquarters in Chiasso and all of Hupac’s branch offices. It was considered important to develop software in-house for the flow of data to control the transport network. The introduction of the Internet has vastly improved opportunities to accelerate the flow of data and information.

Hupac now has a close-knit network of IT connections with around 60 connected terminals across Europe. The centrepiece is Goal (Global Oriented Application for Logistics), a software application developed in-house to coordinate the entire combined transport process from booking to billing. “Various terminals across Europe have adopted the system,” says Croci, “and many partners such as rail operators, shipping companies and so on exchange their data with us via an XML interface. Only a fraction of the data for the movement and tracking of our 700,000 annual shipments needs to be processed manually.”


Aldo Croci, IT Director of Hupac, and his team

Safety is a high priority
Goal supports the zero-error strategy of the rail system. All loading units, rail wagons and compositions are systematically monitored from departure to the final destination. Goal ensures compliance with the specified parameters such as train length and weight. Once the trains are loaded, the system prints out a train list in which all relevant data are documented. At the Hupac terminals, Goal also controls the loading and unloading processes for the gantry cranes. The crane operator deposits the loading unit in a precisely marked position and transmits the data to Goal. At the counter, the driver receives the coordinates of his load and can accept the shipment without delay.

Hazardous materials require special measures for safe transportation. For each train, the system immediately shows the hazardous materials on board and the procedure in case of a fault. But the Goal software also plays an important role at the terminal. When a train is loaded, for example, the system strictly monitors compliance with the required safe distances between the hazardous material containers. If a gantry crane loads a container that cannot be placed next to certain other hazardous material shipments because of the class of hazardous material inside, Goal immediately blocks the loading process.

Added value for customers
Thanks to Goal, staff at the Hupac headquarters always know where each container is. Hupac worked with Swiss company Fela to develop a special location system for the individual trains based on a GPS system, which is also fully integrated into Goal. “Prompt information is crucial for our customers, especially when irregularities occur,” says Croci. The integration of Goal data into the Cesar customer information platform means that customers always have an overview.

Integration of the data systems also creates added value for customers, who tend to choose e-booking and e-billing functions with direct data insertion into their own system, particularly where large traffic volumes are involved.

Reliable rolling stock maintenance
Another consideration in terms of IT support is the maintenance of the rolling stock. For each of the approximately 5,000 wagons in use, there is a detailed description in the Goal system. This also includes a precise inventory of key components for the wagon, such as wheelsets or brakes. Goal indicates when each wagon has to go to the workshop and for which maintenance phase. If a wagon exceeds the specified maintenance date, Goal prevents it from being used. Lastly, Goal controls all invoice flows at the workshops.

In case of emergency: a double system
Goal is now the central system for all operational processes within the Hupac Group, so any failure would be all the more serious. Hupac is prepared for such an emergency because the whole system is mirrored. It runs on two systems that operate independently of each other, are mutually synchronised and are also housed in two separate buildings. There is also a daily backup of all data onto an external data storage medium. All Internet connections for the exchange of data between Goal and customers, partners and suppliers are duplicated. Hupac also conducts periodic audits to check the performance and safety standard of the internal IT connections, in order to determine any weaknesses or opportunities for improvement. “Our high-performance IT system puts us in a position to monitor and control the entire transport chain for the benefit of our customers. Thanks to substantial investments, we have achieved a high standard in terms of digital operational reliability and disaster recovery,” says Aldo Croci with pride.

moving impressum

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