



Photo: Soloplan GmbH
Photo: STI Freight Management GmbH



Towards a fully networked future

by Steffen Klinge

Just a few years ago stories of autonomous drones delivering packages or driverless freight trains rolling across Europe sounded like utopian fantasies of technology-enthralled Internet romantics. Today, with the onward march of digitalisation, such daydreams have come true. For the logistics sector in particular, Industry 4.0 offers a wealth of opportunity, with leaner processes, increased planning efficiency, and lower costs, not to mention eco-gains on the side. Make no mistake – the supply chains of the future will be digital.

According to a trend study carried out by BVL, Germany's logistics providers association, to date just 4% of logistics companies have given their business model a comprehensive digital makeover. The topic is nonetheless high on the agenda of nearly all companies, as of those surveyed nine out of 10 see the need to invest in process digitalisation over the next two years. But many in the industry may be sceptical or even fearful of too much technological innovation, because digitalising supply chains means so much more than using new hard- and software in vehicles and warehouses.

Re-loading of processes

Duisburg-based STI (Deutschland) GmbH, German subsidiary of STI Freight Management GmbH, has not lost sight of the opportunities that digitalisation brings to the transport and logistics business. The company is making big investments in future-focused and software-supported transport planning and control. "In tandem with a complete restructuring of our road haulage division we have taken the opportunity to optimise our dispatch operations by digitalizing them. In a price-driven market, the aim was to create processes that are as efficient as possible for our customers, from order confirmation,

via transport administration, to customer care," Björn Heineremann, STI (Deutschland) GmbH's Senior Manager Operations European Road Transport, said. Thomas Hakenewert, the company's Team Lead Fleet Planning European Road Transport, added, "That is why last year we created a new process management function. A central plank of our strategy for achieving a leaner business structure is the digitalisation of dispatch."

Real-time data access and control

STI, as a logistics provider, manages its entire business with the help of a modern enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, while its commercial road fleet is equipped with a new transportation management system (TMS). Using a handy mobile app, drivers and dispatchers have real-time access to all the relevant delivery data. And thanks to integrated GPS tracking, employees can see their vehicles' current location and route at any time. Also, all consignment details can be conveyed digitally from the driver to dispatcher via a smartphone or tablet. "The 130 vehicles in our dedicated fleet are fitted with the CarLo inTOUCH app, a comprehensive telematics solution from the software provider Soloplan. These simplified status reports make life much easier for our employees, e.g. drivers can

quickly and accurately report waiting times at their delivery destination, and we can react accordingly," Thomas Hakenewert explained. This system also makes the exchange of delivery documents – which has often been a cumbersome bureaucratic process for drivers and dispatchers alike – much easier. Today, consignment notes, bills of lading, and even photos can be captured by the app for sharing between employees. Yet another advantage is the rich input the system can provide on driving and rest times.

The benefits of automatized job management range from efficient route planning and lower transport costs to more efficient use of resources and reduced CO₂ emissions. The specific value lies in the fact that a dispatcher can plan routes and consignments in advance, because each morning they can assess all the data for the entire fleet. In 2016, thanks to process efficiencies, STI (Deutschland) GmbH managed to reduce empty mileage by 1.2% in comparison to the year before, even though freight volumes increased over the same period. In addition to cost savings, environmental impact has also been reduced. Last year STI (Deutschland) GmbH was able to cut back its land-based carbon dioxide emissions by 1%, equivalent to over 123 tn of CO₂, and the aim is to



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are documented and relayed via various sensors, and the networked system as a whole also monitors the exact location of the trailer, as well as the door-lock status and the operating data of the refrigeration equipment.

New logistics

“With the digitalisation of our route and consignment planning, coupled with our new sensor-controlled trailer technology, we’ve made an important commitment to our future. Logistics 4.0 offers a wide range of opportunities for the haulage sector. Our fleet is already more environmentally-friendly and cost-effective. Our processes are lean and efficient. That’s good not just for us, but for our customers, too, because it means we can offer top quality at competitive prices,” Kai Schüttke, Vice President STI Freight Management GmbH, summed up. ■

achieve the same reduction again in 2017 (if not more). STI’s environmental strategy covers not just efficient transport processes, but also investment in vehicle technology. On the roads of Europe, its fleet is made up exclusively of eco-friendly Euro 6 trucks, while in Spain and Portugal the company also uses Liquefied Petroleum Gas to run its lorries.

STI (Deutschland) GmbH has also given a complete digital makeover to the trailer and temperature control of its vehicles. Using a system developed by Schmitz Cargobull Telematics, STI has its fleet

under 24/7 control every day of the year. Any variation in temperature sends an automatic alarm to both the driver and dispatcher, enabling speedy corrective action to be taken. All temperature data



Since 1983, STI Freight Management GmbH (a subsidiary of HAVI Global Logistics and Martin-Brower UK Holdings Ltd.) has been specializing in the planning and handling of complex transport and logistics projects, taking care not only of food and other temperature-controlled goods like high-quality pharmaceuticals, but also supplying cruise liners, providing warehousing, and dealing with customs clearance. STI handles around 285,500 national and international overland, as well as 8,000 air and sea freight consignments, along with 28,000 payments of customs duty per year.

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