

THE LOGISTICS POINT

YEAR 3 | ISSUE 03 | APRIL 2022

EXCLUSIVE
VIDEO CONTENT
INSIDE

REDESIGNING LOGISTICS FOR WOMEN

Two exclusive video interviews with Sandra Rothbard from Freight Matters & Joanna Pearson from DeliveryApp.

THE POWER OF MICRO-HUBS

Our Micro-fulfilment event gathered top specialists

HUMAN RIGHTS MATTER

Logistics needs to address the human rights' issue

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How younger employees can help more experienced staff



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EDITOR'S NOTE

On multiple occasions I have expressed the view that the logistics and supply chain industry is transforming. On my levels it is a profound change. The sector is certainly not what it used to be just a few years ago.

In this edition of the magazine we focus on the change and what more needs to be done. We spoke to two amazing ladies, who have chosen logistics as their industry. Together with Sandra Rothbard and Joanna Pearson we discuss how logistics accommodates women and what more we can do to make the industry really appealing.

A special focus is dedicated to our March event on Micro-fulfilment. You can re-watch all sessions now and learn more about micro-hubs, the value micro-logistics adds and some great case studies.

Human rights are also in focus with a special article examining what logistics is doing right and wrong when it comes to human rights and slave labour.

We touch upon the circular economy and why it is important.



And before I leave you to enjoy the edition, I would like to invite you all to our Delivering Green event on the 24th May. Some very exciting stories and speakers like Segura Systems, River Island, Sony Network Communications Europe and more are to come.

You can [register here](#) and learn more about the topic. Don't hesitate to message us if you would like to be part of the event or just share your story.

Nick Bozhilov
Editor in Chief
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IN THIS EDITION



15

VIDEO REDESIGNING LOGISTICS FOR WOMEN

Sandra Rothbard, Principal at Freight Matters

6 **VIDEO** MICRO-HUBS CAN SOLVE THE E-COM CHALLENGES. BUT HOW?

Parcelly's presentation at our
Micro-fulfilment Online Event

9 **VIDEO** DEEP LEARNING AND THE BENEFITS FOR WAREHOUSING

Fizyr's presentation at our Micro-
fulfilment Online Event

11 **VIDEO** FUTURE OF RETAIL: WHY MICRO-FULFILMENT MAKES SENSE

Cranfield School of Management at
our Micro-fulfilment Online Event

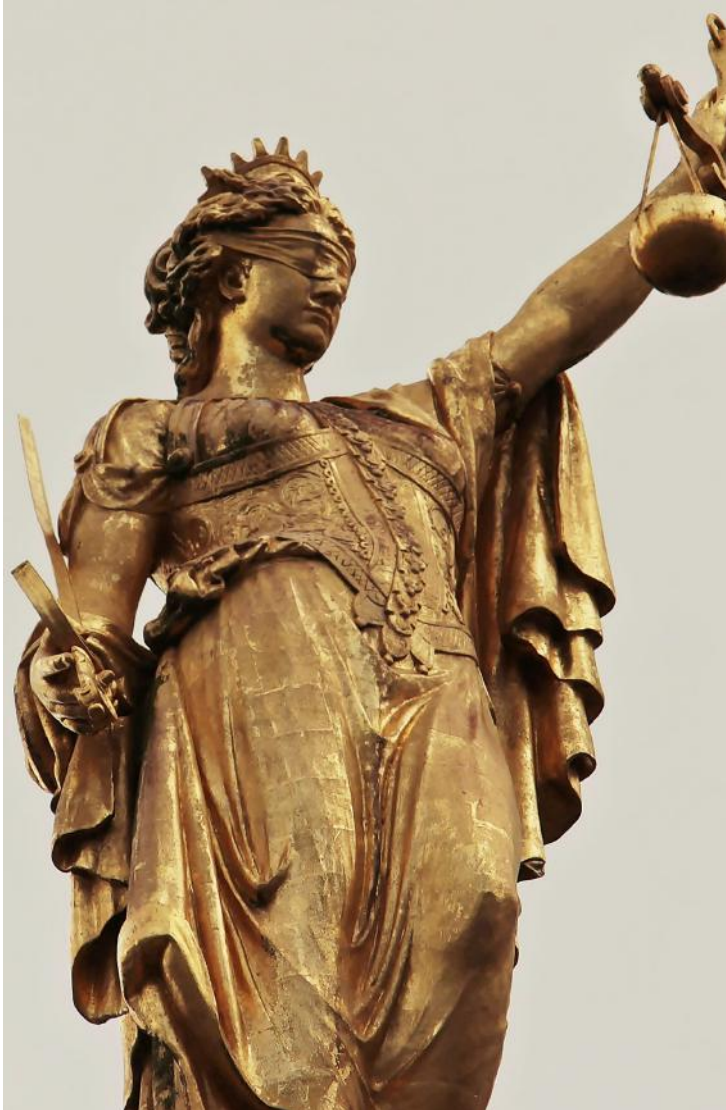
13 **VIDEO** FUTURE OF RETAIL: WHY MICRO-FULFILMENT MAKES SENSE

Watch the discussion panel at our
Micro-fulfilment Online Event

18 **VIDEO** NEW GENERATIONS ARE CHANGING ATTITUDES IN LOGISTICS

Joanna Pearson, Operations
Director at DeliveryApp

IN THIS EDITION



30 LOGISTICS NEEDS TO ADDRESS THE HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM NOW

Tim Nelson, Chief Executive of Slave-Free Alliance

20 **VIDEO** EXPECT GROWTH AND M&A IN LOGISTICS

Daniel Levan-Harris
CEO Mango Logistics Group

23 UNDERSTANDING THE DEMAND FOR GREATER TRANSPARENCY AND CHOICE IN DELIVERY

Despatch Cloud looks at the
delivery options

27 **VIDEO** BUILDING A CIRCULAR ECONOMY & SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE

Britta Wyss Bisang
Global Sustainability Director at
Schoeller Allibert

34 **PIECE-PICKING & THE GROWTH OF ROBOTICS**

Leif Jentoft, co-founder and chief
strategy officer of RightHand
Robotics

37 **VIDEO** HOW YOUNGER EMPLOYEES CAN TEACH SENIOR STAFF NEW TRICKS

Jack Thomas from PrintCity

The Challenges of E-commerce Today

Volume

- In 2021, retail E-commerce sales amounted to approximately 4.9 trillion U.S. dollars worldwide *

Space

- There is only around 18.1 million sq ft of available industrial space left for firms- record low in supply **

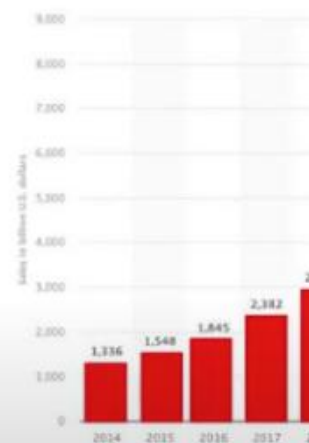
Last mile

- Last-mile delivery accounts for 53% of the total cost of shipping ***

Congestion

- More purchasing = more deliveries

Retail E-commerce sales worldwide
(in billion U.S. dollars)



Sources-
* Statista- E-commerce Worldwide
** The Independent (2021)
*** Business Insider (2022)



Sebastian @ Parcelly

Micro-fulfillment and Warehousing Conference- © Parcelly, 2022

MICRO-HUBS CAN SOLVE THE E-COM CHALLENGES. BUT HOW?

Well, it was great to welcome so many people at our first online event for the year. Micro-fulfillment & Warehousing Conference was a success and we are really grateful to all who took part as attendees and speakers. We are now gearing up for our second event in May on Sustainability. Some very exciting things have been planned and we will soon share more information. But for now, let's recap what happened at our 8th March event.

First the stage took Parcelly and their CEO & Founder Sebastian Steinhauser. Talking about how micro-hubs can help e-commerce operations Sebastian delivered the opening presentation and focused on the changing warehousing ecosystem, e-commerce and the last mile.

E-com Challenges Today

'Parcel volumes have exponentially grown during the last years,' Sebastian began, underlining how important it will be to answer the challenges the industry faces with a new structure.

At the same time space is scarce and many companies are struggling to find the space they need. 'Brands operating online usually have very limited storage space,' Sebastian continued.

Last but not least important is the growth in last mile operations. 'The majority of the cost of shipping, 53% to be more exact, is somehow related to the last mile piece,' Sebastian explained. This calls for a rethink of the way we create value and ship parcels in an environment where consumers are demanding faster and cheaper deliveries but also greener one.

Congestion is also becoming a severe factor in how e-commerce operations are executed. 'In the UK there are now approximately 3.7 million white vans on the roads,' Sebastian said. A big number of these are involved in the last mile and e-commerce deliveries but at the same time they need to drive a long distance between the distribution centre and the customer. For Parcelly the answer to this is the micro-hub.

'For many retailers the warehouses they have are ill-suited for the requirements of a speedy and convenient delivery that is expected,' Sebastian continued. Many are trying to address this by offering different solutions to consumers. This, however, only produces limited results and often buildings are just not at the right place. Size is also an important consideration.



'The pandemic further accelerated the rise of alternative delivery solutions,' Sebastian pointed out. This will only be helped by bringing fulfilment centres closer to consumers and into urban areas.

Benefits of micro-hubs

Micro-hubs are not just something that is popular at the moment but they have many benefits. According to Sebastian they have operational and cost efficiencies. As storage is brought closer to the consumer deliveries are easier and cheaper. In addition, new delivery methods that are more sustainable can also be implemented.

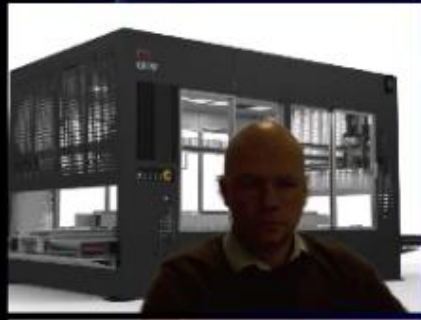
For many retailers the warehouses they have are ill-suited for the requirements of a speedy and convenient delivery that is expected.

Speed is also being improved. 'The growing need for speed and efficiency is key not only for retailers but also for consumers. Having the alternative for flexible range of delivery options is becoming very important.'

Journeys are being shortened and this improve the overall quality of the service. It also plays well with the need for greener logistics in urban areas. Micro-hubs can be located on the High Street in towns and cities. The model is optimised as it takes advantage of buildings that are already there and are being underused. According to Sebastian such hubs can be created in retail areas and spaces that no longer serve their initial purpose.



You can watch the full presentation on how micro-hubs can help urban and e-commerce deliveries from Parcelly at our Micro-fulfilment & Warehousing Conference now.



DEEP LEARNING AND THE BENEFITS FOR WAREHOUSING

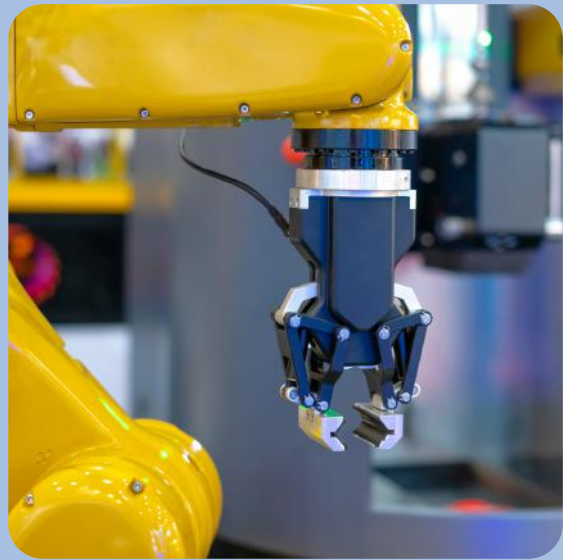
The second presentation at our Micro-fulfilment & Warehousing Online Conference was delivered by the Dutch company Fizyr and their partner Inther Logistics Group. Herbert ten Have, CEO of Fizyr, and Mike Strijbos, CTO at Inther Group, looked at how Deep Learning and smart machines can help warehousing operations be more efficient and prepared for the challenges ahead.

Picking is a problem in modern warehouses that is not easy to solve. Robotics has been trying to work in the area with different levels of success over the course of the last few decades. There are a few areas where picking robots can be useful, according to ten Have. Parcel handling could certainly benefit greatly by the technology and provide a useful tool that could free up warehouse staff. Depalletizing is another area that could be good for robotics and could be automated. Truck unloading, a process that sometimes can take hours, could be sped up by using robotics. But how to know where to begin?

'It is important to start with object recognition,' begins ten Have. 'Several integrators work on truck unloading.'

Mike Strijbos works in automating the internal processes of Inther Group customers. 'Introducing such technology is challenging. In logistics, when it comes to investment, you need to know exactly why,' explained Strijbos. In his opinion, however, logistics and supply chain organisations, should be bolder and embrace the new technologies. 'When we use a cutting edge technology the Return On Investment is not as easy to calculate as we would like. Finding the first customer is a difficult thing, especially during Covid when people were unable to travel and see how the machine is performing.'

Inther is already installing the system in one of their long-term customers. For them this will be a real proof of how the technology works and why it should be widely implemented.



You can watch the full presentation by Fizyr and Inther Group at our Micro-fulfilment & Warehousing Online Conference now.



Cranfield
School of
Management

Future of Retailing: Micro-warehousing in e-commerce

Banu Y. Ekren &
Hendrik Reefke

FUTURE OF RETAIL: WHY MICRO- FULFILMENT MAKES SENSE

The retail sector is not only extremely competitive but the one that was most affected by the change of consumer habits during the pandemic. Now that things are calming down will be important to understand what will last and what will be just a child of the pandemic. Banu Ekren and Hendrik Reefke from Cranfield School of Management took the stage at our Micro-fulfilment Online Event to talk about the trends and what to expect in the micro-fulfilment area.

'Whilst many businesses have suffered during Covid logistics has actually seen very high demand. The pandemic has emphasised the need for warehousing as a cornerstone activity,' Reefke began.

The way consumers have changed their habits is certainly making many retailers and logistics providers rethink their strategies. Purchasing goods online is becoming the norm and many people are not able to do that easier than ever and buy things that were not available before. In turn that meant that investing in warehousing infrastructure was something companies had no option but to think of. For Reefke and Ekren the way these investments have been executed has changed and shown the need for a micro-fulfilment model.

More and more consumers are looking at how efficient a delivery is and this is also changing the logistics landscape. This is one of the reason why we witness a rise in cargo bikes deliveries and other new methods.

'Micro-fulfilment centres can save costs by utilising automation and the warehousing space better,' continued Ekren. In addition, in her opinion micro-fulfilment warehouses are improving the speed. 'These systems can further minimise the negative environmental effects caused by order fulfilment.'

The working environment is also improved as a lot of the processed are automated and employees can focus on more value-adding tasks.



You can watch the full presentation by Cranfield School of Management during our Micro-fulfilment and Warehousing Online Conference now.



MICRO-FULFILMENT: DELIVERING VALUE FOR GROWING URBAN CENTRES

The Micro-fulfilment & Warehousing Online Conference finished with a panel discussion on what the value of micro-hubs is, what is the current reality and what could the industry expect. Part in the panel took Daniel Levan-Harris, CEO & Founder of Mango Logistics Group, Banu Ekren and Hendrik Reefke from Cranfield School of Management, and Oana Jinga Co-founder of the technology company BotsAndUs.

Daniel Levan-Harris from Mango Logistics shared his experience with micro-fulfilment and micro-warehousing. The company has been working in the area for nearly six years. For Levan-Harris it is an important way of dealing with the new challenges brought by the growth in e-commerce and green logistics. He, however, believes that ultra small warehouses will not be the biggest beneficiaries of automation.

Oana Jinga from BotsAndUs joined the conversation by explaining that automation and robotics would work in small warehouses, as long as they are well organised. 'Robotics requires a certain level of processes behind it to be able to operate efficiently. The moment you disrupt those processes it might become inefficient.'

Banu Ekren from Cranfield School of Management pointed out that the warehousing market is becoming more decentralised. She explains that with more locations, however, costs might go up and efficiency suffers. Models need to be developed and studied so whatever is being done is actually bringing value to the business and the consumer.

Overall, all panellists agreed there will be more micro-warehouses set up around urban areas and inside cities. 'We would need to define what the customer wants and what they would be willing to pay,' said Levan-Harris. This might mean an increase in delivery costs for consumers but that might not be a problem as long as they know why they are paying it.



You can watch the full discussion panel from our Miro-fulfilment & Warehousing Online Conference now.



VIDEO **REDESIGNING** **LOGISTICS** **FOR** **WOMEN**

The logistics industry has changed a lot during the last few decades but much more needs to be done when it comes to equality and openness. We spoke to Sandra Rothbard from Freight Matters about how logistics needs to redesign itself to feel more accommodating and welcoming towards not only women but minorities. You can watch the full video interview below.

Have conditions for women in the logistics and supply chain industry improved?

I think more and more women realise that just because we haven't been in a specific field or profession in the past doesn't mean we can't in the future. It doesn't mean it isn't met with certain challenges. This is a field that has traditionally been dominated by men, much more so than many other areas. But there are a lot of different ways for women to break into the industry. I think that provides more opportunities. It makes it a little bit easier.

There were quite a lot of reports that women in general are more negatively affected by COVID. Do you think that things have really been bad?

Absolutely! As you mentioned, there's plenty of evidence that women really took the brunt of a lot of the issues during

COVID. Women tended to pick up all the slack when it came to childcare and even housework. You don't have to have children to see that even in some households without children. The women often are still doing the majority of the household work, so trying to balance that with a job can be very difficult. And many in the logistics and supply chain industry cannot work from home. If you're working in a warehouse or you are driving a truck, it's a lot more difficult.

How can we support women in the industry?

One is we need to design for women. So generally speaking, we don't actually really design cities for women.



SANDRA ROTHBARD
PRINCIPAL AT FREIGHT MATTERS

There's a lot of great research on this, from anything like the hand railing on public stairs not being too tall because they're typically designed for a man's frame.



Learn how to decarbonize your company's logistics with the Introduction to Sustainable Logistics e-training.

[Find out more](#)



Are we designing trucks to be driven by women who may be smaller or have different needs? Are we designing equipment that's in warehousing to actually fit women so they are able to drive it easier or the equipment that helps move goods around? Are we hiring women at the same rate?

We need to train women. They may be coming with less knowledge about the industry than men in those positions. It's important for men to mentor women as well. And this isn't a formal meeting. This is simply looking out for each other and making sure that we are picking each other up and then promoting women.

Do you think that companies are just checking a box?

The world finally woke up over the last couple of years around diversity, inclusion and equity. But diversity, inclusion and equity is not simply saying that you have one woman. It's really understanding that a diverse workforce makes your company better, makes your team better. You have a diversity of voices and different folks coming from different angles trying to solve a problem, and it's going to help your bottom line if you have a diverse set of views.

Watch the full video interview with Sandra Rothbard from Freight Matters on how women were impacted by the pandemic, how the industry is transforming to support them and what more needs to be done. *



VIDEO

NEW GENERATIONS ARE CHANGING ATTITUDES IN LOGISTICS

The logistics and supply chain industry is changing rapidly. It is no longer something people fell into by chance and more are choosing it as a career option from the beginning. We spoke to Joanna Pearson, Operations Director at DeliveryApp about her career path, how women in the industry are feeling about opportunities and what the new generation will bring.

Do you think conditions for women in the supply chain have improved or worsened during Covid?

There are positives and negatives for women working in the industry, sadly, in some instances, it has got worse, in other ways it has created opportunity. The number of roles which companies are hiring for has reduced because of Covid, on the flipside of that companies are outsourcing things.

Doesn't it feel that things should have changed by now?

Historically, logistics was a very male orientated business right away from your higher level director through to the people who actually do the jobs. Drivers predominantly are all male, although we do see more and more women coming onboard.

Probably in this day and age, we shouldn't have to have the conversation about women and logistics. But I do feel that there certainly are more women like myself in very key positions with some excellent companies.

What type of support do you think that needs to be provided from senior management or also maybe from state legislation to increase the numbers?

If there is a set of rules it would mean that you do it because you have to follow them. The opportunities that I have had predominantly have been given to me by women in a good position within the company. I would like to think it's just the fact that ultimately I was in front of them and they liked me because of what I could bring to the role, not just because I am a woman.

Have you noticed a generational change in attitudes?

Yes, definitely. And I think, whereas before logistics was very much not something you aspired to go into, things have changed. Covid has really brought it to the surface and highlighted that actually logistics is a really important industry to be part of.

Learn more about the role new generations are playing in reshaping the logistics and supply chain industry, how women are becoming a key part of the sector and more in the video below.



VIDEO

EXPECT GROWTH AND M&A IN LOGISTICS

The logistics industry is expected to grow more in the future and M&As will be a common occurrence. This is a prediction by Daniel Levan-Harris, Founder and CEO at Mango Logistics Group. We spoke to him about the future of warehousing, growth in the UK and more. You can watch the full video interview now.

How has the warehousing market developed in the UK during Covid?

It has very much developed mainly due to the boom in e-commerce. Saying that there was a shortage of warehouses before, now even more so now.

You were part of our Micro-fulfilment event on the 8th March. What is your opinion on micro-fulfilment?

It does two things. One is obviously the speed of delivery if that requirement is there. Secondly, it helps congestion in cities. Last mile in a city in a van is a lot worse than on a cargo bicycle.

THE LOGISTICS POINT'S

2022

**DELIVERING
GREEN:
SUSTAINABLE
SUPPLY CHAINS**

**24TH MAY 2022
10:00 AM BST**

REGISTRATION:

[Delivering Green: Sustainability](#)

Join us for the second online conference on sustainable supply chains. Learn how to make your operations more efficient and greener.

What are your expectations post-Covid for growth, automation and labour shortages?

My belief is there will be about another 10 years of growth, a lot of consolidation and M&A particularly amongst startups. Labour shortage is an issue and I believe it will push wages up. I think we will see a lot more automation in the industry, more in big distribution centers but less in micro-warehousing.

What are the Brexit implications on the market?

There has been both a negative and positive impact on warehouses.

Some eCommerce that were based here and distributed from here have moved to mainland Europe and European companies that had warehouses outside the UK



DANIEL LEVAN-HARRIS
CEO MANGO LOGISTICS GROUP

and distributed from outside have had to move into the UK to reach their clients faster. All in all, I can't see the benefits of Brexit except for the additional paperwork.*



UNDERSTANDING THE DEMAND FOR GREATER TRANSPARENCY AND CHOICE IN DELIVERY

We are seeing big movement, particularly from larger delivery companies, with innovation in transparency (real-time delivery updates and carbon-footprint information), and increasing delivery options for consumers.

Smaller companies are also shaking up the market with offerings that target specialist areas, such as last-mile and more environmentally-friendly delivery methods, as well as technology or AI-enabled efficiency improvements.

At Despatch Cloud, we applaud these changes, particularly with regards to transparency and the reduction of carbon emissions in delivery.

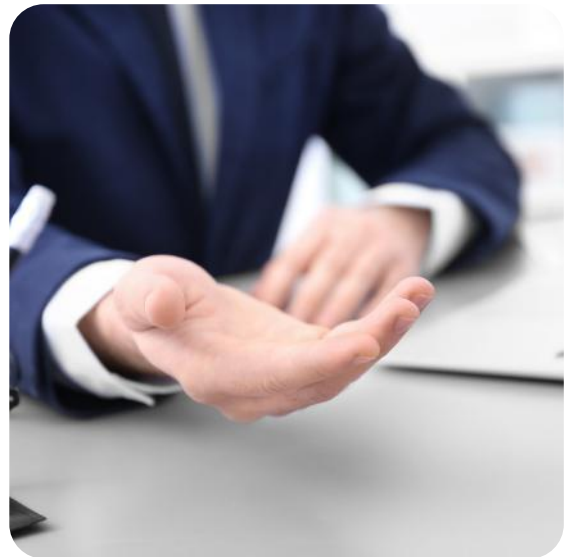
Customer expectation or company-led transformation?

Whether these developments in transparency and delivery choice are consumer-led, or industry-led, is a hard distinction to make. Consumers are clearly now demanding of a high-standard of service, fast deliveries, and increasingly concerned about the impact of their purchases on the environment.

Yet, it's hard to know whether the continuous innovations are primarily influenced by their desires, or by delivery companies consistently striving for differentiation and innovation.

When next-day delivery was initially introduced, this wasn't something that we could demonstrate customers were clamouring for. People don't really know what they want until you give them the option, but once they have that expectation you have to deliver... and keep delivering.

Large organisations are also increasingly focused on CSR and are making concerted efforts to decarbonise their business. Yet, we cannot necessarily separate out this choice from a consumer-led demand, as this area is also something that consumers are focused on, and heavily impacts their purchasing decisions. A study from Deloitte demonstrates that 28% of consumers have stopped buying certain products or brands due to ethical or environmental concerns, and this percentage rises to 45% amongst Gen Z consumers



The role of emotion

People make decisions based on emotion. As much as we like to think it's a rational world, our purchasing decisions are based on feelings. Retailers, brands and delivery companies may well be anticipating and leading transformation in an effort to differentiate and improve, but they are also aligning their offerings with peoples' emotions.

This also plays into ongoing customer experience, not just the initial purchase. If people have a good experience they will return, and delivery is a key part of this in e-commerce.

Large organisations are also increasingly focused on CSR and are making concerted efforts to decarbonise their business.



Consumers want to feel in control, and as though the brand is taking into consideration their needs, with personalisation being a big trend in e-commerce right now and in the future. More choices for delivery will play into this trend, with time-slot deliveries, parcel lockers, or the ability to change delivery option on the day, most likely increasing in popularity over the next year or so.

Live updates on delivery, that give customers the ability to see in real-time the location of the delivery vehicle on its way to them, can be a fantastic way to offer transparency to customers. Certain couriers are already differentiating themselves with this offering. However, this level of visibility can also have its drawbacks. If any issues arise, then customers have greater awareness, can get frustrated more easily and have more fuel in their fire when it comes to complaints.

Often they won't necessarily understand the nuances and complications of delivery.

Supporting equity in retailing

Keeping up with these ever-increasing demands and offering more delivery options is an ongoing challenge for smaller companies because they don't have the resources to offer and spread the cost of additional services over a large revenue. Technology and software can play a big role in supporting independent and smaller retailers keep up with changes.

Differentiation is vital for competition, but it needs to be viable for companies. No matter how much a company wants to improve its sustainability or increase customer personalisation and choice, these concerns will likely remain secondary unless they are financially viable and practical to introduce.

A multichannel shipping platform can open up access to a range of couriers and services (such as signed-for, next-day, parcel locker etc.).² Selection could be made based on price, speed, carbon footprint, or whichever preference the retailer or consumer decides. There is some work to be done when integrating shipping channels with whatever order or payment service retailers use, but once integrated it means even smaller businesses can have access to extensive delivery options and, if desired, pass on that choice to customers.

Another method of transparency, which Despatch Cloud is facilitating, is communicating with customers regarding carbon-footprint. Retailers have the option to offset the carbon emissions from a delivery through certified offsetting schemes. If they are working with couriers, or have selected a service which already provides carbon-offset delivery, then this is taken into account. If they are using a courier who does not offer this, then they can choose to offset all, or some, of their deliveries.

A trust mark can be shown to customers to share the news that the business is working with certified offsetting schemes. Detailed transparency is also possible by displaying real-time data on the company-specific carbon-offsetting stats at checkout or on a website homepage. This display can also be linked – enabling a customer to simply click and view the specific offsetting schemes used by a retailer.



Overcoming resistance to sale through delivery

Anything which overcomes resistance to a purchase as consumers go through checkout will help retailers make more sales. However, before introducing greater transparency or expanding delivery options, retailers should be aware of the benefits, and the challenges, that may come from this.

-



VIDEO

BUILDING A CIRCULAR ECONOMY & SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE

Sustainability is a hot topic in the logistics industry. Knowing how to approach this vital topic and what practical steps need to be taken, however, is not something to be taken lightly. We spoke with Britta Wyss Bisang, Global Sustainability Director at Schoeller Allibert about how the company has conducted its materiality assessment, the building of a circular economy, and the role of educating employees and candidates. Watch the full video interview below.

Bisang argues that one of the first things companies should do when building a sustainability strategy is to conduct a comprehensive materiality assessment to gain a holistic view of the landscape by consulting with stakeholders and benchmarking against peers, ESG ratings, sustainability frameworks and standards. With the materiality assessment complete, Schoeller Allibert laid the foundations for its sustainability strategy. It provides crucial insights and helps prioritize actions on those topics that have a critical impact on the company's business, as well as on society and the environment, and helps to identify potential solutions.

In her wide-ranging interview with The Logistics Point, Bisang also looks at the importance of building a circular economy. Reusing materials and creating buy-back models is a key part of Schoeller Allibert's global strategy.

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Engaging with stakeholders

None of this would be possible if the company was unprepared for the change. Receiving a positive response from company executives is crucial. Bisang talks about the need for a complete culture change by including all stakeholders. Supply chains do not work in isolation and Bisang is adamant that all partners should be on board.

This includes employees as well as suppliers. Those who have a keen interest in sustainability can be the ones who drive the change. Bisang believes inaction will only lead to higher costs in future. In addition, clearly explaining sustainability goals to prospective employees would enable the company to hire candidates who are already culturally aligned.



BRITTA WYSS BISANG
GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY DIRECTOR AT
SCHOELLER ALLIBERT

You can watch the full video interview with Britta Wyss Bisang, Global Sustainability Director at Schoeller Allibert now and learn more about the work the company is doing and the insights they have uncovered along the way.

*



LOGISTICS NEEDS TO ADDRESS THE HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEM NOW

Tim Nelson, Chief Executive of Slave-Free Alliance and its parent charity Hope for Justice, explains why human rights due diligence is so important within the logistics industry, and why the sector can be an attractive target for traffickers looking to place their victims.

Alongside the agricultural and construction industries, the logistics sector is among the worst affected by the atrocious crime of forced labour through the trafficking of humans.

The sector can have a high turnover of lower skilled and less secure roles, which are sometimes outsourced, especially within warehouse picking and packing. Although most businesses undertake stringent right-to-work checks for permanent workers, due to the urgent need for candidates that comes with peaks in activity, reliance is often placed on external recruitment agencies to complete checks for seasonal or temporary workers.

Unfortunately, recruitment agencies, and even internal HR personnel under pressure, can often miss the signs of modern slavery. Traffickers understand this, and are adept at exploiting any weakness they perceive that allows them to place a victim within an organisation without detection.

Post-Brexit, the logistics sector also faces further risk of infiltration by traffickers. Many EU workers have left the UK. This has left many organisations feeling pressure about how they will address the deficit.

Furthermore, European workers in low skilled, low paid logistic jobs who lacked the life and language skills to apply to legally remain in the UK, may have also been exploited by traffickers who seized the opportunity to take advantage of their predicament.

The law

The Modern Slavery Act 2015 specifies that any UK company with revenues over £36m must publish an annual report on the actions they are taking to combat modern slavery, working towards the common goal of a supply chain free from slavery.

Companies required to issue statements include hauliers such as DHL and Eddie Stobart, and last-mile carriers such as Yodel, who were the first logistics sector member of Slave-Free Alliance.



TIM NELSON, CHIEF EXECUTIVE
SLAVE-FREE ALLIANCE

Doing the right thing

All businesses have a responsibility to contribute to a better society and working environment for all. The Modern Slavery Act has also created a domino effect down the supply chain; modern slavery compliance parameters imposed upon industry-leading brands are being pushed onto their suppliers. If a supplier cannot demonstrate robust proactive action in modern slavery prevention, they can be excluded from tender processes with explicit ethical sourcing requirements.

Initiatives that push corporate responsibility onto suppliers include L'Oréal's Solidarity Sourcing, and Unilever's Supplier Qualification System, which is heavily driven by its Responsible Sourcing Policy.

Offering support to migrant workers is essential. Multilingual literature highlighting the signs of modern slavery, and how to respond to them, should be displayed in the workplace.

Training key staff members, or at the minimum security and HR personnel, to spot the signs of exploitation is vital. Refresher training is essential, as is evaluating delivery and comprehension – quizzes are good.

If an employee appears to have been physically abused or acts withdrawn, is escorted to and from work, wears dirty clothes or has an unkempt appearance, carries few possessions and seems frightened, there could be a very real chance they are trapped in modern slavery.

Fear or paranoia are also likely to visibly increase when spoken to by a staff member or a person of authority, therefore it's advisable not to approach the suspected victim with your concerns directly. This makes it vitally important to have an escalation process in place with clear, strategic steps to take in the event of potential victim discovery.

At the very minimum, a whistleblowing policy and well publicised helpline should be provided, which gives any staff member with concerns a safe, confidential place to voice them.

Questions to ask of staff

If you talk to a worker and suspect something is not right, do not hesitate – investigate! Firstly, if an interpreter is needed, insist on engaging someone independent. Do not use someone known to the interviewee (we often see traffickers pretending to be interpreters).

If the worker says they migrated for work, have they paid fees to anyone along the way? Were they asked for money to secure the interview or job?

Ask for and check references. If the worker is being paid into a bank account, ask if they have the card for that account (if not, who does?) Ask about where they live – do they know the address? How many live there? Does it match any address you have on file? How did they find the accommodation? How do they get to work? Check ID and age – see Home Office's 'An Employer's guide to right to work checks', updated March 2022.

If you are using a labour provider, are you confident they know to ask all of the above questions? Can you check?

Finally, be assured that while traffickers are brutal, they are also entrepreneurial, organised and innovative. The suggestions above only scratch the service in corporate modern slavery prevention.

How Slave-Free Alliance can help

To ensure you are properly protected, we recommend you contact us at Slave-Free Alliance. We offer support for organisations of all sizes, from in-depth advice on effective training, to achieving a high-quality remediation process, and all of your other necessary processes, including Disciplinary; Whistleblowing; Discrimination; Grievance; Recruitment; Induction.

We also offer technical consultation, on-site modern slavery assessments, and a proactive or reactive investigations service.

Let's end modern slavery together. You'll also contribute to the worldwide fight against modern slavery; all profits made by Slave-Free Alliance are reinvested into Hope for Justice's charitable activities.



Offering support to migrant workers is essential. Multilingual literature highlighting the signs of modern slavery, and how to respond to them, should be displayed in the workplace. Training key staff members, or at the minimum security and HR personnel, to spot the signs of exploitation is vital. Refresher training is essential, as is evaluating delivery and comprehension – quizzes are good.



PIECE-PICKING & THE GROWTH OF ROBOTICS

'Supply chain resilience is one of the biggest concerns for everybody,' begins Leif Jentoft, co-founder and chief strategy officer of RightHand Robotics during an interview for The Logistics Point. Geopolitical uncertainties are creating headaches and in addition many facilities are running below their capacity due to shortages of labour. We talk about how technology and robotics is helping these problems and the recent announcement by RightHand Robotics of raising new funding.

Labour costs are rising very quickly around the USA and other developed countries. 'Everybody believes that many tasks will not be performed by people in the future,' says Jentoft. For piece-picking this means more robotics and even further adoption of technology. The technology is proven and scaled warehouses are operating well. That in return is driving interest up and more organisations are looking into similar solutions.

Jentoft quickly addresses the topic of what happens to employees once robots are deployed. 'Our customers' concerns are around how they can get more output from the people they already have.' Warehouse jobs will be different and more people would need to have skills that would enable them to maintain and work with robotic systems. 'There are new and interesting job opportunities.'

Our customers' concerns are around how they can get more output from the people they already have.

Across the investment space many people are recognising that automation in the distribution and warehousing space will be the next big thing. Jentoft points at the growth of RightHand Robotics and many of its partners and competitors who have quickly expanded and found new markets. 'The technology delivers real customer value and this is what is exciting to me.' The real transformation of attitudes is brought about because technology is being applied to real problems.



'Full training programs will be needed and RightHand Robotics is already doing this with its clients.'

RightHand Robotics is investing in a few key areas. One of them is investing in their channel program. A second area is in the piece-picking space. 'Very few companies have scaled installations,' claims Jentoft. Product and development is an important part of what the company is doing.

THE LOGISTICS POINT'S

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Piece-picking has passed the point where the rough edges need trimming,' Jentoft says and assures that the technology brings real and tangible value to those who use it. Changing the way warehouses operate will bring huge value. In Jentoft's words, picking should be put in the forefront. Designing the warehouse with picking in mind will save not only costs but also time and increase customers' satisfaction.

Investing in innovation

Exciting players on the market are accelerating their investments. Competition is fierce and many areas are getting more mature and it is harder to enter. Piece-picking was something that was not well developed five years ago but today it has shown to be a beneficial tool.

The store retrieval market is another area that Jentoft expects to see growth. 'The real question is how technology can be connected to a specific need,' he says. He believes that companies should firstly learn about what technologies can do and how they fit in their operations. Waiting might not be an option but good due diligence is crucial. 'Running tests is essential.' Understanding what the goals are and why you are automating is also important. Looking at the right KPIs is another area. *

Across the investment space many people are recognising that automation in the distribution and warehousing space will be the next big thing.



VIDEO

HOW YOUNGER EMPLOYEES CAN TEACH SENIOR STAFF NEW TRICKS

To say that employees' attitudes have changed over the last few years would be understatement. The supply chain and logistics industry is no exception but it might be a bit slower in adopting those new outlooks. We spoke to Jack Thomas from PrintCity about training and how younger employees can help more experienced ones to implement new strategies and points of views. You can watch the full video below.

Usually mentoring is a process where experienced employees train and teach younger people. Due to the change in technologies and social attitudes many companies are now reversing this. Reverse mentoring allows younger employees to support their more experienced colleagues in areas where they feel better prepared.

According to Jack Thomas this might not be very easy for managers and experienced professionals to accept but ultimately could benefit performance and social interactions. Thomas believes that Reverse Mentoring helps create an environment where younger employees feel more welcome and also where experienced staff can ask questions about topics they might not know much about.

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Removing barriers could also help with thinking outside of the box and applying more innovative ways of solving old problems. Nevertheless, how the whole process is presented matters. Thomas underlines that initiative should come both from senior management, as well as from younger employees who think they can help their companies.

According to industrial 3D printing company and PrintCity partner, Markforged, incorporating the following approaches into your reverse mentoring scheme will help make it successful:

- Ensure everyone is on board with the programme. Mentees, no matter what their seniority or level of experience, need to be open minded and ready to accept new knowledge and ask questions. Make sure everyone understands the need to commit to a long-term partnership as it takes time to develop trust and the relationships needed for significant change and development.
- Be careful with conflicts of interest. Think carefully about pairings. It may not be suitable to have a mentor paired with anyone in their direct line of management.



JAVID SANDRA, SENIOR PRODUCT
MANAGER & STEPH DAVIS, DIRECTOR OF
SUPPLY CHAIN AT VISION DIRECT

- Create written agreements to ensure clear understanding of the reverse mentoring relationship. Communicate and agree on the purpose, rules and goals. How will you communicate? What does the mentee want to learn? When and where will you meet? How long is the relationship expected to last? This could be anything from a few months to a year or more, or just when the goals are achieved.
- Develop boundaries and ensure there are guidelines on professionalism. Giving guidance and security in their position is especially important for new graduates or students with little workplace experience.

- Set up regular meetings to keep up the pace of the mentoring. Executives and senior staff may be busy, but meeting at least once a month will be beneficial. Mentees will almost certainly be senior in age as well as position within the organisation and should therefore still have the responsibility to maintain and lead the mentoring relationship.
- Build evaluation points and feedback strategies into the programme so the organisation and the participants can assess how it is going and ensure both parties are benefitting.



You can watch the full interview with Jack Thomas now and learn more about what the role of mentoring is and how more experienced staff members can learn new ideas and share their experience. *

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