

trans-o-flex

magazine



Doing what the customer needs

How trans-o-flex solved the logistics challenges of Lyreco, Merck and reboVet

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Artificial intelligence

Faster customer information during line haul delays

Active temperature control

New sorting centre: increased capacity and sustainability

International e-commerce

Customs duties reduced for Swiss exports – new B2C solution

Focus Money

trans-o-flex offers the best value for money

For the fourth time in a row, trans-o-flex Expressdienst, which specialises in healthcare, cosmetics, consumer electronics and other sensitive goods, has come out on top in Focus Money magazine's test for Germany. According to the study, trans-o-flex offers the best value for money in the courier, express and parcel (CEP) sector. Martin Reder, CEO of trans-o-flex, says: "If customers pay a reasonable price, they have the right to expect an appropriate service for their money. We are proud that our value for money has once again been rated the best in the industry by an independent study."

On behalf of Focus Money, the Hamburg Institute for Management and Economic Research (IMWF) identified and assigned around 100 million mentions of more than 19,000 companies and brands in an internet-based study during the study period from 1 September 2021 to 31 August 2023. The approach: The more (subjectively) customer assessments are evaluated, the more accurately an (objective) picture can be drawn from them. The result: trans-o-flex sets the standard for all other companies in its sector and won by a clear margin.

While several companies in other sectors have been recognised as winners, this was not the case in the CEP industry. This is because a minimum of 70 per cent of the industry's best scores is required for an award. As all other CEP services scored less than 70 per cent of trans-o-flex's score, only trans-o-flex Expressdienst from Weinheim received the award.



For the fourth time in a row, trans-o-flex was named price winner by Focus Money magazine.

Legal notice

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trans-o-flex.com

Responsible for the content:
Sabine Kolaric

Editorial staff: Sabine Kolaric,
Ludwig M. Cremer

Design:
bfw tailormade communication GmbH, Angelika Szigeti

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Errors and omissions excepted. The details given in this magazine do not, in any circumstances, replace the General Terms and Conditions of Business of the trans-o-flex companies. For ease of reference, in German the masculine form is used to designate persons (e.g. the customer). Such terms should be understood to apply to both sexes.

Dear Readers,



For the first time in my role as CEO of trans-o-flex, I have been given the opportunity to write the editorial for our company magazine. And I am really impressed by what I see in this magazine. I am not just talking about the professional presentation of news and reports. I am also talking about the content. It shows where trans-o-flex stands, the challenges it faces, the solutions it has found and the progress it has made.

For me, the title, "Doing what the customer needs", is almost programmatic. Three specific examples illustrate just how different our customers' needs are, and how the trans-o-flex family has delivered tailor-made solutions. Each and every one of our solutions is an outstanding achievement in its own right. Take, for example, the 24-hour delivery from southern Germany to the Benelux countries that trans-o-flex has developed for Merck subsidiary Sigma-Aldrich. From my own express experience, I can say that this alone – especially as a standard delivery with a high rate of fulfilment of the standard delivery time – is a mature express service.

I am fascinated by the myriad of possible combinations that trans-o-flex offers and that customers can use for their own purposes. Whether it's the combination of parcel and pallet, standard delivery times and guaranteed delivery dates, standard and dangerous goods, or active temperature control in the 2–8 degrees Celsius range and at 15–25 degrees Celsius. And the features go much further, as the examples of workplace solutions manufacturer and distributor Lyreco and veterinary wholesaler reboVet show. Amongst many other things, the customer is provided with handling space for their own sorting or particularly sustainable pallets that no one else offers.

What I also find programmatic about this topic is the fact that customers take centre stage here. Of course, many companies talk about this. At trans-o-flex, I see that this is the daily goal of the employees. And this is exactly what I will continue to promote and develop in my role as CEO. Every single trans-o-flex employee must be able to change their perspective and put themselves in the customer's shoes: What would our customer want now, and how could we meet that need?

You will find many more examples of this approach in the pages of this magazine. The point is not to shy away from the challenges we face, but to name them, to tackle them head on and to try to find the answers. In this way, trans-o-flex has been able to place itself at the forefront of the competition in several areas with innovative approaches and has received several awards for this. This magazine also reports on these topics. I hope that you will enjoy reading it as much as I have.

Kind regards

Martin Reder
Chief Executive Officer



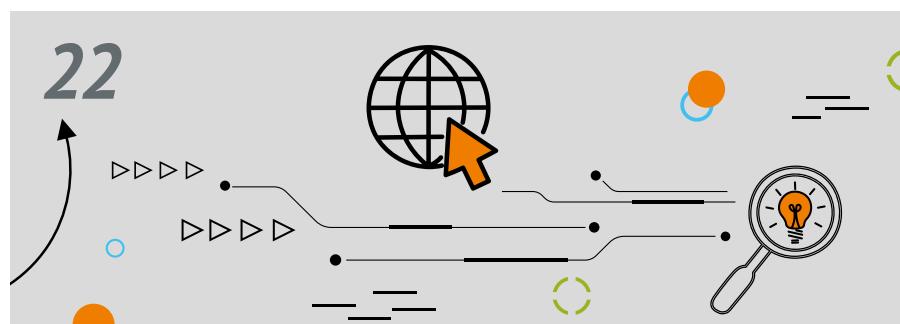
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Safety and security**Bremen now also TAPA certified**

trans-o-flex has started the year 2024 with two successful TAPA certifications. The Hamm site was successfully recertified and the Bremen site received the TAPA FSR C 2023 certificate for the first time. Both of these certificates are valid until 2027. Including Bremen, 15 stations are now certified to the strict security rules of the global shippers' organisation TAPA.



The TAPA security certificates for the Bremen and Hamm sites are valid for three years.

New requirements***trans-o-flex fulfils Supply Chain Act***

The Supply Chain Duty of Care Act, which was initially only introduced for large companies in 2023, has applied to all companies with more than 1,000 employees since this year and therefore also to trans-o-flex. In order to meet the requirements of the regulation, which is usually referred to simply as the Supply Chain Act, trans-o-flex implemented two things at the beginning of the year. Firstly, Carina Flitsch, Head of Legal, Data Protection, Compliance and Insurance, has been appointed as the company's Human Rights Officer. Secondly, a complaints procedure has been put in place where reports can be made of violations or risks of violations of human rights or environmental regulations.

“With these concrete steps, trans-o-flex is consistently continuing on its path to ensure compliance with human rights and environmental standards, both within trans-o-flex and along the entire supply chain,” says Martin Reder, CEO of trans-o-flex. “We will ensure that trans-o-flex meets the highest standards in human rights and social responsibility.”

The new complaints procedure allows not only trans-o-flex employees but also external parties such as suppliers or transport partners and their employees to report risks or violations of human rights and environmental standards. Examples include violations of health and safety regulations, prohibitions on child and forced labour, and trade union activities. Complaints can also be made about unequal treatment, failure to pay the minimum wage or the illegal import or export of hazardous waste.



Further details and reporting channels can be found in the Rules of Procedure on the trans-o-flex website (bit.ly/tof-whistleblowingsystems).

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GEODIS honoured trans-o-flex with the prestigious Business Excellence Award in its very first year with the company. Attending the ceremony (from left): Michael Schmidt (CFO trans-o-flex), Amaury Valicon (Chief Operations Officer - Performance Improvement at GEODIS), Lukas Mitgau (Head of Data Experience Department at trans-o-flex), Michael Zuchold (Senior Vice President Marketing at GEODIS).

Innovative IT solution

Business Excellence Award for digital twin

For the first time, representatives of trans-o-flex attended the annual GEODIS Management Days. And they were able to take home one of the most important prizes for the development of the digital twin in line haulage – the Business Excellence Award. “With the help of digital twins, we will take the next big steps in the development and optimisation of our express and logistics services”, said Michael Schmidt, Managing Director of trans-o-flex, as he accepted the award. The Chief Financial Officer is convinced: “Digital twins can also significantly further improve optimised products and processes.”

Digital twins are virtual images of a real product, a real process, a real person or even a real place. The development of digital twins requires

significant investment in IT and human resources, as it is highly complex and requires large amounts of real-time data and sophisticated analysis tools. “So far, there are only a very few applications in the logistics sector”, adds Schmidt. “trans-o-flex is one of the pioneers in this field.”

trans-o-flex Express is using its first digital twin to optimise its overnight routes between branches. The virtual image can detect network problems before they occur. This makes it possible to react in time to control the real network and use alternatives, which is proven to improve quality.

Promise kept

Planting a tree for every employee

By planting 1,000 maritime pines and 1,000 fly honeysuckle trees, trans-o-flex has kept its promise to give every employee a tree for Christmas. The trees are growing in France as part of the “Agroforesterie et Boisement” environmental project. More trees are being planted on land that was previously only used for agriculture. Fallow land is being reforested. By combining forestry and agriculture, farmers need less pesticide and fertiliser, biodiversity increases and soil erosion is reduced. Last but not least, the trees absorb significant amounts of CO₂. Tree Nation has calculated that each of the two varieties planted will absorb 150 tonnes of CO₂ as they grow. All together, the 2,000 trees planted will remove 300 tonnes of CO₂ from the environment.



Maritime pines grow to a height of 40 metres. Their trunks can be up to a metre in diameter. Fly honeysuckle magically attracts bumblebees with its flowers. The branches of the shrub are hollow and the wood is extremely hard. Hence the botanical name *Lonicera xylosteum*: *xylos* means is Greek for wood and *osteon* for bone.



Energy supplier MVV guarantees trans-o-flex a supply of 100% green electricity from renewable sources. The process has been certified by the German TÜV Süd.

Green electricity 2024

7,500 tonnes of CO₂ emissions saved

In order to reduce the CO₂ emissions of its own operations, trans-o-flex will continue to purchase all of its electricity from renewable sources this year. To this end, a supply agreement has been signed with its long-standing partner, the energy utility MVV. The planned supply of around 17,207 MWh of green electricity will reduce CO₂ emissions from electricity consumption by 7,467 tonnes compared to the conventional electricity mix in Germany.

A commitment to sustainability

trans-o-flex shows its colours when it comes to recycled paper

For trans-o-flex CEO Martin Reder, Blue Angel recycled paper is an almost indispensable piece in the mosaic of a comprehensive sustainability strategy. "On the one hand, the conversion process to recycling quality is very fast." trans-o-flex started the changeover in 2017. In 2019 it was already 99 per cent and since 2021 it has been 100 per cent. Secondly, according to Reder, the use of the Blue Angel makes it easy to document the company's commitment to sustainability both internally and externally. For Reder, however, it is crucial that



trans-o-flex "makes an important contribution to climate and resource protection as well as to the preservation of forests and biodiversity by using Blue Angel paper". The German Federal Ministry for the Environment and the Pro Recycling Paper initiative have recognised trans-o-flex's commitment to sustainability on the "CEOs show their colours" platform and awarded trans-o-flex the "Recycling Paper Friendly Company" seal.

Environmental management

New certification for ThermoMed Austria

"This represents a major step forward in harmonising our Quality Management", says Eugen Günther. The Managing Director Sales of trans-o-flex Express and Spokesman of the Management Board of trans-o-flex ThermoMed Austria is alluding to the fact that trans-o-flex ThermoMed Austria has been certified for the first time according to the ISO 14001 standard for environmental management. At the same time, the company was re-certified to the ISO 9001 quality management standard and the certification body was changed. The basic quality and environmental management systems 9001 and 14001 for all subsidiaries are now standardised by the certification company bsi. Other quality processes, such as ISO 20000 and 27001 for the IT sector or the EU GDP,

which is fundamental in the pharmaceutical sector, are standardised by TÜV Süd.

"The fact that we now have a single partner for each standard across all of our companies makes the process much simpler", adds Günther. "In addition, the certification of all companies without exception allows us to demonstrate our uniform quality approach across national and regional borders to the outside world." Certification in accordance with ISO 9001 and ISO 14001 as well as the EU-GDP guidelines for good distribution practice for medicinal products for human use now applies to trans-o-flex Express and trans-o-flex ThermoMed in Germany and Austria, as well as to trans-o-flex Logistik-Service.



In addition to these quality management certificates, trans-o-flex companies also hold the AEO (Authorised Economic Operator), Ecovadis (sustainability rating) and TAPA certificates. Günther: "Our next two major QM projects are the standardised IT certification in accordance with ISO 27001, which we are already close to completing, and the ongoing certification of further sites in accordance with the TAPA security standard FSR C 2023."



Would you like to check the certificates? Use the QR code or the link (bit.ly/tot-certificates). They will take you to the trans-o-flex website, where the certificates are stored for you.



Customised solutions

Doing what the customer needs

Three companies, three sectors, three very different logistics solutions. But all from the same service provider. Three specific examples in this issue illustrate just how varied the challenges customers present to trans-o-flex can be, and how individual the solutions can be. Merck subsidiary Sigma-Aldrich needed to transport sensitive chemicals from southern Germany to Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands as quickly and reliably as possible. For Lyreco, a leading international manufacturer and distributor of workplace equipment, the challenge was to handle additional volumes following company takeovers and to provide customised services, including the leasing of handling space for Lyreco's own plant traffic. Veterinary wholesaler reboVet wanted to make the transport of sensitive goods even more sustainable for its customers. The offer of orange plastic pallets from trans-o-flex came at just the right time.



If you would also like to tell us about your trans-o-flex logistics solution in this magazine, please send a short email to sabine.kolaric@tof.de. We look forward to hearing from you with many examples of successful logistics.



Lyreco



Workplace solutions shipping

The service competition

Lyreco, a European and Asian manufacturer and distributor of workplace solutions, has continued to develop its relationship with trans-o-flex. Acquisitions and customised logistics solutions have led to extraordinary leaps.

“When a long-standing customer of trans-o-flex takes over a company that uses another transport service provider, there are two options”, says Eugen Günther, Managing Director Sales at the Weinheim-based company. “Either the business disappears or the volume increases.” The latter has happened twice recently at the Lyreco Group, for which trans-o-flex has been working since 1997. The manufacturer and distributor of workplace solutions, which operates in Europe and Asia, initially took over the B2B business of its

competitor Staples Solutions in Central and Northern Europe. Since August 2022, this has led to a surge in volume for trans-o-flex. And because Pressel, which operates in Austria, Germany and Switzerland, has also been part of Lyreco since 2021, the Pressel volumes also changed carriers after a transitional period. These volumes have also been handled by trans-o-flex since the beginning of this year. In total, Lyreco now hands over more than three million parcels and pallets a year to trans-o-flex Express. »



Providing everything a workplace needs

“We are pioneers in providing everything a workplace needs in a sustainable way, allowing our customers to focus on the essentials.” This is Lyreco’s mission. Founded in France in 1926, the company has grown to become the European market leader and the world’s third largest supplier of products and services for the workplace. Still family-owned, the Lyreco Group has 17 subsidiaries in 25 countries, as well as a European health and safety department.

Lyreco offers several thousand products ranging from office supplies to office furniture, IT accessories, printing solutions, personal protective equipment, hygiene products, coffee and catering. In addition, Lyreco offers a wide range of services, from the design and installation of modern office environments and recycling solutions to annual inspections and fall protection training.

Since 2004, Lyreco has documented its journey towards becoming a sustainable company through numerous memberships and initiatives. These include membership of the United Nations Global Compact, ISO 14001 certification, a sustainable procurement process in accordance with ISO 20400 guidelines and the Ecovadis Gold Award.



Lyreco's sustainability report is available for download via the QR code or the corresponding link (bit.ly/sustainability_lyreco).



Matthias Vogel, Head of Transportation, Lyreco Deutschland GmbH, Barsinghausen.

“From our point of view, two factors in particular are decisive for the long-term cooperation and the growth in volume”, says Matthias Vogel, Head of Transportation at Lyreco Deutschland GmbH. “On the one hand, it’s the quality of the transport, which has to be fast, reliable and secure. On the other hand, it is the variety of different services that trans-o-flex offers us.”

Lyreco benefits from trans-o-flex’s unique combined freight capability. “The majority of our shipments are parcels”, says Vogel. “But we also hand over tens of thousands of pallets to trans-o-flex every year. This makes our internal processing easier.” More than one in ten shipments is also an in-house delivery. As well as delivering to a specific address, trans-o-flex can direct the shipment to the required department and can also allocate different shipments directly to different cost centres. Lyreco uses time-definite express deliveries for particularly urgent shipments.

While the majority of deliveries are made in Germany, Lyreco also regularly hands over international consignments. Most of these go to Austria and Switzerland. Here, trans-o-flex’s long-standing partner Bonafide takes care of all the necessary customs clearance. Other international destinations include the three Benelux countries, France, Denmark, Italy, Liechtenstein, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Slovenia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary.

Lyreco’s high-bay warehouse in Barsinghausen holds more than 17,000 items.





From office supplies such as printer paper and envelopes, office technology such as document shredders, scanners and projectors, IT consumables, personal protective equipment and first aid products to catering and hygiene products: the consignments are collected from three different locations in Germany. trans-o-flex can also combine parts of an order that have been sent to different locations into one consignment and then deliver it to the customer as a bundle – regardless of whether the customer is a large corporation, a small or medium-sized business, a school, a government agency or a bank.

One of the special features of this co-operation is that trans-o-flex provides Lyreco with services that are not included in any of the product overviews. "At our site in Dettingen, Württemberg, we

At Lyreco, the quality of the trans-o-flex service is measured not against other service providers, but against internal competitors. Lyreco has its own fleet of 180 delivery vehicles in Germany.

rent part of the handling area to Lyreco and allow them to use three handling gates", says Günther. "We deliver goods on the main run to Dettingen and Lyreco sorts the consignments into different routes, which are then driven from there in their own vans."

In general: Lyreco's own fleet. "This is the quality benchmark against which we measure ourselves." Lyreco uses a fleet of almost 200 of its own vans for deliveries in some regions of Germany. "This gives Lyreco a very good overview of what works and what doesn't work in terms of delivery and what the costs are." Günther adds with a smile: "That saves a lot of discussions that we have with other customers." ■



Sensitive laboratory material

24-hour international service

trans-o-flex has introduced its own international overnight service for Merck subsidiary Sigma-Aldrich Chemie GmbH. One in three of the customer's shipments has a destination outside of Germany.

For Matthias Jäger, the priorities are clear. "What we need from a transport service provider for our national shipments are low costs, a high level of dangerous goods expertise, fast delivery and fulfilment of delivery promises, personal customer service and a low damage rate." Jäger is Transport Manager for the Life Science Division of Merck, a science and technology company based in Darmstadt, Germany, where he is responsible for logistics at its subsidiary Sigma-Aldrich Chemie GmbH. The company, which primarily manufactures laboratory and production materials, has been using trans-o-flex for more than 25 years. Merck in Schnelldorf, Bavaria, hands over several

hundred thousand consignments a year to trans-o-flex Expressdienst, which specialises in sensitive goods. The company then supplies them to labs, hospitals, schools and public facilities through its Health Express service. "trans-o-flex is a reliable partner for our entire product portfolio in Germany", says Jäger. And now also beyond: "Around one in three consignments is now an international shipment."

Merck pre-sorts the consignments by country at its logistics centre. It makes no difference whether the goods are shipped in parcels or on pallets, whether they are standard consignments or

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66 countries, 64,000 employees

Merck, a leading science and technology company, is active in the fields of life science, healthcare and electronics. The company's more than 64,000 employees work, for example, on products and services to develop and manufacture medicines faster, to discover unique ways to treat diseases and on applications for intelligent devices. In 2022, Merck generated sales of € 22.2 billion in 66 countries. In Germany, Merck and its subsidiary Sigma-Aldrich Chemie have been customers of trans-o-flex for more than 25 years.

Scientific research and responsible entrepreneurship are the cornerstones of Merck's progress. This principle has been in place since the company was founded in 1668. The listed company is still majority owned by the founding family. Merck holds the global rights to the Merck name and trademark. Exceptions are the US and Canada, where the divisions operate as MilliporeSigma, EMD Serono and EMD Electronics.



The science and technology company Merck is investing more than €100 million in the expansion of its Schnelldorf site to increase distribution capacity for its products and combine it with a bottling plant. This means that laboratories can often be supplied in as little as one day. The site will grow by 25,000 square metres, almost doubling its previous size. Full opening of the new facilities is scheduled for later this year.

special consignments such as dangerous goods requiring labelling. "The trans-o-flex trucks only collect the goods from us, which are pre-sorted by country, and then some of them go directly on their national or international route", says Jäger. Since February 2022, a trans-o-flex articulated truck has been travelling daily from Schnelldorf to Belgium and the Netherlands. Although the location of Schnelldorf, in the south of Germany between Heilbronn and Nuremberg, is relatively unfavourable for a Benelux delivery, the company's own Benelux line ensures a 24-hour delivery service. The articulated lorry leaves Merck at 2.15 p.m., arrives in Turnhout, Belgium, at around 10.30 p.m. and is in Utrecht by 0.35 a.m. at the latest. PostNL, the trans-o-flex partner for Belgium and the Netherlands in the EURODIS network, then takes care of delivery in both countries the day after collection.

"The introduction of next working day international delivery is also a result of our regular joint meetings with the customer", says Eugen Günther, Managing Director Sales at trans-o-flex. "A trans-o-flex team meets with Merck twice a year for business reviews." In addition to the responsible key account manager, the head of the Nuremberg branch and the head of the customer service team are also present. "This means that Sales, Customer Service and Operations are always at the table and we can not only discuss performance based on the respective data and share news from both companies, but also really discuss all topics and requests."

Merck in Schnelldorf, Germany, is a very special customer for Günther. "The challenges are great because the sensitive laboratory acids, glassware and delicate equipment have to be transported gently and quickly at the same time. But because

we do it so well, working with Merck also gives us a certain sense of pride and satisfaction. And that's a pretty good feeling." ■



Celebrating the silver anniversary of their successful collaboration (from left): Key Account Manager Gunther Meyer and Nuremberg Branch Manager Nicol Pfeiffer from trans-o-flex and Matthias Jäger, Transport Manager Global Transportation, and Anja Seng, Specialist Order Processing International Logistics In- & Outbound, from Merck.



Wood out, H1 pallet in

Orange is the new green

Veterinary wholesaler reboVet has switched to plastic load carriers for its mixed pallets because sustainability is important to the company.

When the opportunity arose to switch to modern plastic load carriers for the collection of mixed pallets, Tim Erning did not hesitate for long. The advantages of the H1 pallet over the traditional wooden Euro pallet were immediately clear to the Head of Operations at veterinary wholesaler reboVet. "The facts speak for themselves", he says. "The H1 pallet is lighter, lasts longer and is more hygienic. For me, there is no longer any question as to whether the sustainability balance is better than that of the Euro pallet. We want to support that."

For more than ten years, the veterinary wholesaler, based in Bocholt, Westphalia, has been using trans-o-flex to supply vets and veterinary clinics throughout Germany. Since mid December last year, reboVet has been packing all mixed pallets, i.e. pallets with parcels for different consignees, on orange H1 pallets. This applies both to chilled goods (2–8°C), which are actively temperature-controlled by trans-o-flex ThermoMed, and to less sensitive products, which reboVet has transported using trans-o-flex Express' non temperature-controlled Health Express service. [»](#)



The handover of the H1 pallets was sealed with a handshake: Tim Erning (left), Head of Operations at reboVet Veterinary Wholesale, and Pascal Scheer, Account Manager Sales West at trans-o-flex.

Before Erning decided to use the H1 pallet, he and his contact at trans-o-flex worked out how many of the orange pallets reboVet would need. As a rule of thumb, a customer should have three to four times the number of pallets in daily use. A third of these will be used by the shipper as stock, a third will be needed for the consignments made available for collection on the day of collection and a third will normally be in circulation. “We have a special pallet exchange agreement with trans-o-flex that defines the rental conditions”, says Erning. “We pay a usage fee that is lower than the cost of wooden Euro pallets.”

Prior to using H1 pallets, the company had no experience with plastic load carriers. Was it a big change? “Apart from the colour, nothing has really changed much”, says Erning. “And the colour also turns out to be an advantage. You can see at a glance which pallets are mixed and which are complete.”

The mixed pallets are used for transport from reboVet to the trans-o-flex branch in Duisburg. Here, the individual packages on a mixed pallet are placed on the

sorting system. The system automatically feeds the parcels to the line-haul lorries that transport the parcels to the receiving region. The complete pallets do not need to be packed at the trans-o-flex branch. They are transferred by forklift truck directly to the relevant truck, which takes them to the consignee’s region. The complete pallets then go directly from the distribution centre to the consignees. reboVet still has to use conventional wooden Euro pallets for the complete pallets. This is because the H1 pallets cannot yet be exchanged everywhere.

At the start of the palletisation process, Erning can only think of one thing that had to be readjusted. “The first return deliveries were calculated very tightly, so we ran out of H1 pallets. We discussed this immediately and since then the pallets have been returned to us earlier.” As a rule, the truck that collects the consignments also brings back empty pallets. This means that no additional ramp contact is required for the return delivery. “We then drive the pallets directly into the warehouse and store them there until the next delivery.” ■

reboVet
tierisch kompetent

Why the H1 pallet is more sustainable

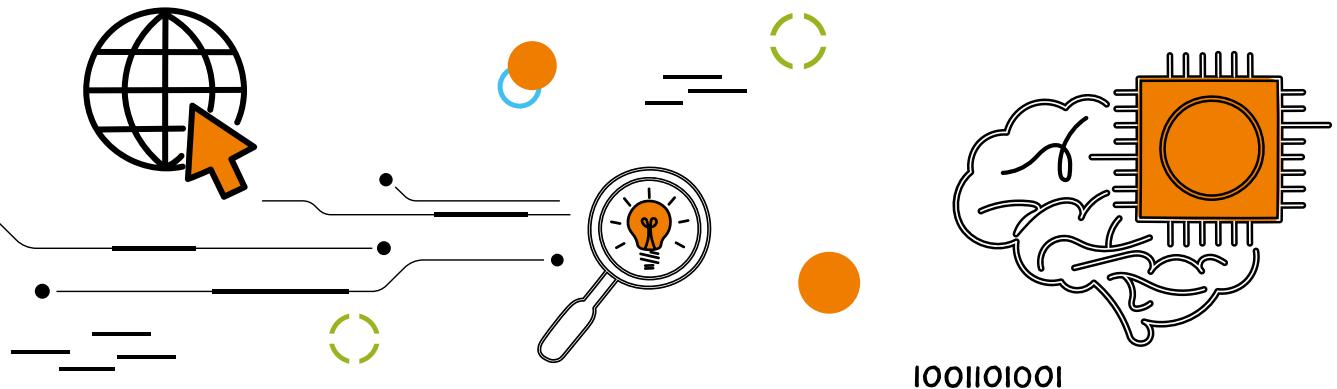
1,200 x 800 x 144 millimetres. The orange plastic pallets that trans-o-flex lends to its customers as load carriers are exactly the same size as the predominant wooden Euro pallet. But they are much lighter. Whereas a new wooden pallet weighs 24 kilos, the plastic alternative weighs only 18 kilos. "This reduces the transport weight of a full articulated truck by more than 200 kilos per trip", says Michael Löckener, Managing Director of ThermoMed and Head of the Express Operation Area at trans-o-flex. In addition, the wooden pallet absorbs more and more moisture over the course of its life, making it even heavier.

According to Löckener, there is another important aspect to consider when transporting medicines and other pharmaceutical products: "The H1 pallet also retains its appearance and cleanliness. Wooden pallets, on the other hand, darken and become dirty with use." Pharmaceutical customers who deliver new light-coloured

wooden pallets to trans-o-flex would rightly complain if they received dark-coloured pallets in return. Such pallets are often rejected. This is because only light-coloured pallets meet the requirements of Class A pallets, which are required by Good Distribution Practice (GDP) rules for the transport of pharmaceutical goods. Plastic pallets are GDP compliant as long as they are fit for purpose.

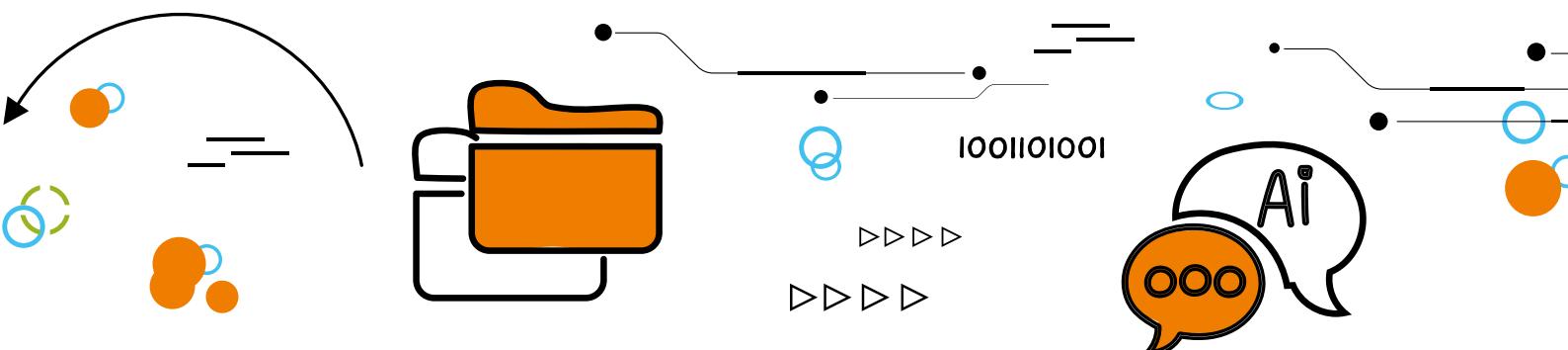
Long-term testing by trans-o-flex has also shown that plastic pallets last much longer than wooden ones. For two years, trans-o-flex tested the two alternatives in long-distance transport between Hamburg and Hanover. Wooden Euro pallets survived an average of eight cycles. After that, they were so damaged that they had to be replaced. In contrast, only two of the 30 H1 pallets used for daily transport between branches were slightly damaged during the entire test period.





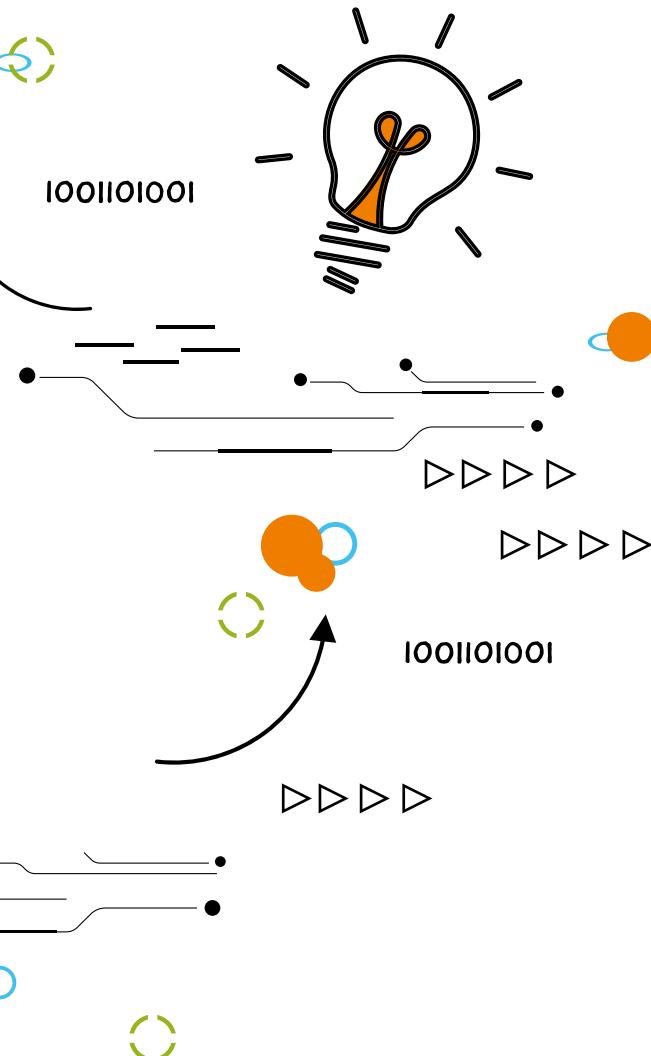
New AI solution

Line haul relieved, greater transparency of information



Minimising delivery delays and enabling greater transparency and active communication about delayed deliveries: these are the goals of a completely new IT solution at trans-o-flex. A language model is used to automatically evaluate and analyse large amounts of data.

“I don't know of any customers who are interested in more detailed information about the 99 out of their 100 consignments that are delivered on time. But everyone wants precise information about the one consignment that is taking longer than expected.” What Stefan Thömmes is talking about here is an experience that every customer service representative of a delivery service has had at one time or another. “No matter how high the rate of regularly delivered consignments is, information about irregular consignments is always needed”, says the Managing Director of trans-o-flex IT-Service GmbH, based on discussions with Customer Service. “We want our customers to receive this information promptly and reliably so that they can inform their consignees accordingly.” trans-o-flex has come closer to achieving this goal with a new IT solution based on artificial intelligence (AI).



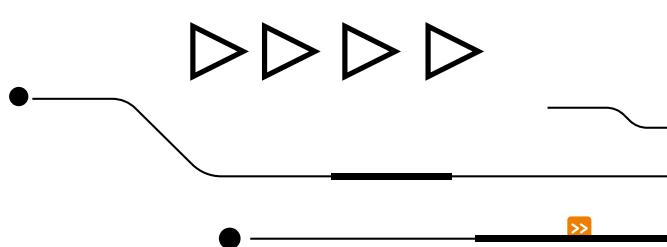
There can be many reasons for extended delivery times. This may be due to disruptions to line haul operations caused by accidents, roadworks, extreme weather or other unforeseen events. When such events occurred, it was already standard practice for carriers, drivers or branches to send an email to the line haul monitoring team. “An analysis of this information has shown”, continues Thömmes, “that some of these emails contain general information, but many also contain important time-critical messages. Basically, it gives us the up-to-the-minute information we need.” So far, however, it has not been possible to analyse this information.

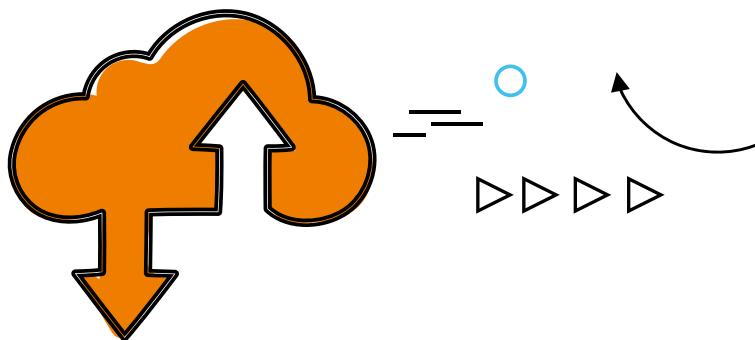
“To do this, the employees in the line monitoring team would have had to keep an eye on the sometimes very high volume of emails throughout the night, filter out time-critical messages and respond to them individually. That would simply be too much.” This is because it takes time to accurately analyse the message, assign it to a specific night line and identify the

consignments involved. Although the information base was therefore available in principle, it was sometimes not possible to react in time to unexpected events, despite early information. Even when line delays were announced virtually, it was often not possible to draw any conclusions from the announcement. And at the delivery branch, this usually means that consignments from delayed line haul trucks can no longer be sorted on their delivery route. As a result, they sit there waiting to be delivered the next day.

The solution was a complex but highly efficient technology. Background: trans-o-flex had already invested in the acquisition of a powerful software platform in 2022, enabling the company to gain real-time insights from the consolidation of unstructured data. IT specialists were recruited and trained to manage these complex software tools. “Unfortunately, you can’t just buy AI software, feed it your own data and have a solution to a problem.”

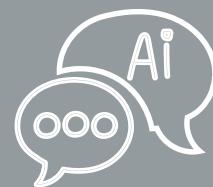
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When Thömmes discussed the line haul situation described above with his specialists, the idea was born to solve the challenge with the help of a large language model – similar to Chat-GPT – and the acquired AI platform Foundry. This was because the solution to the specific case required precisely the capabilities that an AI-based large language model provides: automatically analysing and evaluating unstructured data available as linguistic statements, and triggering actions. A development team of five AI specialists took on the task and implemented the solution in seven main steps.

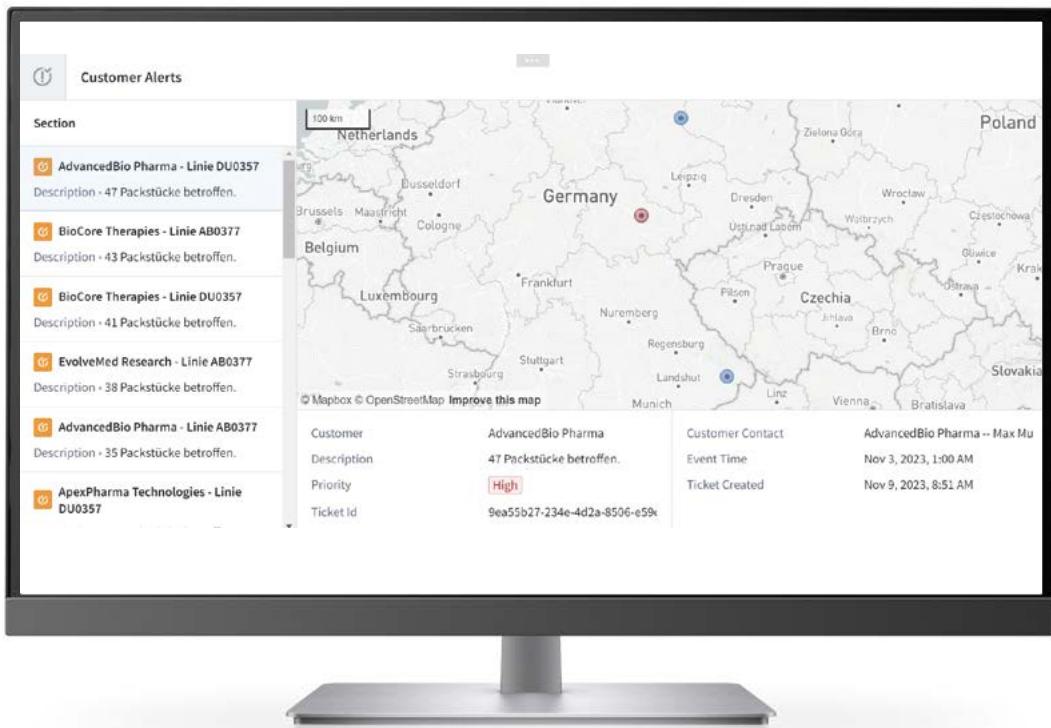
- 1 Developing an interface to automatically transfer incoming messages to the Palantir Foundry platform for analysis. Thömmes: "Instead of emails, we could also analyse WhatsApp messages, for example. We are looking at whether this would be even easier for our partners."
- 2 Using Foundry's artificial intelligence platform (see box), each email is automatically categorised: Is it a message about a traffic jam? About a road closure? About an accident? Is a replacement vehicle needed?
- 3 Programming the automatic display of the relevant line number.
- 4 Automatic identification of all the parcels that are affected by a specific message (= all the parcels loaded on the vehicle).
- 5 Automatic determination of the urgency of a message in the three levels low, medium, high.
- 6 Automatic notification of the persons in charge.
- 7 Automatically recommend one or more actions.



Terms you need to know

There are many names and acronyms in the world of artificial intelligence (AI). Seven terms essential to understanding trans-o-flex's solutions are explained here.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is simply the English version of the German term 'Künstliche Intelligenz' (KI). In some cases, the term AI/KI is replaced by machine learning (ML). This term better describes what AI actually is: a machine (software) that reads large amounts of data and recognises (= learns) and evaluates relationships between the data.

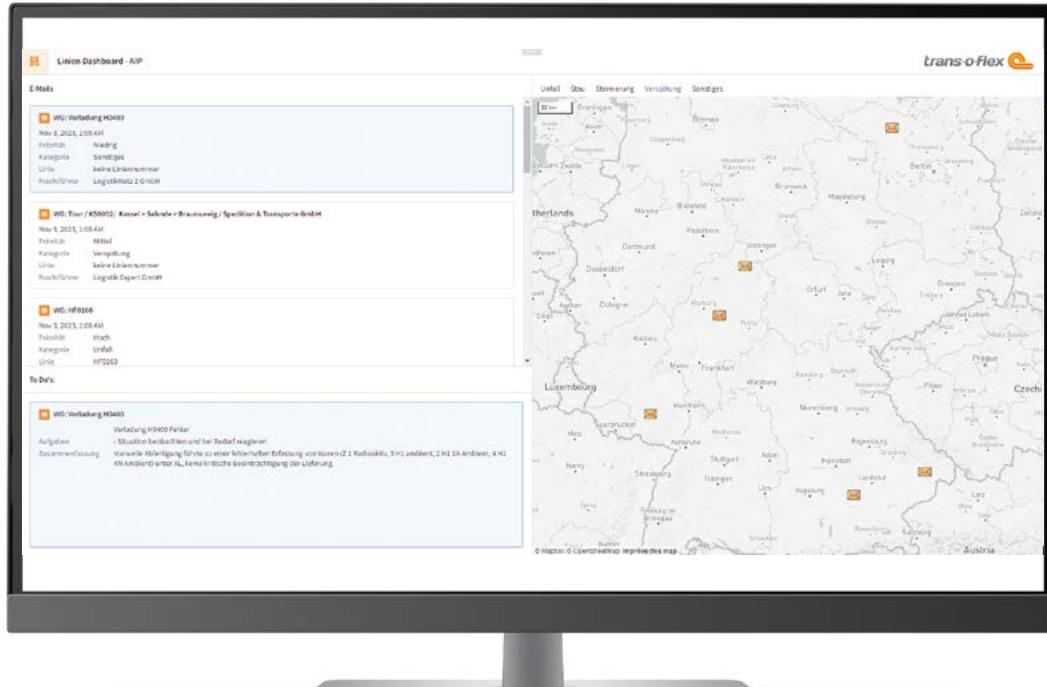


Quick information update in the event of a delay: The trans-o-flex system can identify which pallets and which parcels are affected by a delay by automatically analysing the text of emails relating to line delays and the associated line number. The customer service dashboard then sorts the parcels directly by customer, giving customer service agents a quick overview of which of a customer's consignments may be affected.

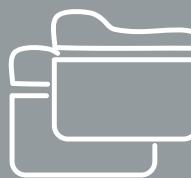
LLM (large language model): A large language model capable of formulating answers to questions. Experts refer to this as general language generation. LLMs acquire these capabilities through machine learning. These are computationally intensive, self-monitored or semi-monitored training processes in which software recognises and stores statistical relationships in text documents.

Chat-GPT (GPT = Generative pre-trained transformer): Currently the best known and most popular LLM. The developer is the US company OPEN AI, whose largest investor is Microsoft. The latest version is Chat-GPT 4. Besides Chat-GPT, there are many other LLMs from other companies that work in a similar way. One example is Google's Bard.





Recommendations provided by software: A large language model also automatically processes the content of alert emails for the line dashboard and filters out the relevant line number. Among other things, the software automatically summarises the content of an email for the network monitoring agent and makes recommendations if action is required.



Palantir: A US company specialising in the consolidation and analysis of large volumes of data ('big data').

Foundry: Palantir's comprehensive data analytics platform for large and medium sized enterprises. trans-o-flex has signed a licence agreement with Palantir for the use of Foundry.

AIP (Artificial intelligence platform): Foundry's groundbreaking premium feature that unlocks the potential of AI and LLM within Foundry. This has one key advantage. Unlike Chat-GPT 4, which uses Microsoft's Bing search engine, the LLM is not limited to publicly available information. With AIP, an LLM can also directly access and analyse selected company data in a protected environment. In addition, the



“Our team of experts worked on this development for several weeks”, says Thömmes. This is because all the ‘automatic’ processing steps mentioned were developed using Prompt engineering. “Voice commands, known as prompts, are written for the LLM (large language model). Based on the result that the prompts deliver, they are optimised until the desired result is achieved.”

Since any data analysis is only as good as the presentation of its results, the team then developed dashboards from the data tables generated by the AI with all the relevant information. “It is only through these interactive real-time overviews that the proposed action steps can be consistently implemented and monitored in practice.” For example, there is a dashboard that provides the line monitoring team with a summary of the messages received, showing which vehicles or lines are affected by a particular incident, what suggestions there are for specific actions, which have been taken and which are still outstanding.

“The new AI tool significantly reduces the workload of the network monitoring team, allowing them to focus on time-critical tasks”, concludes Thömmes. “Because the most important and urgent tasks are completed first, some delays can even be avoided.”

The project will also result in another dashboard for customer service, which is currently in the pilot phase. This dashboard is designed to show customer service representatives which consignments in which delivery area are affected by a delay. The aim is to provide information on consignments broken down by sending and receiving customers. “Ideally, customer service should be able to proactively inform customers of delays, rather than waiting for enquiries and then having to research them. This means that our customer service will be even faster and be able to provide more detailed information.” ■

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AIP has numerous other special features, such as the ability to use prompts (voice commands to the LLM) to run targeted analyses or create entire dashboards.

Prompt engineering: An essential component of AI-powered solutions. AI applications are controlled using voice commands (prompts) to achieve the desired results.



Millions invested in insulated vehicle fleet

Capacity and reliability increase, dependency and downtimes decrease

More than 400 new insulated vehicles have already been delivered, and a further 300 will follow by the end of the year at the latest. trans-o-flex is taking a number of development steps by investing millions in a total of 644 insulated vehicles and 60 insulated boxes. This will further increase the reliability of actively temperature-controlled shipments, while reducing noise and exhaust emissions. This is thanks to new sensor technology that reduces downtime for maintenance, for example, and an innovative electric temperature control system that is fitted to all box trucks. In addition, trans-o-flex is taking the same approach to procuring its own transport capacity in the delivery

sector as it already does in long-haul transport. The company has purchased its own pharmaceutical trailers to avoid relying on specialist vehicles from outside companies.

Clean, quiet, economical electric refrigeration

Specifically, trans-o-flex ThermoMed will take delivery of 213 vans with box bodies (mainly Mercedes Sprinters, some VW Crafters) in Germany and Austria. "They are all equipped with electric refrigeration units from Mitsubishi", explains



Michael Löckener, Managing Director of trans-o-flex ThermoMed and Head of Operations at trans-o-flex Express. "They are more expensive to buy than conventional units. But they are quieter and cleaner to run, and their overall costs are lower." The reason: "When a vehicle with a conventional refrigeration unit stops for a delivery, the engine has to keep running to maintain temperature control. It burns diesel and makes noise." The electric refrigeration unit avoids both.

Its power comes from its own battery when driving and when stopping, which is recharged by the engine's alternator while driving. The engine does not need to be running to pre-cool the load compartment. Instead, the vehicle can be plugged into a standard 230-volt socket. The buffer battery is charged at the same time. Sockets are installed at the loading gates, from which trans-o-flex supplies green electricity from renewable sources. Another advantage of the new solution is that, in the event of an engine failure, the vehicles can maintain the set temperature for several hours thanks to the battery.

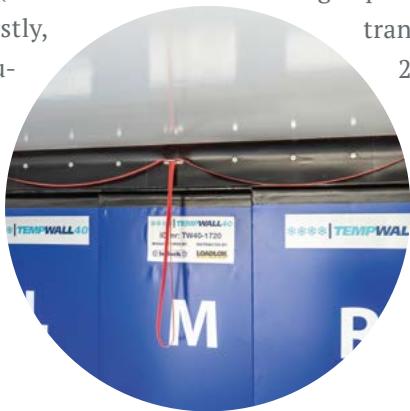
In addition to the panel vans, there are 273 fully temperature-controlled Mercedes Sprinter delivery vans. Most of these are used for trans-o-flex Express' Ambient service (15–25 °C). The following applies to all new acquisitions: "Firstly, the vehicles are already qualified ex works to pharmaceutical standards. This means that they can be used to transport pharmaceuticals straight from delivery. Secondly, all the new vehicles are equipped with plug-in sensors that we use to measure the temperature."

No more need to return to the workshop for calibration

The advantage of these plug-in sensors is that the vehicles no longer have to return to the workshop for the annual calibration of the temperature sensors. "We have a contract with the supplier, Euroscan, where their people come to us for calibration and do it professionally." This reduces vehicle downtimes.

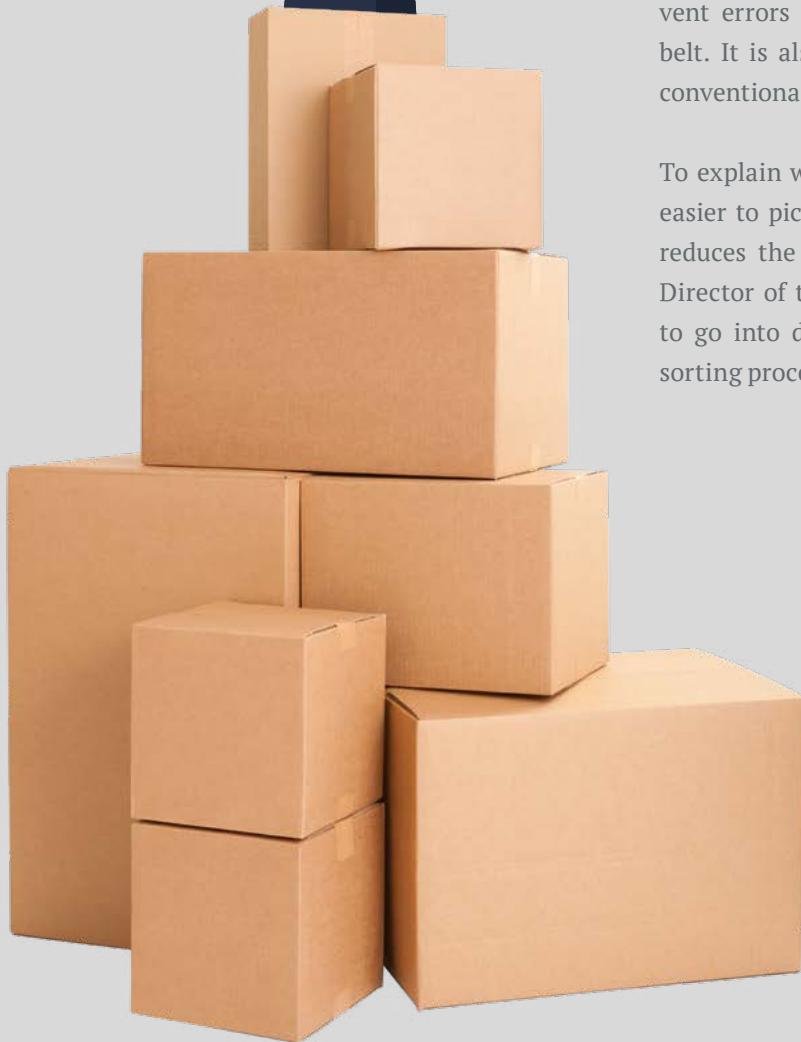
The same applies to the 60 HCP-Technology insulated boxes with a capacity of 1,000 litres. For the first time, these are also equipped with plug-in sensors, reducing downtime as with the vehicles. The background to the box solution is that in areas with low ambient volumes, insulated boxes are a safe option for meeting the temperature requirements of ambient goods. They are also more economical than using fully temperature-controlled vehicles to transport small quantities. As a result, trans-o-flex Express has installed around 1,200 insulated boxes in its fleet, which are available in three different sizes (711 litres, 1,000 litres and 2,400 litres) to suit different ambient volumes and provide greater flexibility for dispatch.

The order includes 10 trucks with box bodies for ThermoMed Austria, 28 two-chamber trucks for ThermoMed Germany and 120 Krone two-axle trailers for the line haulage operations of trans-o-flex Express. There are currently some 398 actively temperature-controlled trailers certified to pharmaceutical standards in use for trans-o-flex Express' line haulage operations. In Germany and Austria, trans-o-flex has a total of more than 2,750 vehicles with active temperature control.



Fewer sorting errors

Remove parcel when the light comes



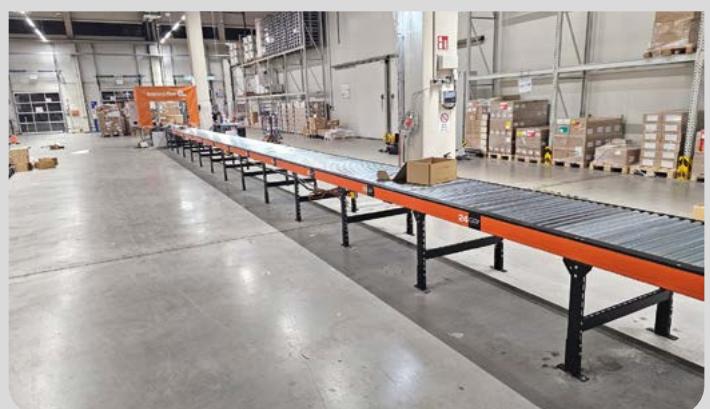
In Großengersdorf near Vienna, trans-o-flex has installed the first pick-by-light sorting system. The new technology used at trans-o-flex ThermoMed Austria is designed to make sorting easier and prevent errors when parcels are removed from the belt. It is also quieter and uses less energy than conventional sorting belts.

To explain why pick-by-light technology makes it easier to pick parcels from the conveyor belt and reduces the error rate, Stefan Gerber, Managing Director of trans-o-flex ThermoMed Austria, has to go into detail and briefly describe the entire sorting process: "After being placed on the convey-

or belt, each parcel is weighed in the scanner tunnel, the volume is registered and the barcode can be read from three sides. The registered parcels then travel along the approximately 30 metre long roller conveyor to one of 24 picking zones. Each picking zone has a display with a frame that can be illuminated in two colours. When the LED frame lights up orange, the picker knows: the next parcel is mine! It changes to blue when the parcel arrives. The system can be set to leave the parcel in the picking zone until it is removed. Alternatively, the system can be set to run continuously. Then the LEDs show which parcel needs to be picked up, but the parcels don't stop".

The system can sort up to 1,500 parcels per hour. Because the electric drive motors use low-voltage technology (24/48 volts), the system is not only very energy efficient, but also very quiet.

In installing the system, trans-o-flex also broke new ground. "To save time and gain certainty, the system was set up twice." Gerber explains the apparent contradiction as follows: "The system was first installed and commissioned at the system integrator tbwb in Holland. We then shipped it to Austria, where it was assembled by trans-o-flex sorter technicians and commissioned together with the tbwb project manager. This saved us time during the installation at the warehouse in Großebersdorf and we could be sure that the system would be up and running immediately."



The new roller conveyor in Großebersdorf near Vienna was delivered directly to the sorting centre. Its pick-by-light technology speeds up the sorting of parcels. trans-o-flex technicians installed the sorting line and then commissioned it together with the manufacturer.

Austria

Sustainable handling with active temperature control

New facility in Styria: major investment ensures lower long-term operating costs

In Austria, trans-o-flex has set the course for further expansion. trans-o-flex ThermoMed Austria (TMA), which specialises in actively temperature-controlled transport for the pharmaceutical and healthcare industries, has opened a new logistics centre in Lebring, Styria. It increases the capacity of the company's nationwide network and reduces operating costs. "We can handle two and a half times more consignments in Lebring than at the previous site in Kalsdorf", said Eugen Günther, spokesman for the TMA management, at the commissioning ceremony. "And while the facility in Kalsdorf was rented, we have built on our very own land in Lebring." The Austrian subsidiary of the German company trans-o-flex ThermoMed is investing a mid single-digit million euro sum in Styria. "This is a lot of money for a relatively small facility with a daily volume of around 2,000 parcels", adds Günther. "But it is essen-

tial if we want to offer our customers a nationwide 24-hour service. In addition, the ecologically designed hub will ensure lower operating costs in the long term and improve our carbon footprint."

The active temperature control of the TMA network at 2 to 8 and 15 to 25 degrees Celsius ensures the quality of the pharmaceuticals, but also requires more energy than conventional transport networks. "This is why investing in energy-saving technology and equipment pays off in the long run", explains Günther. For example, the building is being fitted with heavy-duty thermal insulation and a solar power system on the roof of the 1,100 square metre facility. The electricity can be used to power the heat pump for heating and cooling, as well as the charging points for electric vehicles that TMA has already planned. Expensive LED technology is

used for the lighting. But it is very economical to run. "And all the rain that falls on the roofs and sealed surfaces of the 10,000 square metre site does not go into the sewers", says Günther. "There's a pond on the site that collects all the rainwater and allows it to seep away in a controlled way."

In Lebring, trans-o-flex ThermoMed Austria will employ up to 40 people and will in future use this site to serve the provinces of Styria, Carinthia, parts of Burgenland and East Tyrol. In total, trans-o-flex ThermoMed Austria has four sites. In addition to Lebring, these include Großebersdorf (Lower Austria), Regau (Upper Austria) and Fritzens (Tyrol). The sites are connected to the German ThermoMed network and to the partner networks in Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands.



B2B and B2C customs services

Shopping made easier

How EURODIS partner Bonafide makes exporting to Switzerland easier. And why a special delivery service, including customs clearance, has now been developed for private consignees.

Many roads lead to Switzerland. Nevertheless, Switzerland is and remains an island. Signs show why: Stop – Customs – Zoll – Douane. Ignoring these signs at the border to the Alpine republic is dangerous and can be very expensive. The customs authorities are just as strict as the Swiss police when it comes to monitoring and enforcing speed limits on the roads. “If you want to export successfully to Switzerland, you need a logistics partner who not only has a reliable distribution network, but can also offer the best customs solution for both shippers and consignees”, says Andreas Brunn. “This is not only true for traditional B2B business between corporate customers. It also applies to B2C business with private customers. The biggest growth rates in international e-commerce are in the B2C sector.” For this reason, Brunn’s company expanded its customs clearance solution to include a special solution for private consignees. [»](#)





Bonafide at a glance

1993: Establishment of Bonafide Logistic AG, responsible for distribution logistics in Switzerland. The company is part of the Via-Mat Group, which also offers value-added logistics. In the same year, Bonafide becomes a partner and founding member of the EURODIS network.

2014: Bonafide is integrated into the Swedish group Loomis AB.

2016: Loomis focuses on value-added logistics as its core business. Bonafide is taken over by Rhenus Alpina AG.

2017: New Bonafide logistics centre in Basel. Thanks to the takeover by Rhenus, Bonafide can move into the Rhenus logistics centre in the Rhine port.

The company operates from 15 sites in Switzerland. It has a fleet of 500 trucks. Its major customers include Calida, Grifols, Leister and Carhartt. Bonafide's nationwide delivery service also includes the transport of dangerous goods.

Andreas Brunn is Managing Director of the Swiss EURODIS partner Bonafide Logistic AG. Like trans-o-flex, the company is a founding member of the network for international shipments, which now operates in 38 European countries. "Particularly in the B2C sector, sales success often depends on the service shippers offer their customers in Switzerland", says Brunn. "Private customers often have no understanding of the additional payment of VAT or customs duties during import customs clearance." In Brunn's experience, many people assume they have already paid everything to the shipper when ordering online. "It is then a challenge to recover the cost of customs clearance from the customer. Without an advice note, there is also a high risk that the delivery will not reach the customer. In many cases, a second delivery has to be scheduled, which is neither sustainable nor cost-effective."



Solar panels cover the entire roof of the new Bonafide site in Basel. Following the takeover by Rhenus, Bonafide was able to move into its logistics centre in the Rhine port.

As an alternative, Bonafide offers to act not only as the EU shipper's logistics partner in Switzerland, but also as its fiscal representative. "In this case, we can settle the Swiss value-added tax directly with the foreign exporter", says Brunn. "The customer is not charged, but has the same experience as with a domestic delivery: they get their goods delivered free, duty paid and taxed." The administrative burden on the shipper and the cost of customs clearance are reduced. "They benefit from collective customs clearance, where all consignments for different customers in Switzerland are cleared through customs together." This customs service is available for both B2B and B2C consignments.

In the case of B2C deliveries, consignees are also notified of the delivery before it is made. Brunn: "Consignees can then decide on which day and where they would like to receive the delivery, whether at home or at a parcel station." To use this service, the sender must mark the consignment as a B2C consignment (B2C flag) and include the consignee's email address or mobile phone number in the consignment details. ■

Customs duties on Swiss exports reduced

Two new import regulations have been in force in Switzerland since the beginning of the year. This magazine asked Andreas Brunn of the Swiss company Bonafide Logistic AG what this means for trans-o-flex customers exporting to Switzerland.

Switzerland has abolished its industrial tariffs as of 1 January. What's the catch for exporters?

There isn't one. The change makes shipping to Switzerland more attractive. Shippers from the EU who deliver to Switzerland free domicile, duty and tax paid can save on customs duties. From our point of view, this is all the more reason for us to adjust our delivery conditions accordingly in order to offer our consignee customers in Switzerland an all-round service. When they buy online, they are not aware that they are buying abroad. They pay everything to the shipper and do not receive an invoice from the customs service provider.

Andreas Brunn, Managing Director of the Swiss EURODIS partner Bonafide Logistic AG.



In addition, 1,600 customs tariff numbers have been cancelled. What does this mean?

Things have become even simpler. But beware: the goods still have to be cleared through customs. Unlike the German customs authorities, the BAZG (Federal Office for Customs and Border Security in Switzerland) strictly sanctions incorrect declarations.

Focus on quality

trans-o-flex:
a partner you can
rely on for the highest
quality standards

Our wide range of certifications is a testament to our quality in many areas of our business. We are ISO, AEO, Ecovadis, TAPA and EU-GDP certified. As a partner of the German government for the supply of civil emergency supplies, trans-o-flex is synonymous with reliability and excellent service in every situation. We have also received awards for our quality and value for money.

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