



CASE

Uni-Forwarding International





With TRIS we save time for our customers, our suppliers and ourselves

Uni-Forwarding International is a logistics service provider that manages the European supply chain from Antwerp to and from West and South Africa. The company is the sole European subsidiary of the Senegalese group CSTT-AO (Compagnie Sénégalaise de Transport Transatlantique Afrique d'Ouest) which has been active for 60 years in logistics on the African continent (Guinea, Ghana, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Congo and Mozambique). Uni-Forwarding offers total logistics solutions (sea and air freight, customs and warehousing) for complex business processes, supported by Intris Cloud software solutions. Just a few weeks ago it also introduced a SAP interface so that now the company can achieve full integration with its customers' and suppliers' systems.

At the head of the supply chain

Some 75% of Uni-Forwarding's activities are related to construction and operation of mines in Africa. The company supports and manages the entire supply chain, from clearing a particular concession site to shutdown of the mine. The contracts are long-term: 20, 30 or 40 years, depending on the concession.

The equipment comes from Australia, China, Asia, Europe and the USA. About half of this export volume comes from Europe, with some 60% of it passing through Antwerp. The remaining 40% is exported directly from Italy, France, Germany, Sweden and the UK.

Uni-Forwarding organises LCL, FCL and breakbulk consignments, transport of ro/ro freight on flats and project cargo, by sea freight, air freight and road transport. Added value activities include stuffing and stripping containers, storage and customs procedures.

Uni-Forwarding organises everything, up to when the goods arrive on African soil; the African sister companies then take over, up to and including final delivery. "We're not a big company but we do play an important role within the group because we are at the head of the entire supply chain," explains managing director Gaëtan De Schepper.

"Intris gave us the most confidence"

"The company chose TRIS Customs two and a half years ago, for processing 350 customs declarations per month. The supplier for our previous customs solution stopped that activity, and our application was obsolescent anyway. We compared three different offers and Intris gave us the most confidence. We also wanted to change over quickly, and with Intris that was possible. Furthermore our customs agent spoke directly for the user-friendliness of TRIS."

"While it used a completely different approach, the Intris solution was more modern, more up-to-date and more hands-on. One big advantage of TRIS Customs is the direct communications with the Customs authorities. This saves us a great deal of time: as soon as an exit confirmation arrives it gets checked out automatically and is given final status.

Another reason is that Intris has AEO certification for the communication with Customs: this was an important consideration for us because we too have the ambition to obtain AEO certification. The fact that we wrote out our business process in collaboration with them has helped us a good way forward in our self-assessment."

Flexible enough for complex business flows

"The advantages of the Intris customs applications gave us a great deal of confidence in their other solutions. This positive experience led to us implementing TRIS Forwarding and TRIS Warehouse two years later."

In fact Uni-Forwarding found these two solutions so useful that less than four months later it set up an administrative back office in Durban where three operators work with TRIS Forwarding and TRIS Warehouse and are able to pass customs instructions on to TRIS Customs.

"We have a very complex business process with different workflows and models, but the flexibility of the Intris system allows us to configure all sorts of exceptions. We have an untypical way of receiving bookings: we get orders not only from the consignees but also from the shippers or traders, and we have to deal with exceptions in all of these cases. There are lots of exceptions to the rule, and so we need to work with a model that permits this."

Digital framework

Another reason for choosing Intris was the process flow management. Together with the customers the Intris specialists map out the business processes, down to the smallest details. The necessary features are then built into the TRIS solution.

"Before this we had never written down our business processes in detail. Now that we can see the entire flow on our dashboard our people have a framework to guide them. This framework is digital, without having to go through a physical file.

Previously we had a 'piling system': a pile of in-files, a stack of to-invoice files, a pile of to-send transport orders, a pile of to-make B/L instructions ... and so on. Of course this all creates risk of errors: correct processing depends on having enough concentration. But someone gets interrupted by a phone call, a work colleague comes to ask about something, people are off sick, or on holiday ... So fields are not filled in properly, information is not passed on, or the file is just left lying. There are so many human errors that can lead to mistakes being made.

We therefore needed to automate the process and have workflow support that guides you through the entire procedure, without losing sight of the whole.

This workflow management also enables one person to take over a file directly from someone else. The handler who takes over can see at a glance that e.g. the customs declaration has been sent, the B/L instructions still have to be drawn up, or that an invoice still has to be issued ...

By mapping out the business processes with Intris we discovered steps that can now be done more easily with the help of the system.

And by writing everything down we have laid a good basis for the self-assessment for our AEO. We will be able to show the assessor that nothing has been left to chance, and that we have the timings and KPIs for secure booking of the consignment and for providing the accompanying documentation."

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SAP Interface

The Uni-Forwarding parent company in Senegal (CSTT-AO) runs entirely on SAP, which was another reason for choosing Intris.

"At Uni-Forwarding we want to digitise as much as possible and work more closely with our customers and suppliers by integrating with their systems. With the help of Intris we recently set up an SAP interface with one of our customers so that we can send their bookings in SAP. That way the correct data automatically arrive in the TRIS Forwarding file including the accompanying documents.

This is a revolution compared with how we used to work in the past. Previously we would receive an email saying for example: 'Please book a container to Abidjan with 20 parcels. They will be delivered in two days in your warehouse' together with the manifest. Then there would be 35 invoices to follow. All of this had to be printed out, including the email. So we ended up with a stack of paper before anything had actually been done: no booking, no file.

Now a file is made up automatically with all the necessary data together with the invoices required for the customs declaration. Sending the customs instruction along with the necessary information is just one job, and the container can leave as soon as it has been cleared for exit.

Our ultimate dream is to put the TRIS reporting directly on SAP, then our entire supply chain would be covered. This would be perfectly possible at group level, as the customers and workflows that we have already mapped out are just the same."

Any time, any place, on any device

Uni-Forwarding has opted for a Cloud solution, it doesn't have a physical server any more.

"We don't want to be too dependent on in-house hardware and servers. Our group has an Office 365 licence covering the whole world: they manage all users.

Another advantage of the Cloud is that you can expand (or contract) whenever you need to. If you have a physical server you also have more restrictions in this respect.

Our server got hacked one and a half years ago: all our screens went red and we were asked to pay ransom of 50,000 dollars.

The great thing about TRIS is that you can log in from anywhere in the world. Our operational manager can see what is happening wherever they happen to be, and similarly I can follow the financial flow from anywhere. TRIS has many internal controls, such as an automatic check of new customers for credit risks, which is also very comforting."

De Schepper sums up the bottom line of the TRIS solutions as follows: "It has made our teams more efficient and enabled them to handle much more. Intris helps us to save as much time as possible, for our customers, our suppliers and ourselves. That's the great advantage of TRIS."

Uni-Forwarding opted for Intris because of:

- User-friendliness
- Direct communication with Customs
- AEO certification
- Fast implementation
- Flexible enough for complex business flows
- Process flow management
- SAP interface
- Work anywhere, any place on any device

Uni-Forwarding uses:

- Customs, Forwarding, Warehouse
- Cloud
- Squid
- BI-analytics



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