

New strengths – a new logistics centre and takeover of Camion Transport

Double strike in the Romandie

Positive developments do not often happen in as rapid succession as with Camion Transport in the French-speaking part of Switzerland of late. In addition to opening a logistics centre in Vufflens-la-Ville, 1 July will see Camion Transport take over the general cargo unit of the Domdidier-based Swiss firm Von Bergen. Director Josef Jäger told the *ITJ*'s Christian Doepgen about the background to this move.

Mr Jäger, how did the agreement with Von Bergen come about?

Our companies have been working together for more than 30 years; the new agreement is the outcome of this trusting relationship. Some reports have misrepresented the deal. Actually we've only taken over the general cargo division of Von Bergen, which is just one of the five business units of the company.

Can you tell us something about the volume of this general cargo business?

Both parties agreed to keep the purchase price and the sales volumes under wraps. But I can tell you that the annual sales volume of the division is certainly below CHF 10 million.

1 July is still some time away. What are customers saying about the deal?

The takeover date gives us two months to hold talks and renew contracts. Customers are realistic today, and understand that some extent of concentration in this market is inevitable. Forwarding clients especially have welcomed the takeover.

Is there a turnaround in business?

Let's put it this way. We'll certainly see the expected economies of scale, thanks to higher volumes. A mass business like general cargo is bound to bring the service provider some benefits. In addition, freight forwarding companies also like

to work with larger medium-sized companies that bring their own vehicles and infrastructure into the cooperation agreements and whose owners reinvest surplus capital in the company.

How are you integrating the acquisition?

As part of this asset deal, we will take on all 24 employees of the division, as well as taking control of fifteen vehicles and about 10–15 drivers working on a contract basis.

“Customers are realistic – they understand that concentration in this market is inevitable.”

How is Camion Transport positioned overall in the Swiss Romandie?

Our operational activities date back to 1975, when our first branch office was established in Geneva. After our headquarters in Wil this was our first branch. We actually only came up with our name after these activities started.

What is your overall assessment of western Switzerland's economic potential?

The region is not viable if it has to play second fiddle to others. It needs its own separate network and staff who are rooted in the region. The flow of goods between the French-speaking and German-speaking parts of Switzerland

is not well-balanced. In fact the ratio is about one third to two thirds in favour of the flow into western Switzerland. Accordingly, hauliers must factor in empty return trips throughout Switzerland and



Josef Jäger – in his element.

make sure they take into account the resulting price pressure.

Today Camion Transport is more present in French-speaking Switzerland, isn't it?

The reason for this is the acquisition of Cargo Domizil from SBB, together with Galliker and Planzer in 1996, amongst other things. This is a service network which allows us to rent a freight depot in Lausanne, which offered us the opportunity to take a new approach to forwarding services.

With your new buildings in Rümlang and Schaffhausen you have surely demon-



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strated adequately that logistics space is important to you.

In western Switzerland it is very hard to find space! Some time ago we leased two additional outdoor warehouses in Lausanne, but even this expansion was finally no longer enough.

What solution did you apply there?

Our new logistics centre in Vufflens-la-Ville, near Lausanne, will become operational on 11 June and will be officially inaugurated in August.

“Our strategy has always been to try and increase capacity utilisation.”

Photo: CT



CT worked under a provisional emergency roof to finish the new logistics centre on time.

What are the main advantages of your new premises?

In addition to a generous 8,600 sqm for intermodal handling, with space to handle 20 railway carriages in the rail hall, we also have a 13,600 sqm storage and picking area with 22,000 pallet slots. Acquiring this property has given us capacity reserves of between 40% to 80%.

Does more space also mean a wider range of services?

The range is wider. Garments, co-packing, oversized goods, and other things can all now be delivered on a broader scale.

What is Camion Transport’s overall market position in the French-speaking part of Switzerland after the takeover?

After taking over the new staff in Vufflens and taking into account our activities in Geneva we now have a total of about 150 employees in the region.

What about the French language skills of the employees?

We insist on management as well as all staff speaking the local language. We offer our younger colleagues from the German-speaking part of Switzerland an

exchange programme. It lasts about half a year and allows them to work and learn in one of the offices in the Romandie.

Did you redefine your strategy?

No, our position in the Suisse Romandie is an organic continuation of our business strategy. It was important to keep the local network in our own hands and expand it. 2018 started well, with more general freight and the new logistics centre near Lausanne. Our strategy has always been to try and increase capacity utilisation. Camion Transport managed to do so again this year.

Masthead

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