



Out of Africa . . . into Africa



Operating smoothly: INTRASPEED's warehouse in Kempton Park, Gauteng

INTRASPEED expands with CoreFreight

The economic meltdown of a few years ago and its subsequent aftershocks continue to impact international trade, with the knock-on effect on the business of players in the import and export sectors. Uncertainty in the traditional "first world" markets continues to offer depressed prospects for growth in these countries and so the less developed regions are attracting increased attention from companies wishing to expand. The African continent is a prime candidate for these endeavours and innovative South African companies are enthusiastically participating in the opportunities this presents.



export & import SA spoke to Tony van Aswegen, (pictured left) Managing Director of INTRASPEED South Africa (Pty) Limited (www.intraspeed.co.za) – a South African owned freight forwarding and customs clearing company with longstanding experience in Africa, and Jonathan Sims of Core Freight Systems (www.corefreight.com), with whom INTRASPEED has partnered for the provision of the IT systems used to support its expanded business initiative.

Q. I understand that you established your company in Uganda over 25 years ago, what is different now in 2011?

TvA. We have been represented in Africa for a long time. However, we have now set-up our own proprietary operations in a number of the countries we have identified as presenting significant potential to us. This extends our ability to offer customers our significant expertise with increased control over their shipments; resulting in a unique competitive advantage within their supply chain with the objective of benefiting not only our clients but ultimately their customers. Apart from South Africa INTRASPEED offices now include Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Swaziland and Tanzania.

Q. What are some of the specific challenges you have experienced?

TvA. There are the obvious generic issues such as infrastructure and local business practise; however, one of the primary initial challenges was the interaction of the existing management, based here in Johannesburg, with the staff located at each of the new offices. We want to ensure that our core values and company culture is entrenched within all our people irrespective of the country of operation, to foster a deep seated passion to deliver exceptional service whilst continuously striving to uncover opportunities to add value to our customers and their businesses. This has required a considerable investment from our senior managers in terms of time and travel but we are seeing the returns and remain committed to the exercise.



flow applied consistently across imports and exports and through the different transport modes which makes the cross-skilling of operators easier. The modern Windows-based presentation makes the training of new staff easier and is preferable to the old DOS-styled screens which previously dominated the market. We hope that all of this facilitates the adoption and use of the system so that the advantages of advanced technology are made available easily available in developing environments. Fortunately internet access has improved considerably so we are able to take advantage of the reach that this gives us, providing an advanced solution on a distributed basis.



Jonathan Sims
of Core Freight Systems

A second important aspect relates to the implementation of the internal systems required to run the business on a sustainable basis. We have learnt the benefits of instituting appropriate procedures and the underlying IT to support our operations and consequently needed to make sure that we had these in place from the outset.

Q. Why did you select Core Freight?

TvA. We have used the CoreFreight application to run our business in the Republic for a number of years. The original selection was made not only to meet our existing needs but because we believed in the growth potential of our company and did not want to be inhibited by system constraints, either in respect of the functionality delivered or the operating platform. CoreFreight has worked well for us and has given us the freedom to concentrate on our core competence, the physical movement of cargo with complete reliability for our clients, without the complication of limited functionality and distraction associated with the maintenance of sophisticated IT infrastructure. We wanted to extend this into all our offices if it could be achieved in a cost-effective manner.

Q. From a Core Freight perspective, what were some of the issues you identified as unique to this project?

JS. Firstly, we were delighted with the approach from INTRASPEED. This reflected a definite shift in understanding of the system potential to a holistic perspective where the application is to be used as a tool to manage and control pertinent aspects of the business, rather than simply viewing the software as a mechanism to produce bills of entry for SARS. The primary issue to be addressed was the provision of a solution that spanned multiple branches across multiple countries and yet gave the business owners easy access to manage the individual operations. This included providing visibility of operational and financial activity, detailed control of security access, the application of different VAT rates in each of the independent countries, seamless integration of the local file accounting with general ledger accounting conducted from head office in Johannesburg and the ability to provide comprehensive reporting for both internal and client purposes. All of this needed to be scalable to accommodate future expansion!

Q. What features of the application made it suitable?

JS. In addition to addressing the issues raised by the previous question, ease of use of the application by all users is a vital element to the success of any implementation. CoreFreight provides a logical process

Q. How important are IT systems to your business?

TvA. I think that you only find the answer to that question when the systems are unavailable, for example in a power failure, or you convert from an old to a new system and hopefully discover functionality which allows you to operate more efficiently. We have also noted that customers see advanced IT systems in use within their service providers as an essential part of their supply chain. Not only do they require this for overall visibility and status updates on the delivery process but for the provision of timeous "landed costing" output, which needs to be in machine readable format for further manipulation or electronic interface into in-house applications for warehousing or retail stock.

Q. In conclusion . . .

JS. We certainly believe that South Africa has a leading role to play in the development of the continent. I understand that the projected growth in the Eurozone is projected at 1 to 2% for the next couple of years, whereas sub-Saharan Africa is anticipated at over 5%. This is driven by more than the traditional commodity exports business and reflects internal consumption gains. Our location within the region gives individual South African business the opportunity to service this growth and at the national level leverage the flow of goods through our physical infrastructure, notwithstanding that we will need some imagination to bring our rail and port facilities up to scratch, with the obvious benefits to our local economy. But more than this we should be maximising the exercise of our African experience, intellectual capital and entrepreneurial spirit for the long-term development of the continent.

TvA. "Africa is not for sissies" is a common adage. However, active participation in the region is integral to our strategic plan. We believe that the benefits far outweigh the effort for both ourselves and our clients who share our commitment to the region. ♦