



Davor Sertić, CEO, UnitCargo

The crisis has not had a major impact on our business

Even during these times, we have initiated cooperation with new clients, which has resulted in growth of 30% in all our offices.

Interviewed by: Ana Filipović, ana@instore.rs

The international company UnitCargo, in addition to the headquarters in Vienna, has offices in Serbia - Novi Sad, Slovakia - Nové Zámky, Poland - Wrocław and Resov, Romania - Bucharest, Bulgaria - Sofia, and recently received a prestigious award from the Chamber of Commerce of the City of Vienna for being successfully in the business for 15 years. We talked with the CEO of UnitCargo Davor Sertić about the current situation in the distribution and logistics sector, as well as how UnitCargo has adapted to the new industry circumstances.

How has the coronavirus crisis changed your daily operations? How did you organize the work in this situation?

In general, the corona crisis did not have a major impact on our business, except that we reorganized our 100 workers and sent them to work from home (home office) to protect them from possible infection. In the meantime, we have launched the "Return to UnitCargo Normalization" program, with one employee returning to the office every two weeks. Moreover, our business had as much as

30% growth, as our management has worked hard to develop our business, so that we do not depend solely on customers and suppliers. We are proud to remain a reliable partner for our 1.500 customers in the metal, chemical, pharmaceutical, paper and food industries, as well as 400 suppliers from 20 different countries.

Were there any changes in the demands of your clients, compared to the time before the outbreak of the pandemic, and what are the differences?

There were changes only in terms of quantity when ordering. Clients from the automotive industry had almost no loads, but the need for clients from the paper and food industries, in turn, doubled. Thus, even during these times, we have started cooperation with new clients, achieving a 30% increase in all our branch offices: Slovakia, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia and Austria.

The state of emergency in Serbia has been lifted, but emergency measures are still in force. Has this caused any new changes in your business and which ones?

Everything is going as well as before - without significant improvements, but also without decline. Consumption is rising and that is good for all of us.

What difficulties did you encounter in carrying out your regular transport and logistics activities during this period, and how did you overcome them?

We have had, and still have, difficulties with long waits at border crossings, which directly affects the transport deadline, as well as the prices. At the same time, the new price of diesel fuel emerged, which led to numerous discussions with customers. As a result, our Key Account and Sales managers were under maximum pressure and were contacted more than usual.

Even before the crisis began, distribution and logistics faced the problem of labor shortages. Have you had such problems?

We did not have such problems, except that our marketing activities were reduced to a minimum, and we successfully replaced them with Key Account activities and customer care.

All over the world, your industry is facing similar challenges. Road transport in Europe has been in a rather difficult situation in recent weeks, and some analysts see the answer to this challenge in greater reliance on intermodal transport. What is your opinion?

We did not face this challenge, because truck transport within Europe is the core of our business; it has been and remains a great need for it throughout Europe - to accommodate many countries and their populations. At the same time, the driver is in the safest and safest workplace in Europe in his truck cabin, as long as he does not have to leave the cabin by force of circumstances.

About a month ago, the implementation of the "green corridor" system started at certain border crossings within the CEFTA region. Does this make business easier for you and in what way?

At the very beginning of the crisis, we advocated for the "green corridor", because trucks, as mentioned above, had waited at border crossings for up to 72 hours, which caused security assurances. Some truck drivers were even sent to quarantine, which, however, was not necessary. We can all benefit from the "green corridor", so that road traffic and road transport can flow throughout Europe without the long waiting periods. This is certainly an absolute advantage for the core of our business.

Would it be significant for your business if the Western Balkans were to be included in the system of "green corridors" of the European Union, which facilitates and accelerates the transport of goods?

This is certainly desirable and another sign of approaching Europe. It would be a profit, above all, for import and export companies in the Balkans, since lately it is a trend among companies to decide to set up their production in Europe instead of Asia, in order to ensure for the location, but also to shorten the delivery time. Right now, in times of crisis, it has been shown how important the location of production is. In other words, not all of us depend on the production over in Asia, or the problems with procurement and delivery.

"We can all benefit from the "green corridor", so that road traffic and road transport can flow throughout Europe without the long waiting periods. This is certainly an absolute advantage for the core of our business."

Various agencies and consulting firms recommend companies to build a humane and solidary relationship with their consumers. How important is this for your company?

Communication has always been one of our most important values upon which the UnitCargo management was founded. This is also essential for each of our new employees. It is extremely important to communicate with all stakeholders in our business. Furthermore, clearer communication is important for the future, in order to achieve transparency. This created a new kind of energy, which provided for all employees a new motivational dimension and served as a spark plug.

How do you think distribution and logistics will continue to develop after the end of the pandemic? What impact will this crisis have on further development?

Our existing clients have found themselves in different situations during these times of crisis. Thanks to our activities and measures taken in sales, we've gained 20% of new clients, which should double our business even after the crisis. This was possible exclusively due to our own capital, as well as the suppliers who made timely payments during the crisis and remained by our side. It is these indicators that strengthen our mutual trust and partnership and contribute to all of us coming out of this crisis even stronger than before! Unfortunately, companies that withdrew during the crisis will not have the expected growth after the crisis.