Is transport and tech the perfect marriage?

By Kehad Snydewe

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When thinking of moving packages, people, mail and goods, we automatically think of modes of transportation. Whether it is large ships, airplanes, trucks, trains, motors and mopeds, there are many different ways of shifting freight.

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One thing the general public probably don't immediately think of, but should, is the technology supporting the transport industry. Transportation in the modern global village cannot exist without technology at its very foundation. Just one example from one of the world's biggest transporters should amply demonstrate this.

UPS, the parcel and package company have used intricate mathematical models to analyse the routes their delivery trucks take, so that they can optimise the journeys of the drivers. This, however, does not always mean that the driver takes the shortest route. They have moved away from trying to find the shortest route and look at other criteria to optimise the journey.

One method is to try and avoid turning through oncoming traffic at a junction. This means that in countries where we drive on the left, like Namibia, we avoid right-turns and in the USA, where they drive on the right, they avoid left turns.

This seems to go against common sense, but there's a very good reason for doing this, even if it sometimes means going in

the opposite direction of the final destination. They do this as it reduces the chances of an accident and cuts delays caused by waiting for a gap in the traffic, which also wastes fuel.

Management of transport

As a result, the company has saved 50 million litres less fuel, emits 20,000 tonnes less CO2 and delivers 350,000 more packages every year. The efficiency of planning routes with its navigation software has even helped UPS cut the number of trucks it uses by 1,100, bringing down the company's total distance travelled by more than 45 million km per year – despite the longer routes. The organisation uses what is known as Transport Management Solutioning (TMS).

No professional transport or logistics company would operate without TMS software. It's not just UPS, but shipping companies, ride-hailing apps as well as food delivery services. They all use and benefit from TMS software in one way or another.

This software assists with common activities such as; route planning and optimisation, load optimisation, execution, freight audit and payment, shipyard/harbour management, advanced shipping, order visibility and carrier management.

Imagine simply having to keep track of all the containers at a large port like Walvis Bay, only software can do this efficiently. Where did the container come from, why is it here, what's inside the container and where and when is the container shipping out again? When it comes to transport information and data is king.

Insightful data

Data and its analysis give great insights into the logistics, using technology to analyse data, the logistics sector can improve efficiency, bring down costs and help companies to grow by streamlining their supply chains. As profit margins become thinner by the day and having a competitive edge is the only way to stay ahead and stay in business, using tech just makes sense.

Big Data and Business Intelligence are what is now fuelling and changing every business and changing the way in which whole industries operate. It will change business right here in Namibia.

We cannot afford to be slow on the uptake and implementation of TMS software and making the transport sector more effective and efficient and thereby more competitive. Tailored solutions for the sector can and will keep Namibia moving. As a pillar of Namibia's economy, the transportation sector needs to run optimally, so that the economy can benefit and run optimally as well.

Investing in tech will earn itself back manifold in fuel savings, streamlined processes and able to handle more freight and eliminating costly mistakes.

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