



INTERVIEW

FREIGHT THAT KEEPS THE CITY BREATHING

ALEXANDRU PANAIT, MAINFREIGHT

1. At the beginning of this year you were announcing a two digit increase of the business, for the previous fiscal year. How did 2020 continue for Mainfreight, once the pandemic was declared? And what are your expectations or forecasts for the end of this year?
2020 treated us no different than the rest of the world and because we are active in several market sectors we have seen all range of impacts, from drastic volumes cut to sky high demand. Overall, we are slightly behind last year's figures in terms of revenue and the biggest impact is coming from our division that takes care of Oil & Gas customers. When we leave this impact aside, we are actually ahead of last year. Seeing this positive trend, we are confident that we can reduce to a minimum the gap between this year's figures and 2019 if not even match them.

2. Mainfreight is part of a multinational company. How was the evolution trend of the company during the corona crisis at international level?
At Mainfreight, we have an internal motivational saying that says "we don't do crisis" and this is translated in the mindset of all our team members. Indeed the first months of lockdown have shown a

downturn in most of our businesses worldwide, but once we have understood the "new normal" we have been looking for opportunities and at this moment there are regions of the world which are doing better than pre-pandemic numbers.

3. What changes, if any, did you notice in your corporate clients' behavior? How did the crisis impact your commercial relationships?
Just like ourselves most of our customers have put a stronger focus on costing structure and potential efficiencies in order to bring down the unnecessary costs. For sure this is not something new, but the level of details definitely is. On the other hand, most of our discussions have moved from face to face to phone and video platforms and this has increased the need to keep our partners informed regarding our services and our company. For this reason we have started a "newsletter" type campaign where we have been informing our customers about specific topics and our reactions to the new operating conditions.

4. Clearly, we are still crossing a period full of challenges and changes. How do you prepare for a permanent shift in working relationships? What long-term measures have you

The "medical" safety is undoubtedly the number one priority, just like in our personal lives, all other aspects become irrelevant when our health is at risk.

The first months of lockdown have shown a downturn in most of our businesses worldwide, but once we have understood the “new normal” we have been looking for opportunities

planned for guaranteeing the safety of your employees (both in medical and economical terms)?

The “medical” safety is undoubtedly the number one priority, just like in our personal lives, all other aspects become irrelevant when our health is at risk. Therefore, besides the strict implementation of the legal requirements we have nearly doubled the office space used by our team members (e.g. by using the meeting rooms left with no use) and we have given the option and strongly encouraged our team members to work from home, where possible. In addition, we are currently analyzing the possibilities to enhance our office’s climate control system with an air disinfection purifier.

With regards to our team economical stability I have always been the adopter of the philosophy that the success should not be a purpose on its own, but rather the logical consequence of doing the right things and I follow the same principle in the current situation also. In other words we, as a team, just focus on doing the right things to grab the opportunities available in such uncertain situations and the security of our team is well taken care of by itself.

5. Which are the top 5 priorities on your agenda today? Did this sanitary crisis shift your business strategy or priorities in any way?

As previously mentioned, the safety of our team tops the list and for the rest I would just highlight them in random order:

- Keeping a good balance in the mindset of our teams between safety precautions and business sanity
- One business priority, which has been in the back of our minds for a long time, is to focus on “freight that keeps the city breathing”. This focus has helped us sail through the difficult lockdown period and for sure will remain in the top of sales team strategies.
- Just like the previous point, another topic that has received additional attention from our side is the development of our domestic network - we have

reached a volume level in our distribution network that asks for further development in the country.

- One aspect that has indeed changed in our priorities is the focus on the medical supplies market and recently we have managed to sign collaboration contracts with several players in the industry.

6. A crisis always comes with challenges, but also with opportunities. Which has been the biggest challenge for you over this period and what opportunities has this “new normal” brought for your business?

Without any doubt, the biggest challenge I had been faced with in the past 6 months was to keep my team informed about the general situations and the risks involved from a medical perspective and in the same time generate a climate of trust and “normality” that will allow them to perform at their best. In terms of opportunities, they haven’t ceased to appear and because of the drop in the international freight available we have increased our focus on the domestic market and it payed off. Since the beginning of this year we have managed to sign a significant amount of medium and large accounts that have trusted Mainfreight to distribute their freight in the country.

7. From your experience, what’s your „Focus on ...“ advice for the managers of local companies during this challenged period?

To start with, I do not consider myself as the person to give “management advices” I simply have too much still to learn on these aspects. What I can say is simply what helped me in this journey. Regardless of the context, but especially in these times of physical distance, I mainly “Focus on my team” and if I take good care of them, then it is sure thing that they will take care of our business and together we can find a way through the dark days. Several important elements to mention are the importance of proper recruitment, complementary skills in the team and TRUST!