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MARCH 2026

Welcome to Singapore!



An amazing event as WCAworld members' resilience on full show

WCAworld members showcased their resilience, with more than 4,000 passing through the doors of the Sands Expo & Convention Centre at Singapore's Marina Bay Sands for the 2026 WCA Worldwide Conference.

With further conflict breaking out in the Middle East just a week before the Conference was due to start there had been concern it could cause major issues for the show's fifteenth iteration. But, despite the news that several hundred members could not make it, late changes of plans and travel ensured over 4,000 still made it.

"We made it," one member from

Myanmar told Voice of the Independent (VOTI) as he pointed out across the heaving crowd at the event's opening night cocktail party. A member who had participated in the annual golf tournament was looking forward to kicking back and relaxing following the last-minute scare. A member from India said that they had expected to fly via Dubai with Emirates, "but when they became not an option we didn't hesitate," finding a route via Europe, adding "there was no way we would miss it".

Chief executive officer of WCAworld, Dan March, said that

while full numbers had not yet been gathered, the expectation was that around 90 per cent of attendees had found a way to make the event.

"It is amazing that members responded so quickly to such a challenging and uncertain situation," said March. "Flights were rebooked, schedules changed, and meetings re-arranged, but in the end the resilience and fortitude of members really shone through."

Asked how the show was going midway through its first day a member from Turkey said that having attended the preceding 12



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shows, they knew they could not miss it.

"Already we have had an incredibly productive morning, with lots of new associations made and we feel optimistic about the way business is developing this year," they added. "That's the case even if we do find ourselves contending with conflict to our north (Ukraine) and now our south (Iran)."

With the second day coming to a close, the best that the forwarding sector has to offer were convening for the annual awards ceremony (full winner details on page six). And with a host of one-on-one meetings, special guest speakers, and a fine wine gathering to follow, not to mention the famed WCAworld Football Tournament, there remained a lot for attendees to get their teeth into.

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Sights of Singapore

Members enjoyed an action-packed day enjoying some of the many sights and attractions of Singapore during the full-day tour. Delegates posed with some of the most famous faces in history, albeit in wax, at Madame Tussaud's Singapore, arriving by cable car. Other attractions included the Spirit of Singapore boat ride and access to the Ultimate Film Star Experience. And adrenaline levels were on the rise soon after a leisurely buffet lunch as brave members enjoyed the famous Luge and Sky Ride on a scenic adventure above the tropical forest, with a magnificent bird's eye view of Singapore's city skyline from the iconic Sentosa Island.



WCA Golf tournament

A total of 88 golfers teed off at the Orchid Country Club for the WCAworld 2026 Golf Tournament. The day started early with a breakfast on the go, followed by many birdies and pars concluding with a lunch and drinks. The teams competed for the coveted WCA Happy Hacker award with the winners: Robin Stenmark, Max Waldes and Johan Andersson taking the prize. A special thanks to the sponsors of the tournament, Compliant Business Processing and Cross Freight.



The Singapore swing

The WCA Worldwide Conference 2026 swung into life as thousands of forwarders from around the world enjoyed drinks and food during a joyful reconnection at the annual Cocktail night. Despite the challenges posed by conflict in the Middle East members flooded to Singapore determined to make the most of the most important networking conference of the year.



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Market knowledge key as new lanes emerge

OVER the past 12 to 18 months, Voice of the Independent (VOTI) has witnessed a growth in what forwarders have referred to as “non-traditional trade lanes”. When these first started to pop up – for instance with increased volumes moving between Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa – it appeared as though they would provide a curio until the global trading order reverted to standard operation procedure. Not so. And it seems to be the case that there are a number of these new trades.

Speaking to Voice of the Independent (VOTI) ahead of the WCAworld Conference, chief executive of QCS Stephan Haltmayer notes that the past year has witnessed the fixing of new trades lanes. “We clearly see that non-traditional trade lanes are no longer a temporary phenomenon,” Haltmayer says when asked about the situation. QCS, like others, has observed a notable increase in activity on routes it would have previously considered niche.

“This includes growing

volumes between parts of Southeast Asia and the Middle East, as well as increased project and industrial cargo flows between Eastern Europe and regions in Central Asia,” says Haltmayer. “We are also seeing more complex multi-leg routings becoming the norm, as customers look for alternatives to the traditional, congested gateways.”

“Flexibility, local market knowledge, and strong relationships remain the key success factors”

As far as strategy goes, these shifting patterns are obviously having an influence. But Haltmayer says that from QCS’ perspective it is imperative not to simply focus on the “single ‘new’ lane” that may pop up. Instead, he says, the company strategy is one that is based around building strong regional expertise and reliable partner networks. Taking such an approach allows QCS to support customers wherever new trade flows emerge.

“Flexibility, local market knowledge, and strong relationships remain the key success factors in this evolving trade environment,” Haltmayer adds.

Even so, he cannot say he

has not been surprised by the shifting shape of global trade flows. Indeed, he tells VOTI that the speed at which certain trade patterns are shifting caught QCS a little off guard, noting that it has also affected the way the company’s customers behave.

“We are seeing customers becoming more flexible and pragmatic in their sourcing strategies, with supply chains becoming more diversified and less dependent on single regions,” he continues. “This creates new opportunities but also requires forwarders to be more adaptable and responsive than ever before.”

As to what sectors are proving a boom at the moment, Haltmayer says that automotive-related supply chains, industrial projects, and time-critical shipments, are continuing to supply QCS with strong demand. On the time-critical front, he adds that this is the case “especially where supply chains remain fragile”. Strong demand notwithstanding, he points out that forwarders and their customers are now contending with increasingly complex compliance and regulatory requirements.

“ESG-related reporting, security regulations, and customs requirements are evolving rapidly,” Haltmayer says. “While none of these developments are

unexpected, the speed at which regulatory complexity increases is something the industry needs to actively manage to avoid becoming a bottleneck for global trade.”

And given the challenging conditions of last year, avoiding bottlenecks will be high up the list for global supply chains this year. As Haltmayer himself notes, “the entire forwarding industry” faced serious struggles over the 12 months of 2025. Asked how he felt QCS contended with those challenges, he says that while the company “felt that pressure as well,” he was left overall pleased by the way the team dealt with it. Their ability to handle the stress allowed QCS to “overall” meet the expectations it had set itself for the year. He caveats with “overall” on the basis that those expectations were not met across all the markets the company is active in, nor across all the product lines it works in. Rather, he says expectations were met in



Stephan Haltmayer
QCS

terms of stability, resilience, and continued development of the QCS network.

“The market environment remained volatile, with ongoing geopolitical tensions, capacity fluctuations in air freight, and cost pressure across supply chains,” he adds. “Under these conditions, maintaining service quality and customer trust was already a success. We focused strongly on operational excellence, strengthening our local teams, and further digitalizing internal processes to become more efficient and transparent for our customers.”

If the start of 2026 is anything to go by, QCS have seemingly got the beating of both the issues of last year and the increased complexity

surrounding compliance and regulations. Asked how he feels about the trajectory of the year two months in, Haltmayer says that it has “started with cautious optimism”. That optimism has been propelled by a gradual stabilisation in the company’s volumes, with signs that its customers are engaging in a healthier level of planning to their supply chains. However, he is quick to caution that QCS is not looking at 2026 as a year of “explosive growth” instead, he says, the focus is very much on “sustainable growth”.

“This means expanding selected trade lanes, further investing in our people, and continuing to position QCS as a strong, independent alternative in the global forwarding landscape,” Haltmayer says.

Translog Overseas ready for India’s “boom years”!

“INDIA!” founder and chief executive officer of Translog Overseas Justo Marmol tells Voice of the Independent (VOTI) when asked where the growth opportunities are for European logistics companies.

“In the market right now, the most important place to be is India,” Marmol continues. “You want to be there for multiple reasons. Firstly, there is the growth – seven to eight per cent a year – then there’s the size of the population, 1.5 billion people and counting.”

Marmol says these factors mean that it is a country in need of everything. For Europe, it is also a country that has been largely overlooked – “excluding the UK, of course”. While others may have overlooked it, Translog has had operations in India for more than a decade now, with Marmol considering it

one of the company’s most important.

“We are moving machinery and finished products from Spain to India,” he says. “It is a country that needs high-tech goods, and this is something we have been providing them, sending some 240 tonnes by air each month with a further 600 to 700 teu moving monthly by ocean.”

Long-term, Marmol expects those volumes will increase substantially after the EU and India concluded almost 20 years of negotiations with the news that the pair had entered into free trade agreement. Covering a market of more than two billion people, the deal will cut some tariffs on some 90 per cent of goods.

“This market can only grow,” Marmol continues. “From Spain, we have already seen a lot of growth. Last year Spanish export volumes to India were up 14 per cent. And the year before that they were up 12 per cent. There is a question mark as to how much it will grow but one thing I feel confident saying is that it will be double-digit growth for sure.”

Having built up a reputation in the country after a decade working there, Marmol believes that Translog is very well positioned to tap into this.

“India is going to be booming over the coming years, and we are ready,” he adds.



JUSTO MARMOL
Translog Overseas

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AFRICA: Derek Holmes and Ernest Mokoena from Exclusive Logistics Solutions collect the trophy for the African best partner



HALL OF FAME: Edward Zarach of Zarach Logistics picks up the prestigious hall of fame award. Ed played a pivotal role in the original establishment and growth of the network and has been a close friend of WCA and a great member since.



WINNER: Kevin Addison and Mahsa Pedrami collect the top agent award

WCA Best Partner Awards 2025		
Region	Winner	Runners Up
Africa	Exclusive Logistics Solutions	DN Freight Avion International Company Sarl
Asia & Oceania	1UP CARGO	AOF CARGO LOGISTICS CO., LTD ACE Global Logistics
Mainland China	Best Services International Freight Ltd.	Sinotech Logistics Co., Ltd. Everokgroup International Forwarding Co., Ltd.
Europe	Unsworth UK Ltd.	Crasta & C. Srl QCS-Quick Cargo Service GmbH
India Sub Continent	Globus Transitos Pvt. Ltd.	Skyways Air Services Limited La Freightlift Pvt. Ltd.
Latin America	DC Logistics Brasil	Access Global Logistics ILS Cargo Transportes Internacionais Ltda
Middle East	EMIRATES Logistics LLC	MRC Shipping & Logistics LLC "AL RYAN" FREIGHT LLC
North America	Worldwide Logistic Partners Inc.	BTX Global Logistics Interworld Freight Inc.
TOP AGENT 2025	1UP CARGO	



EUROPE: Unsworth UK is the winner with Alin Dincu and Thomas Kuehn collecting the award



LATIN AMERICA: Ivo Mafra collects the award for DC Logistics Brasil

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NORTH AMERICA: Worldwide Logistic Partners take the award with Mitch Kamdar, Quyen Le and Ajay Pillai picking up the trophy



MAINLAND CHINA: Best Services International's Emmet Zhang and Jay Ning collect the award



INDIAN SUB CONTINENT: Aditya Modi, Rakesh Modi, Sameer Jain and Rishi Jain pick up the trophy for Globus Transitos



ASIA & OCEANIA: 1UP CARGO winning their first award of the evening



MIDDLE EAST: Anjali Ramchandani from EMIRATES Logistics collects the trophy

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“Speed of change” is the only story in town

ASK Marinair’s chief executive Pavlos Poutos about the present state of play in global supply chains and he tells you there is just one story worth focusing on right now: “the speed of change”. For Poutos, who is speaking to Voice of the Independent (VOTI) in the build-up to 2026’s WCA Worldwide Conference in Singapore, the change that the market is undergoing is more definable that it had been, even if the way it is changing has been to some extent recognisable for several years now.

“Rates and surcharges move faster than they did even 12 to 18 months ago, and the market is segmenting more clearly,” Poutos tells VOTI. “Freighter capacity is increasingly pulled toward higher-value, time-critical cargo, while standard volumes flow

through bellyhold and multimodal solutions. That pushes forwarders to look beyond price and build solutions that remain stable in real operating conditions – with reliable handoffs, backup routings and clear visibility.”

That change, Poutos says, can also be spotted in what is happening on the regulatory side of things. Echoing others VOTI has spoken with – just going to show how much more forwarders are being left to think these things through – he says that the major change is not, as had historically been the case, one, single rule change coming through. Instead, Poutos says, what is happening is that there has been a broader trend toward tighter compliance. This trend brings with it higher documentation discipline

across borders. For forwarders operating in a rapidly evolving market, this only adds to the workload, affecting how networks are planned. They must take into account the costs associated with exceptions to any rules, changing customs processes, data quality expectations, and amended screening requirements.

“This is why we have prioritised digital execution through MyMCS and our cloud-based TMS, supporting paperless workflows, faster quoting, track and trace and stronger document control,” says Poutos. “Visibility is not a slogan for us. It is intervention speed.”

Both those platforms supported the company in landing a silver award at 2025’s Supply Chain & Logistics Awards in the Best Digital Transformation 2025

category. Poutos said that the recognition spoke to advances “powered by the two core systems” – MyMCS and its cloud-based TMS. The former provides customers with real-time rates, instant comparison of logistics options, and online booking optionality while its TMS supplies live shipment tracking, automated updates, and immediate access to all shipping documents. Commenting on its win, the company noted that the recognition served to reaffirm its “commitment to delivering modern, data-driven, and customer-centric freight forwarding, combining global reach with transparent and reliable operational performance”. It is perhaps for this reason that Marinair has managed to succeed as far as meeting its ambitions over the past 12 months have gone.



PAVLOS POUTOS
Marinair

“2025 was a strong year for Marinair, broadly in line with, and in some areas ahead of, what we expected,” Poutos says. “We stayed focused on two priorities: reliable execution and digital tools that make forwarding faster, clearer and more predictable. That approach was recognised at the Supply Chain & Logistics Awards 2025 where we received Gold for Best Freight Forwarders and Silver for Best Digital Transformation.”

That second, and arguably bigger, gong and the Supply Chain & Logistics Awards saw Marinair recognised for its global expansion, operational reliability and the rapid progress it has made in digital modernisation. In particular, the awards body noted the company’s “strong presence in key international markets”. Together with its Athens-headquarters, it has offices in China, Hong Kong, India, and the Netherlands, and is supported by partners in 190 countries. It, the company said, served to prove that it provided “consistent performance across air, sea, and road freight, underpinned by structured processes and high operational standards. Poutos adds: “This recognition matters to us because it reflects practical value in daily operations: speed, transparency and control.” All of which are likely proving important in what he describes as the more intense and less predictable start to 2026.

“Costs are not only higher,” Poutos continues. “They are harder to plan for, because fuel, ground handling and airport/terminal charges, as well as labour constraints, can shift at the same time. For the year ahead, our priority is to protect outcomes for customers through tighter planning, more routing options alongside stronger end-to-end visibility. Demand looks resilient, but reliability will

depend more than ever on disciplined capacity planning and the ability to adapt quickly when conditions shift.”

That swirling start to the year has only compounded Poutos’ conviction that there are “real shifts” in trade flows. This, he continues, has been particularly true for

Southeast Asia

amidst what he describes as “the broader reconfiguration of sourcing and distribution”. In practice, he notes that this is driving more multi-gateway strategies and more demand for flexible routing, rather than reliance on a single default

hub – echoing the assertions of others.

“From our side, we’re not chasing ‘new lanes’ as a headline,” Poutos says. “Rather, we’re building an operating setup that can support trade lanes as they evolve, including cross-trade and alternative routings, while maintaining control over execution. What is different today is that ‘new lanes’ are often not a single route, but a different routing architecture. Customers increasingly ask for options that can flex between gateways and modes, so the service remains stable when conditions change.”

If the routes and modes are open to change, the one area customers are not looking for change concerns forwarders’ discipline and capacity to execute. Both matter more than price, Poutos says, at least this is true of those markets that are providing forwarders with the strongest long-term demand.

“Healthcare and pharmaceutical shipments are a good example: the tolerances are tight, the cost of exception is high, and reliability is non-negotiable,” Poutos concludes. “The same applies to project cargo and time-critical shipments, where proactive planning, reliable handoffs and real-time visibility make the difference.”

“Rates and surcharges move faster than they did even 12 to 18 months ago”

Despite the present chaos, Middle East has momentum

DESPITE the chaos being wrought by the war in Iran, SME forwarders remain cautiously optimistic of the growth opportunities presenting themselves in the Middle East. Speaking to Voice of the Independent (VOTI) on the sidelines of 2026’s WCA Worldwide Conference in Singapore, chief executive and chair of JTM Carlos Magalhães highlights the region as offering great potential for the future.

“Of course, the present situation is creating some doubts for the region,” Magalhães tells VOTI. “But I look at the Middle East and see it as a place where we really can see some more growth. It has a lot of opportunities and the opportunities there are better than those we are seeing in many of the other regions.”

For Magalhães part of the benefit the Middle East offers is that the opportunity is not confined to one vertical or product type. JTM has built a

reputation for handling all sorts of shipments from general cargo to project cargoes, to time critical. And it is in this last vertical that he sees particularly big opportunities.

“There is a lot of aerospace industry demand in the Middle East, and we are seeing a lot of shipments in this area,” he continues. “You have to remember there is logistics in everything and so we find work. Of note for the Middle East, however, has been the volume growth, for instance, in sending aircraft parts – wings for instance – from the US to the UAE. It goes unsaid that the conflict is undoubtedly having an impact on this but that is our role, to find a way around the chaos, and that is precisely what we are doing.”

It helps that JTM has one of its core offices in Saudi Arabia to help navigate – and it also helps, Magalhães notes, being a member of the WCA. Not only does the company itself have a body of strong relationships across the region but having that capacity to call on other members has played no small part in offsetting the dilemmas being thrown into the global supply chain.

Magalhães says: “WCA is such a good platform to be a part of, because it allows me to tell our customers that when it comes to logistics, we have coverage worldwide covered. And it also means that we have a lot of possibilities, and we are able to check with WCA partners what the best ways are to sort out the kinds of problems that we, and forwarders more generally,

are contending with.”

Together with the Middle East, Magalhães sees opportunities for growth across JTM’s major markets. But he takes some time to highlight the prospects in Latin America. Already boasting strong business links in Brazil, and increasing opportunities in South American giant, Magalhães sees growth prospects developing elsewhere.

“Argentina is an area where we are seeing volumes and interest from potential customers increase,” he adds. “It seems like the country is making things easier for businesses to operate, and that is certainly helping us develop links there.”

Nor is Magalhães alone in highlighting opportunities in South America. A number of other WCA members have talked up their increasing activities across the continent. And those activities are not limited to specific lanes. There have been reports of growth with North America, Europe, Asia, and Africa – which is seemingly capitalising on increasing numbers of educated young people, its need to improvise, and the vast array of raw materials beneath the continent’s feet.

“Even the regulations in South America are improving,” Magalhães adds. “These changes may be happening at a faster pace in the likes of Brazil and Argentina, but we are seeing developments and improvements everywhere, even in those countries that we may typically consider to have been ‘old fashioned’

“Of course, the present situation is creating some doubts for the region”



CARLOS MAGALHÃES
JTM

Independence is our superpower

FOR the family at the centre of GROUP7 the present market is undergoing something of a transitional moment. Speaking to Voice of the Independent (VOTI) the founder and managing director of the German firm, Günther Jocher, alongside his son and daughter, Daniel and Julia (both GROUP7 project managers) note an increasing dearth of well-known logistics providers. They say these bigger names are simply “disappearing” from the market or finding that they are merging into ever larger companies.

Against the consolidation, the Jochers also express concern that “independent logistics providers are becoming increasingly rare”. Does this leave them experiencing restless nights? Seemingly not. As they state, being “future-driven, privately-owned and a family-led company,” GROUP7 follows a different philosophy of growth.

“Responsibility to clients, partners and employees is one of the core values of GROUP7, honouring relationships that have taken many years to build and sustain,” says Günther in the build-up to both the 2026 WCA Worldwide Conference and the celebration of the company’s twentieth anniversary on the German logistics scene. Two decades in and the Jochers do not seem to be slowing down. The trio note that they “continue to look to the future of the company’s organic growth”. To ensure they are able to achieve this, they point to the essentials of modern supply chains, “flexibility and integration,” noting that GROUP7’s service portfolio to best meet the demands of partners and customers.

These demands mean being aware of the way not only their partners work but the different ways the modes work. For instance, with airfreight, what matters most is speed and reliability. And GROUP7 utilises the air for servicing the needs of customers with time-critical shipments, high-value goods – be it pharmaceuticals, temperature-sensitive cargo, or anything else that needs to reach destination rapidly.

“GROUP7 operates with precision and responsiveness,” the company says. “The ability to react quickly to disruptions such as geopolitical shifts, or capacity bottlenecks is where independent decision-making becomes a strategic advantage.”

On the ocean side, the focus moves from speed of delivery to efficiency, global reach, and intelligent consolidation. This can mean handling full containers worth of goods, to less than container load shipments, project cargo, or, in some cases, being involved in relocating entire factories. Whatever the case GROUP7 ensures that these needs are met, coordinating international flows with a strong partner network worldwide. Given the present market backdrop and the shift that is occurring in global trade patterns, Günther points out that flexibility and strong carrier relationships continue to remain more important than ever.

Alongside air and ocean, GROUP7 also boasts a comprehensive road freight network. And it is a network the company is keen to stress plays a very important role in its service portfolio. While Europe-wide, GROUP7’s road freight operations extend beyond the European continent, stretching down into North Africa to meet customers’ growing demand and the operational shifts to these nearshoring locations.

“From major ports to inland destinations, GROUP7 manages complex distribution flows with reliability and transparency,” the company notes.

Together with its transport services, GROUP7 is also responsible for operating several company-owned logistics facilities across Germany. Providing warehousing, value-added services, digital integration, and smart inventory management these facilities are considered by the company to be essential pillars of modern supply chains. And this area of growth shows no sign of slowing, with expansion very much always on the table – where it makes strategic sense.

Most recent in this growth strategy has been the expansion of the company’s headquarters in Munich. This, the Jochers say, perfectly reflects the company’s future-driven approach. Offering more than an office building, the Munich headquarters is considered a statement that symbolises the company’s long-term commitment, sustainable growth, and its confidence to invest in the future. And this brings us back to the concerns Günther raised earlier.

It remains the case that the logistics industry’s wave of company-acquisitions is ongoing, as the larger corporation buy out their small and medium sized competitors. Much of this is being undertaken to offer the larger corporations a quick route to break into new markets. But for GROUP7, while giving those larger businesses a quick route to market, this strategy often comes at the cost of reduced flexibility, slower decision-making, and a shift in priorities from partnership to shareholder returns.

Instead, as with the WCA membership at large, GROUP7 is determined to retain its independence on the basis that independence allows for long-term partnerships instead of short-term profit. The family see it as a means for enabling management to prioritise relationships with customers, carriers, and employees. And investments in infrastructure, technology,

and people can be centred at the company’s core. “For many customers, this stability is highly important”, says Daniel Jocher. “They seek partners who will still be there in years to come and who understand their business deeply and grow alongside them. In a market increasingly dominated by global players, continuity becomes a competitive advantage”.

Together with continuity, GROUP7 also stresses that it operates under strict quality and security standards, including GDP (Good Distribution Practice) for pharmaceutical logistics. This ensures that temperature-sensitive and healthcare-related products are transported under validated and controlled conditions. Further to which, it also holds several ISO certifications. These, the company says, prove GROUP7’s dedication to quality management, environmental responsibility, and cyber security. Further to which, the standards assure partners that processes are transparent, continuously improved, and externally audited.

“Global supply chains are becoming more complex every day”

“Global supply chains are becoming more complex every day,” says Julia Jocher. “Geopolitical uncertainties, bottlenecks, and environmental

challenges require flexibility and fast decisions. GROUP7 demonstrates that a family-owned logistics provider can compete successfully on an international stage without sacrificing its values.”

In a market increasingly shaped by changes, the company says that remaining independent is a deliberate strategic act. It is a commitment to partners, customers and to future generations.



Günther Jocher, alongside his son and daughter, Daniel and Julia GROUP7

“For many customers, this stability is highly important”

“Global supply chains are becoming more complex every day”



Most recent in this growth strategy has been the expansion of the company’s headquarters in Munich, considered to “symbolise” GROUP7’s long-term commitment

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Focus ON

WCA Academy



Making the most of the Conference

"IT has been another amazing year," WCAworld Academy manager Leah McKenna tells Voice of the Independent (VOTI) amidst the hustle and bustle of the WCA Worldwide Conference's training programme. For McKenna this year's programme has

proved particularly special, as it welcomed the first classrooms for the "Networking, Selling, and Thriving at the WCA Worldwide Conference" course.

Asked where the course originated, McKenna tells VOTI that it essentially came

from her. Run by former forwarder and WCA member, Alex Aucamp – who has turned his hand to teaching logistics personnel how to improve their sales technique – the course is built around "pitching without pitching".

One of those in attendance tells VOTI: "It is essentially about improving relationship-building skills in what is a very short and focused environment of the Conference. It seems like the sort of thing that should just come naturally but when you're speaking to people from all over the world there are important cultural differences to bear in mind and it is also so easy to ramble, so having this structure that Alex is providing I think is really going to help."

"We really designed this for new members," McKenna says, pointing out that while lots of members will have been to conferences before – both WCA and otherwise – the sheer scale of the WCA Worldwide Conference often catches people off guard. "There's 5,000 people here," she points out. And it feels massive. The scale of it only further eats away at your time. Asked how their schedule looks, another attendee says "packed".

"What we have really sought to focus on when building this course is creating a structured process to get the most out of the conference," Aucamp tells VOTI. "So, bearing in mind we have forwarders from all four corners of the globe here, we have to take culture into account. That means

even the little things. To plan for this, we have created a set of questions that help attendees build a picture of those they are speaking to. This in turn builds layers of focus that help them to get out of an interaction what they wish to achieve."

And returning to that issue of culture, he points to the different ways people like to begin these sorts of conversations in different countries. With 22 participants in the first class of the morning and 40 in the later session, attendees themselves pitch in with this.

"For instance, if you're speaking to an American, they like to get straight down to business," one says, another adding "and some countries they want the detail up front". Another points out that "in China, these sorts of business relationships begin with the sharing of business cards".

Of course, Aucamp is aware that it is not really possible to memorise the way 200-plus cultures begin business proceedings, nor is that on the agenda. Instead, he says, the key is to recognise that these differences do exist and to be ready for them.

"Your advantage is your adaptability," he continues. This is what makes it possible to operate in a global setting because to operate in a global setting requires you to be aware of not only these differences but that there are differences more generally."

Adaptability is important beyond the cultural knowledge too. But Aucamp's course sees this within the structure it seeks to build in attendees minds. The Conference may bill the sessions as "networking" but Aucamp wishes to differentiate between "networking" and what he believes the course attendees are hoping to achieve: "strategic relationship building".



ALEX AUCAMP

"A networking session will involve exchanging cards, there will be polite conversation, perhaps it ends with a 'let's stay in touch,'" he says. "From that you have got the hope that maybe something will come of it. Strategic relationship building is premised on what we are teaching, which is defining objectives – for

instance, asking about the trade lanes they operate on, or where their growth priorities are so you can then share where you might align with them. By engaging with members through the structure this class provides, mean that next steps can be defined – this could be through a test shipments, agreement on a follow-up call, maybe a rate exchange or a strategic

introduction. But what you have from this is not just hope, it is momentum."

So, how well does he think the class has gone? "Well," he says, pointing out that he had attendees trialling the structure on one another and realised that they were already beginning to sell to one another.

McKenna adds: "Alex called up to ask about sales training for members and I realised that one area where we could really help was with the Conference itself. It can be daunting given the size and knowing how to make the most of it. I am really pleased with how this has gone, and I really think this has paid off for those in attendance."



It's about knowing when to say no

NOW in its third year, WCAworld Academy's Good Distribution Practice Certified Training Course has cemented itself as a staple of the WCA Worldwide Conference. Leading the sessions, as in the course's previous outings, is Henry Moran of ASC Associates. Voice of the Independent (VOTI) caught up with Moran during a class drinks break.

"Yeah, it has been another excellent session," Moran tells VOTI. "As you can see, it has been well attended," so well attended in fact that a few extra chairs have to be brought in to meet last minute demand. And it is certainly a class that energises attendees who are both eager to hear how they can improve on their handling of pharmaceuticals

but also how the standards can be applied in a real-world setting. Moran does not sugar coat things.

"It is not easy, I will not say that it is easy but when you are handling pharmaceuticals you need to have a process in place to make sure that you are handling legitimate medications and not counterfeit medication – or stolen medication for that matter," he says. "If the customer begins to question things, you probably want to be asking yourself 'does this seem right to me?' and maybe making the choice to walk away."

That directness engenders respect. For an industry built around relationship-building, Moran's class highlights the need to be paying attention to situations where maybe the level of detail surrounding a shipment

becomes murkier – "again, I would say, do not ship in those murky instances".

The problem forwarders face, and the problem the



class seeks to if not solve then assuage the level of concern around, is that when it comes to Good Distribution Practice (GDP) there is an absence of unified standards. It is an issue one of the attendees themselves raise.

"There are these GDP processes that are in place but in a real-world situation, how do we as freight forwarders achieve compliance while also contending with the different practices that are in place across different countries and jurisdictions?" the attendee asks.

Moran acknowledges that there is a need to make

things work in the real-world, noting "this is always where things get difficult" – another member interjects, "how do you know the partner you're dealing with has done the same due diligence?" – but from your end the focus should be on yourself.

"Make sure you have done the due diligence that you can," he adds.

Speaking to VOTI alongside the session, WCAworld Academy manager Leah McKenna says that the GDP session always proves popular, pointing out that it really helps the members to know where their focus should be.

"It's been excellent and the members see it as really to understand that they are moving medical products or medical devices in the correct and compliant way," she adds.

"Make sure you have done the due diligence that you can"



HENRY MORAN
ASC Associates

No House B/L? You're Still on the Hook

Why forwarders face liability even as agents – and how to protect yourself

The Dangerous Misconception

“We don’t issue house bills of lading, so we don’t have liability.” This is a common—and costly—myth. One forwarder paid \$20,000 last year despite never issuing a house B/L. Liability can still reach you, whether acting as agent or principal. The first step to protection is understanding the difference between the two roles.

Agent vs. Principal

As an agent, you arrange transport on behalf of the client. The contract is between the client and the carrier—you facilitate and earn your fee. Liability is usually limited to professional negligence, like booking errors or missed instructions.

As a principal, issuing your own house B/L or multimodal document means you assume carrier obligations. You’re liable for the full journey, even for issues on the carrier’s vessel, with potential claims reaching hundreds of thousands.

The Trap

Courts judge by actions, not intentions. Quoting “our rates/transit times,” promising delivery dates, or accepting cargo “for carriage” can make you appear as principal—no house B/L needed.

Even true agents face risks: the broad “Merchant” clause in carrier B/Ls can lead to demurrage claims chasing the forwarder when cargo is abandoned (\$20,000 real example). Or an errors & omissions case: a missed booking causes the client a \$50,000 loss from a missed trade show. Proper coverage provides defence and protection from day one.



How to Protect Yourself

Clearly state in documentation: “We act as agent only, arranging carriage on your behalf.” Avoid phrases like “we will ship”—use “the carrier will ship.” Strengthen your Standard Trading Conditions to define your role and limit liability per conventions and regulations. Most importantly, secure tailored insurance.

WIS – Your WCAworld Partner

Our ForwarderProtect policy covers:

- Cargo liabilities (agent or principal)
- Errors & omissions
- Warehousemen liabilities
- Extensions (third-party, customs broker, charterers liability)

Get instant cargo insurance certificates via our 24/7 Wave platform. We simplify U.S. bonds (FMC, OTI/NVOCC, FMCSA, customs) and tailor coverage to your exact operations—not generic policies.

Final Note

Acting as an agent doesn’t eliminate liability. Align your documentation, processes, and insurance to safeguard your business.



Reach out to us at
info@worldinsuranceagency.com

Exclusive Risk Management Partners for the WCAworld and its affiliated networks.



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Going niche has protected us

"Our niche strategy is protecting our business from the realities of the present moment," president of the Mathez Freight executive board Frederic Mercier tells Voice of the Independent (VOTI). That present moment is one in which logistics operators are facing up to a raft of issues. Not least of these has been the increase in both labour costs and the number of companies declaring bankruptcy – "this is particularly the case for the trucking sector," Mercier says.

"So, yes, there is a bit of concern on our side as we are seeing the struggles that others in the sector are facing up to – and for those working on the import side the situation does not look good – but, despite this, I have to say that business has been pretty good," Mercier tells VOTI ahead of WCA's Worldwide Conference for 2026. "The volumes we have handled and the number of shipments we had over the

"I think for us, the belief is that we have our ship and we are managing to sail it across this bumpy water"

course of 2025 was good. Yes, the profit has dropped but this is because of the increase in labour costs."

Asked about 2026 and Mercier says that it appears things are "going to same way" for Mathez Freight. As to that niche strategy, the company has made a name for itself in the pharma, aerospace, and fine art logistics scene. The last of these, the fine art scene, has proved particularly popular for Mathez Freight's clientele along the French

Riviera. So popular in fact that it took fewer than 24 months to fill an art logistics warehouse after its opening. As Mercier said this time last year, "the south of France has its billionaires, and these billionaires have their needs". Those needs included maxing out Mathez

Freight's facility, boasting 1,000 square metres of storage space. For Mercier, the protection the strategy offers is obviously soothing but he is clearly eager to get through the

"rough times".

"If you ask me, we are just doing the job we excel in, but we are doing it in time where we are not really able to grow the company," he continues. "It is, to be honest, a funny market at the moment and it is a funny moment too, but with our strategy of catering to niche needs it is alright, it's fine."

That funny market has one glaring cause: the decisions being taken in Washington, DC. It is the case, Mercier continues, that forwarders and their customers are struggling to anticipate what comes next. "We know it will be unexpected," but he says it is still, nonetheless, very difficult to plan for the unexpected. Sometimes, however, the chaos sewn in one market opens another up, and this is something Mercier has seen.

"It seems that there is growth on either side of the border, with volumes linked to both Mexico and Canada on the up," he says. "We are also seeing growth in Asia too. It had been that the US was very much the focus for Asia but now, because of the country's politics, those Asian markets are now turning to the European markets. As such, we are seeing them more."

Pointing to the upturn in



FREDERIC MERCIER
Mathez Freight

activity with Mexico prompts VOTI to ask Mercier if he is seeing similar growth with Latin America – a market that has experienced an upturn in interest among WCA members. While Mercier says that Mathez Freight has not been so active in the wider Latin American region he reemphasises the work it has been doing in Mexico. It is the case, he continues, that the market appears to be "reshuffling" itself at the moment. Could this be short term? He does not rule it out but equally he says that he would not be surprised if Europe's redirecting of focus away from the US became the norm moving forward.

"I think for us, the belief is that we have our ship and we are managing to sail it across this bumpy water that the economy is going to make us cross this year," Mercier adds, with seeming conviction that while there is an undeniable shifting of global trade afoot, it is a shift that Mathez Freight is more than capable of adapting to.

WCA helping SMEs through the storm

FORWARDERS across Canada have found themselves grappling with a series of unexpected shifts across trade and politics that have forced them into reshaping the way they do business. While moving the goalposts, these shifts have not been wholly negative. AGO Transportation's vice president Sandra Faraj tells Voice of the Independent (VOTI), there has been no let-up in the level of business.

"While demand strengthened, the environment became more complex, requiring greater agility and tighter coordination across global and domestic networks," Faraj says. "AGO saw an increase in import volumes particularly from Asia and Europe. This was undoubtedly due to the imposition of US Tariffs. This surge created immediate pressure on capacity planning, documentation

processing, and last mile coordination."

Faraj says that AGO has been able to quickly pivot to address all these changes. This is in no small part down to the long-term relationships she and the team have built because of being a member of WCA – "WCA agents and service providers has worked very much to our advantage".

"On the export side, we have witnessed an increase in exports to other countries most notably Europe, China and the Americas," Faraj continues. "This can partly be attributed to the Canadian government, which has been very proactive in its efforts to provide education, financial assistance and programmes to promote exports from Canada to countries other than the US."

AGO has capitalised on this government assistance, with Faraj noting that the team has been attending

many of these programmes and seminars as it offers an opportunity to increase the company's visibility and promote its range of global services.

"Our membership with WCA has been invaluable in this endeavour," she adds. "One example is that many of our Canadian clients are looking to find buyers outside the US market. With the help and expertise of



SANDRA FARAJ
AGO Transportation

our WCA contacts we have been able to put some Canadian exporters in touch with potential buyers in other countries."

Voice
of the Independent

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