

Jointly mastering logistical challenges

Raben operates high-bay warehouse and distribution logistics for Fuchs Schmierstoffe

Lubricants for automotive, mechanical engineering, aviation and various other industries: This is the business model of Fuchs Schmierstoffe from Mannheim. The wholly-owned subsidiary of Fuchs Petrolub produces at four plants throughout Germany. The throughput in the Mannheim high-bay warehouse is currently around 255,000 tonnes per year. Deliveries are made worldwide — a logistical challenge, especially in times of a pandemic.

To master this task, the Fuchs employees receive support from the Raben Group, whose German subsidiary is also located in Mannheim. The logistics service provider, which operates throughout Europe, is responsible for the operation of the three largest warehouses. In addition, Raben is the main service provider for distribution

logistics in the field of packaged chemical goods — i.e. lubricants in drums and other containers — and thus moves up to 65 % of the lubricant manufacturer's finished products; the rest is distributed among self-collectors and automotive area freight forwarders. The cooperation between the two companies, which has

grown over decades, forms the foundation of Fuchs logistics. And this basis is more valuable than ever — in view of the pandemic-related upheavals in the global supply chains.

Annual production volumes in Mannheim have been rising for years — and demand has increased significantly since the economy reopened in the first half of 2021. In this situation, experienced cooperation pays off: "Our central transshipment warehouse was originally designed for 450 t daily output. Now we are delivering at a peak of 700 t per day," Lutz Schulz, Head of Procurement and Distribution Logistics at Fuchs, clarifies the challenge. "The expansion of the warehouse is already



being planned. But until the capacities are expanded, it is a matter of optimising the daily logistical processes in such a way that we can guarantee maximum delivery reliability.”

This is where Raben comes in — as the operator of the Fuchs central warehouse, a hazardous materials warehouse and another external warehouse for “slow movers”. “Together with Fuchs, we are always developing solutions for current logistical challenges,” says Georg Pross, Head of Sales Germany at Raben Trans European Germany. Strategic approaches for the further development of logistics processes are discussed in the regular audits.

Digitalisation helps with handling and transport preparation

One example of a planned project is the digitalisation and simplification of processes in the printing of labels. “For this we have a separate office in the warehouse where the labels are produced. These printouts have to be taken by Raben employees across the warehouse to the picking zone and stuck on there — this costs time and space for intermediate storage,” explains Schulz. In future, the labels will therefore be printed out directly at the packer’s workplace via a special IT solution in a space-saving and time-efficient way.

Another example is the transport management system (TMS) “Blu Jay”, which Raben uses as an IT solution. With the help of this software and hand scanners, the goods to be loaded are scanned in a



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Fuchs’ central handling warehouse was originally designed for 450 t of daily output. Today, the lubricant manufacturer delivers a peak of 700 t per day.

with its traffic restrictions such as border controls and corona tests for staff.” Within Germany, the goods must be delivered to the customer within 48 hours of receipt. With 84,000 truckloads per year and increasingly busy transport infrastructure, this is also a challenge. In the event of any delays, the sales staff are proactively informed via the ETA tool — in the system or also by e-mail or SMS to their mobile phones.

In the case of delays or other complaints, the two companies use their regular quality circle to achieve a permanent improvement of the situation. The audits that Fuchs carries out several times a year at selected branches of the service

both companies. Fuchs has implemented an environmental management system according to ISO 14001. One of the measures aims at climate-neutral transports — according to the motto “CO₂-free from factory gate to factory gate”. “As part of this measure, our goal is to deliver our goods to customers CO₂-free by 2025, even outside of factory transport,” says Schulz. At the moment, this is not yet possible without CO₂ compensation certificates, but the company wants to hold service providers more accountable and is asking suppliers about their carbon footprint.

In line with this, Raben Group has introduced its environmental programme “Eco2way” on the occasion of its 90th anniversary at the beginning of 2021. It includes the gradual introduction of more environmentally friendly transport technology, as well as the optimisation of supply chains and energy-saving and environmental measures at the sites. “We want to reduce our CO₂ footprint step by step. In this way we support customers like Fuchs on their way and also make our own contribution to the transport turnaround,” emphasises Dirk Fellhauer, Marketing Manager at Raben Trans European Germany. According to Raben, some trucks with liquefied natural gas (LNG) are already running on its own network. “Now we are also looking at electric and hydrogen drives.”

Bruno Lukas, Berlin

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Dirk Fellhauer, Marketing Manager, Raben Trans European Germany

two-stage process after picking and before loading. “This way we always know where our freight units are for each customer. Accidental mix-ups and other picking errors are thus minimised,” explains Schulz.

Visualisation of the transports

With Raben’s ETA software, deliveries can also be planned more reliably. “ETA stands for estimated time of arrival and means the estimated time of arrival of the truck at the respective Fuchs customer,” Pross explains. “Visualising the transports and knowing the delivery times is of utmost importance — especially now in times of the pandemic

provider also contribute to this. “At these appointments, we have always found sensible solutions that contribute to more process and occupational safety,” says logistics manager Schulz. “For example, we have jointly developed concepts for securing loads in sea containers. We also subsequently documented the innovative solutions for better transport packaging of our articles pictorially.”

Sustainability in focus: the carbon footprint

The topic of sustainability is also taking on an increasingly important role at