

April 2020



GLOBAL INTERVIEWS

taken during COVID-19 Pandemic



CARGO
Connections

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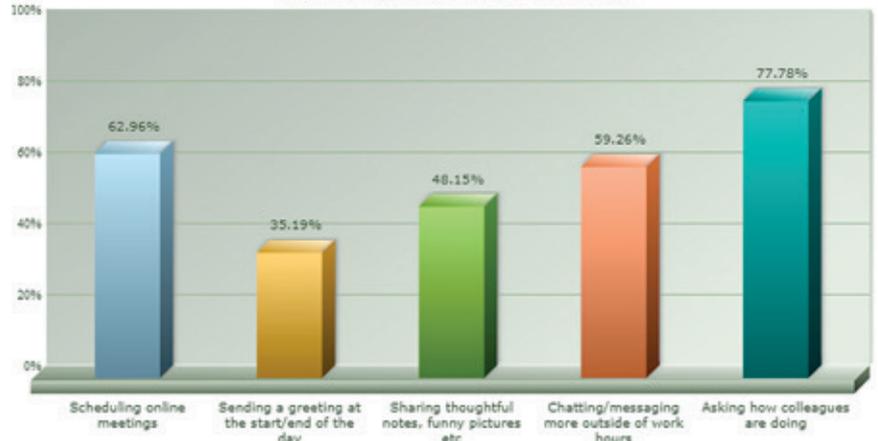
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On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation declared the new coronavirus outbreak as a pandemic. Since then, the virus officially named COVID-19 has spread rapidly around the world reaching more than 180 countries. The pandemic has sent billions of people into lockdown and is affecting everyone both professionally and personally. As a global family, we wanted to obtain some feedback from our Members. The results are now collated in this document so that we have a permanent record to reflect upon of this historical event.



Rachel Crawford FCILT

Cargo Connections President/C.E.O.

What are you finding **most challenging** at the moment business wise?
How are you finding your cargo **has changed**?

AUSTRALIA: Not seeing customers face to face and grow more business. Cargo wise, a lot of projects on hold but I chose my customers a while ago and most of them have not been seriously affected by this, no retail no bottom feeders, good reliable customers are essential for the longevity of our business.



HONG KONG: Less Frequency & Space, High Rates, 60% Epidemic Related Products.



SPAIN: I cannot be original in this answer. That saying of "time of crisis, time of opportunities" is generally true, but it was generally focused on financial or systemic crises, never on such an unknown stage and on which there is no prior account on which we can take ourselves as a reference. Our activity continues at a good pace, taking more financial forecasts than usual, but I know that the day after will be very cold for everyone, and that opportunities will be very few in this new and unknown world that we are going to have to face.



GREECE: The challenges we face are: Working with reduced staff. Internet speed as we are working from home. Difficulty in communication vs. direct contact in the office. Cost have, partially increased (air and road mainly).



PAKISTAN: Most local factories totally shut down so approaching customers through emails and mobile phones. In short business wise there is no demand and no major challenges locally.



AUSTRALIA: Airfreight, each day is different, delays and finding flights is very challenging at the moment.



GERMANY: Challenge: There are 85% less loading possibilities by air freight. Cargo: only what is absolutely necessary to be sent by air freight. Our sea freight runs excellent, there is hardly any difference to be seen before "Corona".



BANGLADESH: We have to defer our project shipments (sea and air) due to force holidays in Bangladesh. So, we can't finish our jobs in time. Our few shipments are held at ports. We are stuck and can't proceed for operation.



INDIA: At the moment biggest issues is collections as customers are using the lockdown as excuse to delay payment. Movement has hardly started as Govt declared exim trade as essential in midst of lockdown.



FRANCE: Much harder to find availabilities and space and equipment's. Need to dig in to find new used suppliers. Not possible to engage on ETA and on booking as airlines selling but not having direct visibility on availabilities.



IRELAND: Our carryings are down about 60% as Ireland is mainly in lockdown at the moment. Our regular clients involved in importing have had to close unless they are involved in food or medicines.



MALAYSIA: There are many challenges presently. Due to lock down on non-essential business, there are no movements and the suppliers from the various countries are under lock down too. Cash flow is becoming tight as we are expected to continue sustaining the staffs as per the government ruling. the government has promised to assist in this area but so far there is no evident of any monetary support so far. Payments from customers are being prolonged due to the lock down, the customers too are not able to commute. Fixed expenses remains the same, but revenue has dropped by at least 80%.



INDIA: Due to the complete lock down imposed in the whole of India, the entire cargo movement and handling operations have literally come to a standstill. Both import and export documentation transactions for customs clearance planned for movement through various gateway sea ports / terminals and airports are stuck up due to want of physical cargo arrivals in the ports. Thus, there is a huge back log of exim cargo piling up in various premises of the shippers' as well as in transit on rail / roads.



Have you moved any cargo that has **directly resulted** from the COVID-19 outbreak?



FRANCE: We did import facial masks for supermarkets. Probably in Europe all shipment concerned by Covid 19 and coming from overseas will need CE certificate issued by CE organization (we had first CE certificate coming from Chinese organisation refused by customs so we had to provide one coming from CE country).



INDIA: Yes, pharmaceutical consignments for medical aid to the virus victims.



INDIA: We exported masks as per government norms to South East Asia and Hong Kong.



MALAYSIA: We are mostly in machineries and automotive and the essential services which covers food and medical already have preassigned freight forwarders. Again due to the flight restrictions, some urgent shipments were cancelled due to non-availability of space.



IRELAND: We have had shipments, mainly from China, of PPE and also some plastics for use in the moulding of ventilators.



BANGLADESH: We have moved a few shipments due to COVID 19.



SPAIN: Yes sure. Sanitary masks, gloves and IPE's by airfreight from China and with destination to individual dealers and, mainly, sanitary governmental departments. Also, we arranged a humble donation with equipment from Korea and China donated to one NGO we collaborate with.



PAKISTAN: As per government, all logistics related works going on in Pakistan so have moved air shipment for related medical supplies.



HONG KONG: In March we did export some Covid 19 related products, tons of enquiries on rates but less than 10% actually moved due to customs requirements, high rates, space and cash payment for airfreight.



INDIA: We have regular Medicines which are moving under essential goods.



GERMANY: Yes, masks and protective clothing.



GREECE: No. We had several requests but none materialized.



Do you think your authorities are **handling the crisis**? Are they giving regular advice and updates?

AUSTRALIA:

Yes, they are handling best they can. This is all new for everyone, so it is not a case of right or wrong, just each day changes about how we are going to handle it.



GERMANY:

In the short term, our authority is responding extremely well. However, in Germany and Europe we are running up debt on an incalculable scale.



MALAYSIA:

They are managing pretty well. However, their support system for the business owners are limited with too many regulations, making it impossible for some business owners. For instance, to qualify for wage subsidy, the company need to prove 50% drop in sales. Of course, we are re-approaching the government to relook into their criteria. Updates and advices are regular. Again, we do anticipate some hiccups which are manageable and applaudable.



HONG KONG: Hong Kong SAR Government is doing great & really help to ease the situation. Cannot complain at all.



AUSTRALIA:

Here in Australia not bad at all closing borders before most countries paid off.



PAKISTAN: I think our authorities are handling the crisis but it's really difficult to come over on it overnight. In this situation we will have one future opportunity as well how to handle this global issue which effected all same equally. So, anyone who survives and overcomes on it will have extra edge in future.



SPAIN: I personally believe that politicians and their teams of experts are doing everything possible to confront this unprecedented health crisis. Italy and Spain have been the laboratory mice that have marked, through successes and errors, a roadmap that the rest of the countries have been able to take as a reference. No doubt it could have been better managed, but at this point, I can only ask a politician to do their part and, honestly, I think they are doing it as much as I don't like many of their decisions. Now is the time for the EU, but this is already a different and most complicated stage.



GREECE: Greece reaction to the virus outbreak was swift and efficient, thus the very small number of deaths. There is a fixed daily update from government officials in the media.



IRELAND: The Irish Government so far have done a good job and we expect to be informed about the path out of lockdown over the next few days, so I think they have been good at communicating.



INDIA: The Indian authorities have managed this crisis reasonably well in all the critical and crucial areas. They have been quite prompt in releasing numerous trade advisories on various aspects of international cargo shipments in a timely manner so as to avoid mass confusion. They have also acted in the best interests of the trade by issuing directives to all the concerned stake holders such as seaport terminals / Container Freight Stations / Inland Container Depots / Air Cargo complexes towards implementing waiver on various cargo handling, storage and penalty charges arising out of the imposition of lock down measures.



BANGLADESH: The situation has never been faced by any authority. I would say our authorities are trying to manage this with an excremental basis in some extend. Yes; we are having regular update by our concern association.



FRANCE: They do regular update but don't bring much solution. With all money French spend in Health care via taxes on Salary and companies etc... it doesn't make sense the lack of supplies we have to face such a crisis.



INDIA: Yes, authorities are doing their best. They are issuing timely advisory and instructions but people in general are being irresponsible.



Within your local community, **have you been impressed/unimpressed** by anything in particular i.e. organisation in shops, community spirit, abundance of restrictions, etc?

GERMANY:

That I'm impressed anywhere, I can't say. Some restrictions like closed restaurants I can't understand. With a little organization, you could do better. Security measures are okay and apparently necessary. Everybody sticks to them, but that is also the least that can be expected in a society.



HONG KONG: Hong

Kong citizens are protecting themselves and others by wearing mask & washing hands as frequently as possible. All these are by self-volunteering.



INDIA: It is impressive

that people in our local community are understanding situation and following the rules laid by the Municipal and State Govt Authorities.



INDIA: The Local

Corporator and his team has been on the ground to assist in maintaining the lockdown as well as ensuring people get essentials and the poor food and groceries.



IRELAND: We have

in general been very accepting of the restrictions. The country has responded in mature way to the lockdown and most people adhere to the restrictions. Most shops have sanitiser and floor markings laid out to assist customers.



BANGLADESH: It is very difficult

to understand and manage the situation here in Bangladesh. There are huge population density country, the lower class (less income people) could manage their foods and other needs. It is very tough to our Govt. to manage those people to restricted to "stay at home".



INDIA: By and large

the safety and security measures mandated to be followed during the lockdown period have been complied with by the community. However, there were some stray incidents wherein there were lapses in following the safety guidelines mostly in the grocery markets, which were managed well by the law enforcing authorities.



AUSTRALIA: Perth is

not a big city and has a small town mentality (in a good way) too so it's been good in general, people are mostly following the authority's recommendations and it's working. Worth mentioning the toilet paper idiots.



MALAYSIA: Of course, the daily wages community is badly

effected due to no income and single mothers. There are the foreign labour community who do not come under the citizens category and do not receive any authorities support. Personally, I had been involved in food distribution to single mums. I quickly initiated some fund raising among friends and families, which we managed to cover about 60+ families in the first couple of weeks. Now the government and their welfare department has well strategized their distribution system. We are still reaching out to elders who stay alone in our community to attend to their needs.



AUSTRALIA: Charity

for the homeless, donations and clothing.



GREECE: For Greek

standards, the adherence to the lockdown and the quarantine has been remarkable and this has helped keep the numbers of deaths down. A negative influence are both the facilities where illegal immigrants are staying and the gypsies as both live rather packed in close quarters, the first ones by necessity and the latter by choice. Especially the gypsies have a gross disregard to the Law and are notoriously difficult to restrain.



SPAIN: Spain has shown

that it is a caring and committed country and its people have scrupulously followed the instructions of the health authorities. We are a country, also Italy as good Latinos, very familiar with the physical contact, the hug, the kisses and the displays of affection; therefore, our effort is even greater than that of the rest of countries much colder in their personal relationships.



What are you finding is **helping you** on a personal basis during this time?

Have you started a new hobby, exercise, anything which you have been meaning to do and now have found the time to do it?

BANGLADESH: Well, from the day one have planned to do - reading books, to write something poem easy on particular etc. I am passing very good quality time with my family members.



PAKISTAN: As a male helping home chores with family. Reading books. Pray more and more as we got the idea through this situation we have nothing in hand only Allah is greater than everything.



INDIA: Spending time helping my wife. Spending time helping my son. Taking care of my society building being the secretary. In contact with my team to keep the spirit high and motivated. Spending time to speak to my creator. Keeping away from negativity.



AUSTRALIA: Bought a lot of weights and made home gym with my son, taking the dog for walks more often, and especially good family chats to avoid stupid fights. we are all adapting to this, we all have to give up something, communication is essential like in a business.



GREECE: Basically, we are all in excellent spirits at home (despite the fact that I have been working from home for approx. 1.5 months), so I did not feel the need for some distraction. Nevertheless, we profited from the quarantine so as to do lots of works on the flat, renovation work etc. Unfortunately, the D.I.Y. e-shops were not prepared for the crisis and it takes ages to get what you order online.



IRELAND: Still very busy at work. Whereas most staff are working from home my day is usually in the office on my own coordinating the various customer requests that we are getting so I cannot say I have had a lot of extra time to myself.



MALAYSIA: Thinking about others and reaching out to help keeps me going and mentally stimulated. I have more time to reflect on my life and my inner self. However, still missing meeting people and my nature trips.



HONG KONG: In Hong Kong we are working as usual, so not much time left for hobbies & others.



INDIA: Painting and cooking.



AUSTRALIA: Just working and walking. Starting to see my adult children a lot more.



SPAIN: By family decision and in order to minimize any risk with my daughter, we have divided the confinement, and I'm already 6 weeks completely alone in our habitual residence. I have tried to be routine and do a lot of things that I had on the to do backpack, especially reading a lot and ordering and rediscovering my vinyl's. Have created many playlists! I have not stopped doing sport as much as possible and attended to my housework, which I did before. I have not neglected my friends and I have helped those who may have needed it to the best of my ability. Oh! and I have not seen any series or wanted to discover how Netflix works or any of the other digital platforms that I pay for and do not use :)



GERMANY: Basically, nothing has changed for me or my family. The only thing that has changed is that the garage has been cleaned up again.



FRANCE: Keeping working is helping :) I do home exercise to just maintain shape a little bit as I usually run but seems to risky for now...



INDIA: Discipline - on the personal front I am finding that adherence to disciplinary measures within the family has helped a lot in maintaining timely schedules of household chores, sharing good moments for all the three meals at the dining table together with all family members joining in, finding adequate relaxing time for entertainment through movies and watching good programs on TV thereby keeping all of us abreast on the latest happenings around the globe. I have also developed a habit for reading books and articles on History and Political Science.



How are you preparing for the post-pandemic future?

AUSTRALIA: Right at this moment we are taking it week by week. Our primary goal is to survive, and we will do that, but managing correctly is important.



INDIA: Trying to collect as much cash flow as possible so that once lockdown opens we can do bookings. Informing customers to co-operate for next 6 months by not asking for credit.



IRELAND: We have set out some objectives where we feel we can improve our procedures through the learnings of remote working as we are doing now. Hopefully we can be more paperless in the future. Also, we are setting targets, reviewing old files, lost business, also developing new service offerings so hopefully we are in a position to hit the ground running when things come back to 'normal'.



GREECE: Not in any particular way. What I will try to do is see how to improve our flexibility so as to facilitate people working from home but anyway, we are already doing that. In general, the crisis has not revealed any notable weak spots in our organization so as to call for special planning or preparations. Although business has slowed slightly in the warehousing and national distribution part, we have retained all our staff so as to be ready for the next day, with well trained and engaged staff.



GERMANY: After the pandemic? When will that be? 2023? The future lies in worldwide business relations. Europe as well as USA want to move the production of various products from China back to their own countries. Independence between states is being sought. Our activities as forwarding agents will change. It is not possible to prepare oneself at present. We must wait and see how and where the flow of goods will shift.



INDIA: Well post-pandemic period is expected to come with a lot of challenges not only on the professional front but on the personal fronts as well. I am already in the process of motivating my team to be prepared for a very tough and compromising period on various aspects of work and be positive in whatever they do. I have been encouraging them to develop out of the box thinking solutions towards handling complicated work situations in the best interests of our organization and our esteemed customers and stake holders. I am interacting with them on a daily basis so as to develop their confidence levels and maintain high levels of work integrity. On the commercial business front, I am in constant contact with most of my customers and vendor supporters towards assuring them an optimum level of service standards which should see their businesses sailing through smoothly in the difficult times. I also plan to get involved in good CSR initiatives in the overall interests of the society during post pandemic period.



SPAIN: I think the scenario is so negative that no contingency plan is going to be enough to ensure that we are prepared for the very different world that awaits us. Finally, scientists will discover a vaccine that will end, sooner or later, the health problem; but I am much more concerned about something that does not have a vaccine, that spreads more quickly and that, I think, will make us a worse society: FEAR.



AUSTRALIA: Waiting for the big multinational forwarders to screw up big time, they are already struggling and smaller companies like ours will benefit from it.



HONG KONG: Contact old clients and see how many of them are still surviving.



INDIA: Working on sales and investments for the betterment of staff and company.



BANGLADESH: We are planning to do our jobs on prior basis as per projects and regular shipments. We should be closer with our customers and serve them with more patience and professional approaches.



PAKISTAN: 1. We are developing more effective IT solution so all ICM Employees working on same page. We will work proactively on any future pandemic. Working on cash and document receiving automatically through some systems.



MALAYSIA: Cost control is our major concern for sustainability. Keeping the team active with some assignments and encouraging them to be part of.



What future problems do you anticipate for our industry/and or the world?

BANGLADESH: Huge number of people here in Bangladesh will be unemployed / jobless. The garment sector and other related industries will lose their buyer from European countries, the orders will be cancelled. This will be huge challenge to restore the business in every sectors business in Bangladesh.

HONG KONG: Less shippers, manufactories and competitors as well if we survive from this epidemic.

INDIA: Increase in logistics cost.

MALAYSIA: We cannot deny that we are approaching global recession which we understand will take at least another 2 years minimum to recover or return to surplus. While I am typing this, just got a circular on the various airlines laying off staffs and grounding their fleet.

FRANCE: Increase of rates of standard consumer product. Probably raise of unemployment and austerity as government was planning it anyway they will have now a good reason to justify it.

INDIA: Its often said that 'WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH - THE TOUGH GETS GOING'. There would be innumerable problems and complications faced in our industry in terms of paucity of shipping services, non-availability of containers and other equipment, labor and other Industrial Relations (IR) issues, piling up of shipments, clearing the back log and so on and so forth. There may be no death of business, but the challenges would lie in offering comprehensive logistics solutions in view of the most difficult scenario explained above and these would be the most testing times for our industry and freight forwarding fraternity. Moreover, the cash flows and financial prudence on all fronts would remain a huge concerning factor. The future pandemic situation would require and mix of both - effective micro and macro management of all pertinent issues in the most professional and logical manner.

GREECE: If my predictions were any better than those of the next man / woman - or of those of most "experts" for that matter - I would be a rich man. :) As I am not rich, it means that my predictions are of very limited value so I would prefer to refrain from making any. If you twist my arm hard enough however, I would resort to common sense predictions such as:

Industry wise:

- Increase in storage rent / costs due to the increasing scarcity of good real estate in the industrial areas.
- Increase in transportation costs due to ever stricter environmental regulations making old trucks obsolete and increasing production cost of new ones as well as rising fuel costs (due to the pressure for them to become more environmentally friendly).
- Once the crisis has been overcome, lack of trained and skilled personnel. The demand for specialized labour in the forwarding and Logistics sector will surpass the "supply" in countries such as Greece, which do not invest in developing the relevant training. This will push wages and consequently Supply Chain related costs up.

Globally:

- Future virus outbreaks.
- Environmental disasters.
- Crises due to illegal immigration.
- Conflicts over natural resources such as rivers and lakes, fishing rights etc.
- Food shortage.
- Moral issues in terms of genetically modified or "enhanced" plants, animals and finally humans, increasing issues and disputes pertaining to the use of private data by companies such as Google, Facebook etc.





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