LI IS AT THE HEART OF SUPPLY CHAINS

Stefan Van Doorslaer

Group CEO, Ahlers

Location Intelligence plays an integral role in supply chain and logistics, which became suddenly visible for many end users during the pandemic. Goods are not always in the warehouse, the shop, or the factory; they are somewhere in between. We call that rolling inventory. So, a combination of internal data on logistics and public data, such as border waiting times and traffic congestion, can help in tracking the rolling inventory and making important decisions. A Digital Twin is a great solution in this regard, as it can help make the combined data visible, so that one can see the impact, know whether further contingency measures are necessary, or whether the process needs to be expedited. In the future, digital twins will become the standard for a lot of companies.

Automation in data processing

One of the biggest challenges associated with data is its cleaning. Captured data usually has many errors or is inconsistent and needs to be meticulously cleaned before it is used, and the process can take months. Automated 'cleaning' in data processing can help in making sure that the data is corrected, formatted and gaps are filled in real time using Artificial Intelligence, so that the output is immediately ready to be analyzed.

One of our customers had a recurring space constraint. So, we linked the logistics data to their planning software to feed directly into their process. The add-on tool made it possible to detect spikes in customer lead times and re-allocate loading slots in advance. The system was able to use the data to optimize planning and minimize delays in delivery.

Adding efficiency to logistics

We also engineered a mobile anti-theft device, including geo-referencing, to digitalize logistics security and tracking. We used to have armed guards with Kalashnikovs in the truck to protect the goods. With the pandemic and border restrictions, everyone traveling in the vehicle needed to be routinely tested, and that process added another element of delay in the logistics. So, we replaced the people by a mobile anti-theft device that can be installed in the truck when it is being loaded. Now, we are able to see in real time the location of the truck, the speed at which it is going, whether there is a traffic jam on the route and a lot more.

> 66
>
> **We must combine location data with realistic insights to present streamlined solutions.**

There is also a camera that tells us whether the goods are alright, or whether any doors are loose or open. In essence, it is a mobile security system that can be taken away and placed in a new truck as soon as the delivery is complete. It is real time, more secure, and also costs much less than employing people, while generating a lot of data that can be used to improve efficiency. Furthermore, it also helps in visualization of the available data that helps in winning the confidence of existing clients and attracting new customers.

Location data is at the core of supply chains, but we must be able to combine it with realistic insights, in order to present a streamlined solution that drives the business forward.