

Trade fairs without borders



EXPOTRANS ARCHIVE PHOTO

Expotrans forklifts in Fiera Milano

Like a 21st century Silk Road, Expotrans is fuelling trade between Europe and Asia.

Europe's economic woes continue to cast a black cloud over the continent's growth. However for some enterprising companies, who early on predicted the rise of Asia as a key market, the horizon is a little brighter. Expotrans is an Italian freight handler founded which, since being founded in 1990, has handled the logistics of over 8000 fairs in 150 countries worldwide. Its logistics infrastructure has developed to the point where it can handle merchandise of all types, from fresh food and high fashion to heavy machinery and defence. The company is a key member of IELA (International Exhibition Logistics Associates). IELA's 280 global correspondents mean that Expotrans can carefully follow the trajectory of their customers' merchandise as it travels across the world. Exclusive contracts mean that Expotrans provides handling and logistics for 50% of all the international trade fairs that take place in Italy annually. At Fiera Milano alone it services more than 80 trade fairs a year with up to 50 000 individual exhibitors whose specific needs are met by Expotrans' network of delivery vehicles, warehouses and on-site teams charged with erecting and dismantling exhibitions. Guido Fornelli, CEO of Expotrans is confident that the company can build on its Italian success story and become

a global force. He spoke about the company's growing international outlook: "Expotrans has worked extensively in emerging economies like Russia, China and India since its birth in 1990 and it considers these markets as a key component in its future growth strategy." Accordingly Expotrans has signed a number of system sharing agreements with local logistics companies in these countries creating competitive partnerships. India in particular represents one of Expotrans' most prolific and historical overseas markets. The company's first foray into the Indian market was in 1995 where Expotrans managed the logistics of the Italian Pavilion at the ITF Fair which saw India as a partner country. Expotrans handles the most important Indian exhibitors at Italian trade fairs such as MACEF and CHIBI. Indian expertise in silverwork has typically been very well received at these fairs. Expotrans also acts as shipping agent of choice for IMTMA (the Indian Machine Tool Manufacturers Association) whose stands have always been present at the main Italian trade fairs for the industry namely BIMU and EMO; two of the industry's most important annual events. The shipping company was the exclusive handler of EMO in 2009. The logistics for this gargantuan global event required the coordination of 8000 different transportation vehicles bringing merchandise from around the world to the site by rail, road, plane and ship. Thousands of customs clearances were obtained while, on-site, 60 cranes and 120 forklifts worked tirelessly in the space of one week to unload the merchandise and erect all the exhibitions for the fair. Expotrans also plays a key role in exposing Italian and European brands to the fast growing Indian consumer and industrial market. The major fair venues in Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai have long been critical to Expotrans' activity. Joining the WCA, a global "family" of logistics networks, in 2010 has allowed Expotrans to extend not only its geographic coverage but also the range of products it is able to handle to include high value and abnormally sized goods. Innovation and dynamic management remain critical if the company is to continue to grow in a weak global economy. Guido Fornelli, company CEO commented: "The last three have shaken the structure of the European economy to its core and the future still looks turbulent. The key for companies organizing events and exhibitions in the future to remain competitive is to continue offering ever more flexible solutions. Our company aims to build on its past success in terms of customer satisfaction and make our international company truly global."

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