

Investing in the future: tackling the economic slowdown

Alan Long, General Manager, Maritime Cargo Processing PLC, Felixstowe, UK

The economic slowdown has undoubtedly offered a big challenge to the shipping industry, but those who have the foresight to plan ahead will be better prepared for when the industry does make a recovery.

This year is a time for re-evaluating and transforming the industry in which we work. In my opinion, it is essential for companies to be forward thinking in order to survive this tough time and come out on the other side stronger. Without a doubt, negative thinking and defeatism will only further fuel the economic shrinkage. Investment in leading technology is paramount to running a modern business and tackling the problem of inefficiency and environmental concerns.

I recently read an interesting piece that quoted ESPO Chairman Victor Schoenmakers. He advised port authorities and private investors not to give in to the attitude of some interest groups, who claim that the crisis is a good reason to stop or postpone vital investment projects in ports. I am in full agreement with him. As with past recessions, it is the preparation for when the market stabilises that will make or break a business. Now is a good time to invest and businesses should be looking at ways of streamlining their operations, making them more efficient and cost-effective.

The communication of information through the port system is essential to its smooth operation. Whilst port community systems have been a part of the industry for some time now, I believe that the implementation of such practices holds even more value in the current economy.

Port community systems handle and process huge volumes of data and information relating to international trade, providing the electronic exchange of information between all port sectors, including shipping lines, terminal operators, customs, and road and rail hauliers. The benefits are quite simple; it brings all port stakeholders together under one roof, so to speak, streamlining the communication process, making the handling of cargo more efficient.

A port cluster consists of all economic activities related to the arrival of ships and cargoes in the port region and includes all the stakeholders of a port community. As these become an increasingly popular way of operating, the sharing of information will be more important than ever. Having a system in place that streamlines the way companies within the cluster communicate is invaluable. However, it very much depends on whether the system is efficient and whether it is proven to work. Those port operators that invest in technology to ensure they are ready for this transition will inevitably be the best placed for the long-term.

At this year's IAPH Conference I will be taking part in a session dedicated to the future of ports and their communities. For me, it will be interesting to see whether port operators are willing to accept change in light of the current economic conditions. I would like to think the answer is yes and investment in systems



This year's IAPH Conference will take place in Genoa, Italy from 25-29 May.

to enhance cargo handling operations continues throughout this difficult period. The shipping industry has traditionally been quite slow to implement change, however, the time has come for the new-thinking generation to step forward and ensure the future security of our industry.

Alan Long will be speaking at this year's IAPH Conference that takes place in Genoa, Italy, from 25-29 May. Other key speakers include ESPO Chairman Victor Schoenmakers and IAPH President Datin Paduka O.C. Phang.

ABOUT THE COMPANY

Maritime Cargo Processing PLC assist and promote trade facilitation through its work with organisations such as SITPRO, the World Customs Organisation, the International Association of Ports and Harbours and the UN.

ENQUIRIES

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