

# express



CUSTOMER MAGAZINE 1\_2022



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## DIGITISATION 2022

NIGHT STAR EXPRESS EQUIPS ITSELF  
FOR THE FUTURE



# A SUCCESSFUL START TO THE NEW YEAR

## WEEKEND SERVICE, NEW RESEARCH PROJECTS, ETC.



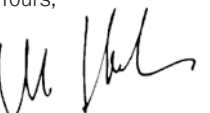
After the past two years, which were defined by the challenges they posed, all of us probably looked to 2022 with great expectations. But the new year will be overshadowed by the war in Ukraine, and its consequences – both social and economic – cannot yet be estimated. However, what is already clear is that the logistics industry, above all others, will have to struggle with unforeseeably massive hikes in diesel prices.

To ensure that Night Star Express is well equipped for the uncertain times ahead, 2022 will be all about new technologies and digitisation. February saw the start of a new transfer project that we launched in partnership with the Fraunhofer Institute for Material Flow and Logistics (IML) and the project sponsor Mittelstand-Digital Zentrum Ruhr-OWL. Read more about it on page 10.

In March, we initiated the launch of a new localisation technology that enables any location

in the world to be found using a three-word address. We will be rolling out its comprehensive use throughout the year. This topic is the subject of the article on pages 6 and 7.

More good news: Night Star Express continued on its growth trajectory in 2021. Despite global market uncertainty, we were able to increase our consignment volume in 2021 by an impressive 8.5% year on year.

Yours,  
  
Ihr Matthias Hohmann

# DIGITISATION ESSENTIAL IN LOGISTICS

## A „MUST“

Whether it's in warehouse management, transportation or production, digitisation is making waves in logistics processes. Networking and transparency, data security and process optimisation – the industry is undergoing a sea-

change and the digital revolution is moving forwards. Night Star Express addresses the key questions that will shape the future. “Digitisation isn't just an option – it's essential,” say Matthias Hohmann, Managing Director of

Night Star Express, and Jens Schoneboom, Head of IT, who will also be contributing again in the magazine. Find out which digitisation topics are of current relevance to Night Star Express in this issue.



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# DELIVERIES, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK

## THE NIGHT STAR EXPRESS WEEKEND SERVICE

“Our weekend service customers primarily come from the automotive and agricultural industries, as well as horse breeding and construction and agricultural machinery,” explains Oliver Bell, Process Manager at Night Star Express. “In the high season from May to September, we mainly support agricultural technology specialists in keeping their harvesting and agricultural machinery running. For farmers, it would be catastrophic if they weren't able to continue working at the weekend due to damage to a tractor or the harvester.” Companies from other sectors, such as commercial vehicle manufacturers, use the weekend service from Night Star Express all year round. In this way, Night Star Express makes a significant contribution towards ensuring that replacement parts for commercial vehicles, such as police patrol cars and the fire and rescue service, but also buses, are ready for use as soon as possible. It doesn't matter whether

it's some tiny screws or a grain tank, all consignments are delivered during the night and are guaranteed to be at their destination before work starts.

Stud farms such as Gestüt Bonhomme, which we reported on in an earlier issue, but also other prestigious stud farms in Germany and its neighbouring countries rely on this important service from Night Star Express to ship fresh horse semen.

Oliver Bell explains how the weekend service deliveries work: “The consignments are collected by late afternoon and delivered by the early hours of the morning. Often even earlier than that, so during the night. The consignments are delivered all over Germany but also to Germany's neighbouring countries. The service is already established in the Benelux countries, and we are also able to offer it in other countries upon request. The deliveries are contactless and made to lockable deposit boxes that



are specified in advance. In this way, the parts are where they need to be and can be put to use immediately.”

If you have any questions about our weekend service, please speak to your contact partner at Night Star Express!







# Current study: Keeping in touch with customers via video call

## Study project during the coronavirus pandemic

*Almost overnight, this pandemic has turned digital communication into an essential tool for companies, with Night Star Express and its cooperation partners no exceptions to this. A current internal study related to sales processes has confirmed the trend: Video conferencing systems such as Microsoft Teams have been experiencing a spike in demand since the start of the pandemic. While we are bound by social distancing requirements, they are a great alternative, even if they might not be the perfect way of keeping in touch.*

Teams is a platform developed by Microsoft that combines a chat function, meetings, notes and attachments. The app is also used by Night Star Express and its partners, both in Germany and internationally. After over two years of pandemic, it is a good opportunity to ask people specifically how the platform is used in practice and what experiences they have had with it. Based on these findings, student intern Percy Szallnaß has developed a survey that has been completed by around 20 sales staff from the national and international Night Star Express network. “Finding out what significance digital communication has acquired in this area, and within logistics as a whole, was of particular interest to us,” explains Percy Szallnaß, who is studying logistics management as part of a sandwich course at the IU International University of Applied Sciences in Dortmund. Not only was he interested in the feedback, so was Jens Schoneboom, Head of IT at Night Star Express. Before we get stuck in: Video conferencing is used in sales but not as often as in other areas and workflows. Percy Szallnaß: “The rates of use are generally a little below average. Some users have very positive feedback about the tool and use it regularly, while others aren’t quite so enthusiastic and only use it sporadically. Only very few haven’t got to grips with it at all. Those people tend to be the ones who only used it for the first time when the pandemic hit.”

### NOT IDEAL FOR INITIAL CONTACT

Upon closer analysis, however, the frequency of use varies widely depending on the reason stated on the agenda for the video call. A Teams meeting is a useful idea for regular dialogue, provided there are no

items to be resolved in a one-to-one discussion. However, it is not necessarily ideal for initial contact. One response, for example, was: “You tend to take a matter-of-fact approach in video calls. And when you’re actually with the person, you engage in some small talk. The importance of that shouldn’t be underestimated in sales.” Other issues included that it is more difficult to build a trusting relationship via initial contact on a video call. Practical experience reveals that there’s no personal atmosphere, less body language, and no one-to-one attention – especially when several conversation partners are included on the call at the same time. Teams and other similar platforms are also less ideal communication options when it comes to resolving problems and negotiating prices. This is not so much the case when it comes to maintaining contact with existing customers. This is where digital platforms really come into their own, offering shorter appointments, no travel time, more frequent discussions, less effort involved, more efficient handling, great benefits in terms of presentations and as a replacement for e-mails. And another plus: Various units from different regions and locations can get together, appointments can be scheduled at very short notice and straightforwardly slotted into the day. Of course, the technology has to work properly and the Internet connection needs to be stable.

### DOING VALUABLE WORK

“Sales is an area that is highly dependent on one-to-one customer contact, particularly when establishing business relationships. Video conferencing is certainly an appealing option in terms of various work processes. When it comes to sensitive issues, picking up the phone or visiting in person is obviously the better choice. Our sales staff have the necessary experience and sensitivity to weigh up the most suitable solution individually and pragmatically, depending on the situation,” says Jens Schoneboom, underlining a key aspect of the study. Overall, it underscores the general trend towards increased digitisation. If we also consider that sales in particular faces specific challenges related to customer contact every day, the willingness to switch between various channels flexibly is quite high compared to other business units. In his first project, Percy Szallnaß has also done valuable work and provided valid data in this regard.





# The easiest way to talk about locations

## Night Star Express uses what3words

*For even more reliable deliveries, Night Star Express has been working with the localisation technology what3words since early March. The technology is being gradually integrated into the IT system. This will make the work of our delivery drivers much simpler in future, doing away with the need to search for the precise coordinates of deposit locations.*



### FINDING LOCATIONS USING WORDS

what3words has divided the world into a grid of squares, each measuring 3 x 3 metres, and assigned each grid square a unique combination of three words. The technology of this London-based provider converts the three words into GPS coordinates. Using this simple system makes locations easy to pinpoint and share. Addresses often cannot be precisely located or easily found. Particularly in rural regions, roads often don't have names. For example, in emergencies, when every minute counts, it is important to be able to get to wherever help is required quickly. The new technology helps to localise people in distress quickly in order to be able to assist them.

### WIDE RANGE OF APPLICATIONS

what3words is already being used in travel, transport and navigation. Thanks to precise localisation, it will enable locations to be found quickly and easily in a future that will include drones, voice-controlled devices and self-driving cars. Many car manufacturers are already integrating what3words into their navigation systems.

### GRADUAL ROLL-OUT

Jens Schoneboom, who is responsible for IT at Night Star Express, explains the steps involved in implementing what3words: "First of all, we created the option of storing a three-word address in our depository database. The service is being rolled out gradually until our drivers will be able to make the most of all of its advantages."

### MAJOR BENEFITS FOR LOGISTICS

Night Star Express Sales Coordinator Benjamin Maße explains the advantages for Night Star Express delivery drivers: "Particularly for overnight deliveries, it is important to be able to give our drivers a precise depository location. At night, no one is around to ask. On large sites, it is often not so easy to find the deposit box or location, especially for new members of



Benjamin Maße

staff. Also, during the current pandemic, drivers who are not familiar with the sites might have to suddenly step in for colleagues who are off sick, and this is where the three words are a huge help. With what3words, we can store the three words of the deposit location in our system, enabling straightforward, fast delivery. I believe it will improve our service and simplify the delivery process."

Further advantages of the three-word service will arise as the service is expanded for new customers: When their details are entered, the three-word address for the deposit location can be stored at the same time. But lots of existing customers in rural regions can also benefit.

Benjamin Maße indicates the benefits for deliveries to stud farms and recipients of agricultural machinery: "In rural regions, what3words is a big help in terms of location information. In such places, it is often not easy for our drivers to find their way. Finding the right deposit location on a large estate is often rather like looking for the proverbial needle in a haystack. With what3words, we can track the precise delivery location to a square of 3 x 3 metres – doing away with the need to search."

### Find any 3 x 3 metre plot in Germany using just three words

*what3words is the easiest way to pinpoint and describe locations – anywhere in the world. The system has divided the world into squares measuring 3 x 3 metres and assigned each one a unique three-word address. This can be used to avoid any imprecision or mix-ups when communicating locations.*



# Cretschmar Cargo moves to larger premises

## Expansion to 3,200 square metres

*The logistics service provider Cretschmar Cargo GmbH & Co. KG is expanding and moving into a new facility in Leverkusen measuring around 3,200 square metres. In doing so, the Night Star Express system partner is responding to the growing number of major clients, primarily from the automotive, construction machinery and agricultural sectors. The new site is due to go into operation in summer 2022.*

“The new handling facility in Leverkusen has more than doubled the amount of space we have available compared to our old site in Düsseldorf. In terms of gates and area, we are flexible and can expand them at any time. Currently, it has 14 HGV ramps and 60 van gates,” explains Thorsten Junk, Head of Marketing and Express at Cretschmar Cargo. Another strategic advantage: “The new site is very well connected to the infrastructure so it can process even more efficiently the rocketing volume of overnight consignments from our neighbouring countries to the west. This means we can guarantee later pick-up times and shorter distances in order to distribute the consignments via over 60 HGV and van routes every day to our locations all over Germany and Europe. This will enable us to continue to offer our ‘first-class’ delivery performance.” Nearly three years ago now, Night Star Express, in partnership with Cretschmar Cargo,

installed the new Consolidation Hub West in Düsseldorf. “The deciding factor was the start of a few long-term, fixed partnerships with new major clients. It’s a milestone and can be expanded further alongside our growing customer base,” states Thorsten Junk.

### OPTIMISED PROCESSES FROM SUMMER 2022 IN LEVERKUSEN

The heart of the new handling facility is an innovative conveyor system around 150 metres long. Modern conveyor technology has several advantages: It reduces the number of contact points for the parcels and increases the processing speed. It can also be customised if necessary. “This enables us to achieve maximum productivity, with all processes perfectly in harmony with one another,” explains Ralf Stevens, Operations Manager at Night Star Express Düsseldorf. Despite all this modern technology, without expert staff there would be no seamless processes because heavy overnight express consignments, such as exhaust systems or windscreens that cannot be transported by conveyor, have to be processed by hand. Finally, the new conveyor helps to improve ergonomics and workplace safety for the staff. Ralf Stevens says: “The whole team with our colleagues from the administration and business units works precisely, effectively and co-operatively in order to handle the growing demand both from Germany and abroad. We can always rely on our committed staff. Even when orders are coming in right, left and centre.”

### THE RIGHT DECISION AT THE RIGHT TIME

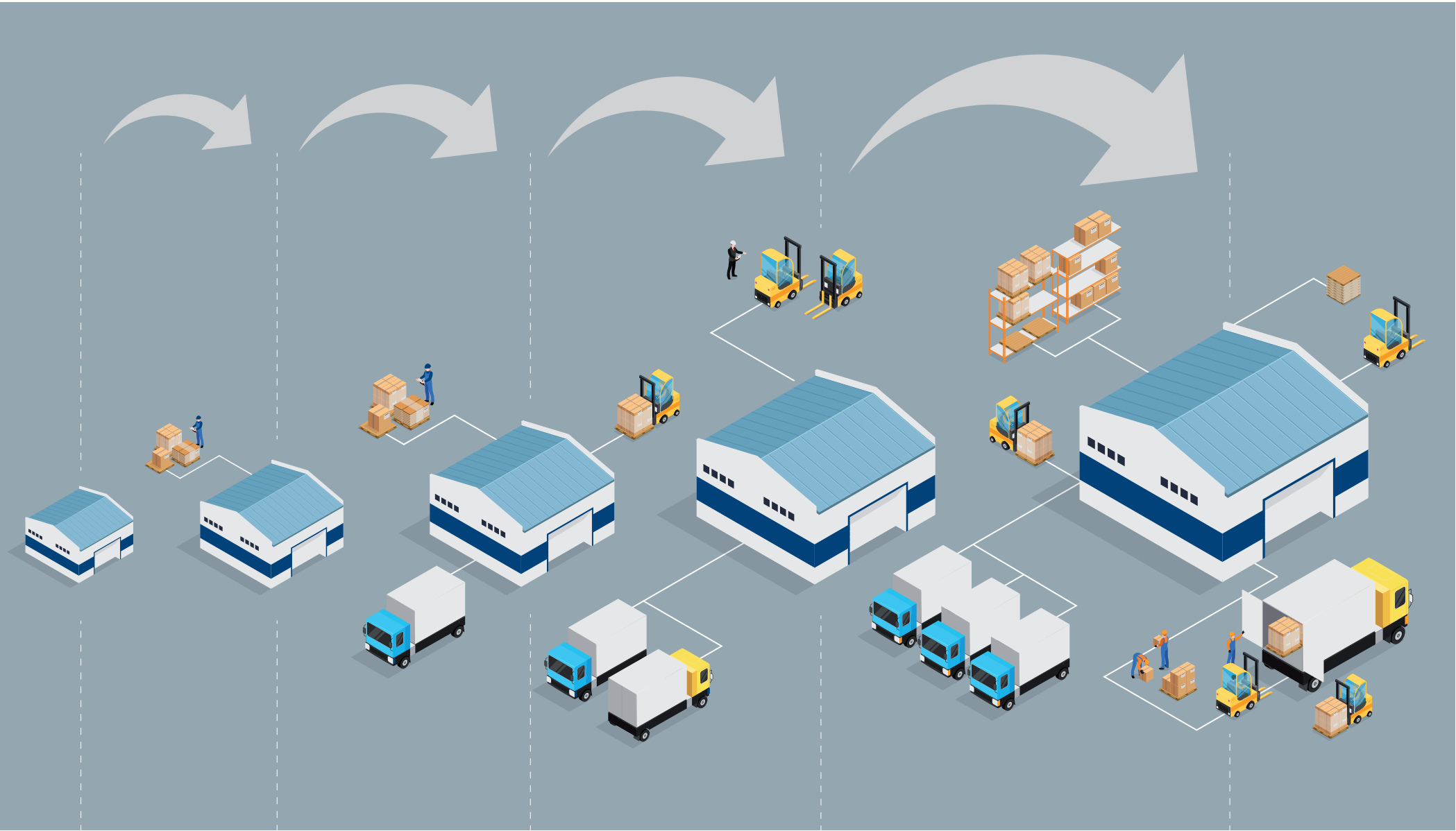
“Moving into bigger premises was exactly the right decision from an operational and strategic perspective. By doing so, we are taking a major step towards leveraging further potential and valuable synergies. This opens up more attractive opportunities for us to expand our national and international network even further,” adds André Jehn, Head of System and Transport Planning at Night Star Express. “With the new Consolidation Hub West in Düsseldorf and soon in Leverkusen, we were in the right place at exactly the right time. And, as we can already tell from the extremely positive developments so far, our success has borne this out.”



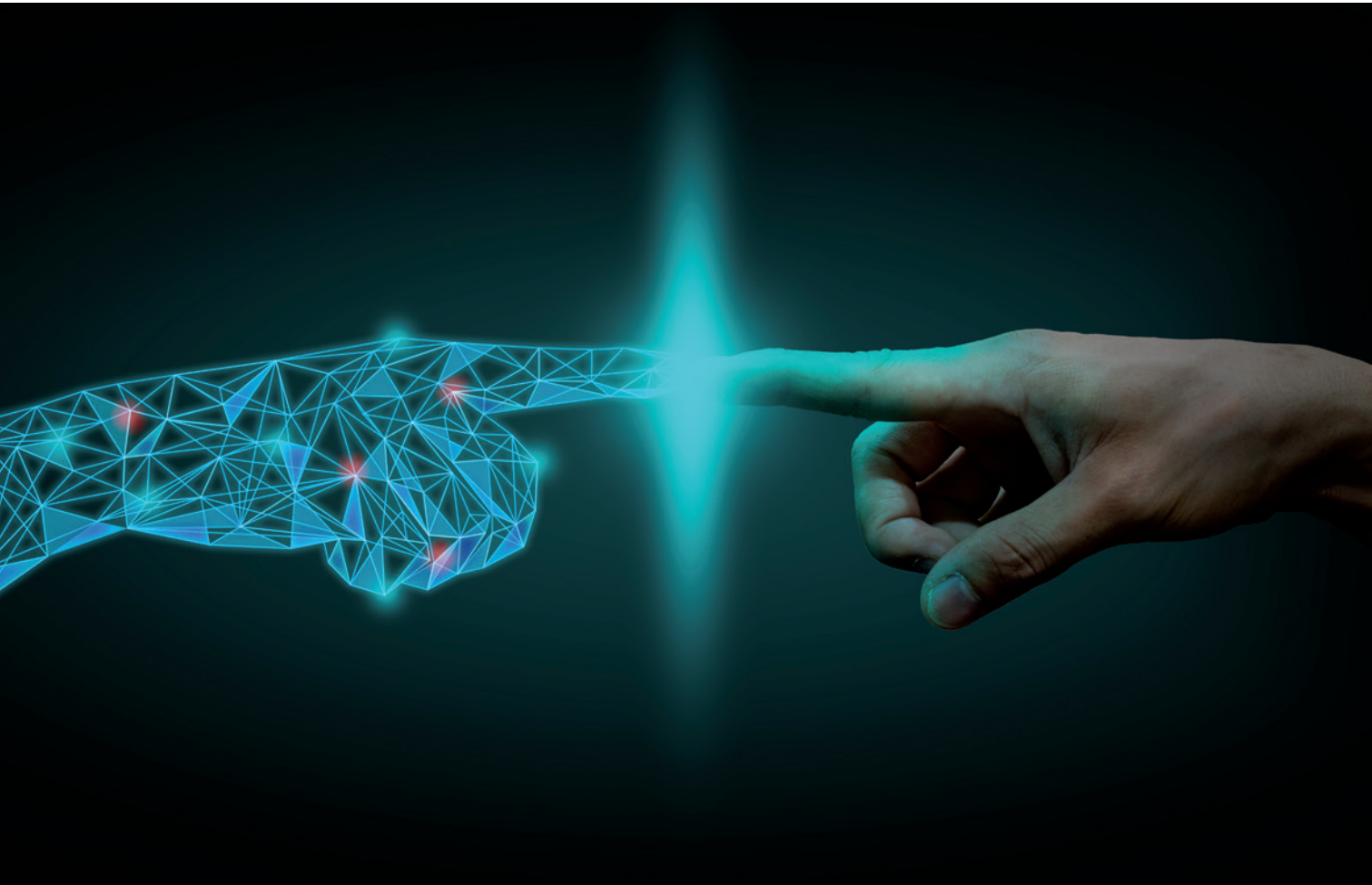
André Jehn



Thorsten Junk







JOINT PROJECT WITH FRAUNHOFER IML

NIGHT STAR EXPRESS, DIGITALLY CONNECTED

Digitisation has enormous potential for companies. Night Star Express is making the most of this and is launching a new transfer project. Increasingly networked data via apps also brings advantages for customers, which could provide major impetus to the logistics industry. Punctual deliveries overnight by the following morning: This special service is the reason why more and more customers are opting for

press network and also their customers. Digital services for internal and external applications are to be created in the future using a data pool.

PROJECT WITH FRAUNHOFER INSTITUTE FOR MATERIAL FLOW AND LOGISTICS

“The Fraunhofer Institute for Material Flow and Logistics in Dortmund will be providing the relevant technology and apps,” explains Jörg Witteborn, Project Manager at Night Star Express. The project sponsor is Mittelstand-Digital Zentrum Ruhr-OWL, which primarily aims at readying German SMEs for a digital future. After all, industry surveys have revealed that there is plenty of room for improvement in this regard. Night Star Express teamed up with scientists from the Fraunhofer Institute for the “KoLibRi” research project in order to develop application software for mobile devices. The result of

this, the 24/7 parcel deposit box, was recently field-tested in order to develop new services (see issue 3/21 of express). The panel quickly agreed to involve Night Star Express with the transfer project. Jörg Witteborn says: “Over the long term, other companies in the industry are set to benefit from our practical experience.” Initial plans are being developed in internal workshops and the implementation will follow in the months to come. The planning phase started in February and the project will last six months. It is also conceivable that digitisation will gradually find its way into request for quotes processing and that it will partially do away with the need for Excel files. “The situation remains very exciting – including with regard to other digital business models.”

NIGHT STAR EXPRESS SCHWEIZ AG CARBON-NEUTRAL SINCE 2011

CLIMATE-NEUTRAL FOR 10 YEARS

Zero carbon and environmentally friendly services are playing an increasingly significant role within our society. More and more logistics companies are recognising this and responding by going climate-neutral in order to appeal to more environmentally aware consumers. Whether it’s a global corporation or a one-man business, every company affects the environment by emitting CO2. Manufacturing, postage and shipping, IT and offices, logistics and mobility are just some of the areas that are directly or indirectly responsible for contributing to a company’s carbon footprint. For this reason, more and more people are requesting a zero-carbon policy from order acceptance through to delivery. Night Star Express Schweiz AG opted for a transparent, climate-friendly strategy throughout its national transport network over ten years ago now. It selected the company CO2Frei from Cologne as its partner in this endeavor.

CO2Frei offers companies the option of offsetting their carbon emissions by planting trees and basket willow. The trees and willow are only planted in the Federal Republic of Germany, including on behalf of Swiss companies. The overnight express service provider and its interested customers can find out from CO2Frei where the trees have been planted. To protect biodiversity, fruit trees are also planted in addition to the basket willow, which emits high levels of oxygen. These tree plantations can be visited and enjoyed for an overwhelmingly emotional experience. It generates a tangible relationship that brings joy, gratitude and pride because your own contribution to protecting the environment can be experienced and understood directly. CO2Frei will be increasing the 11,000 trees planted on behalf of the Swiss overnight express transport network to a total of approximately 13,000 trees by the end of 2022. On a

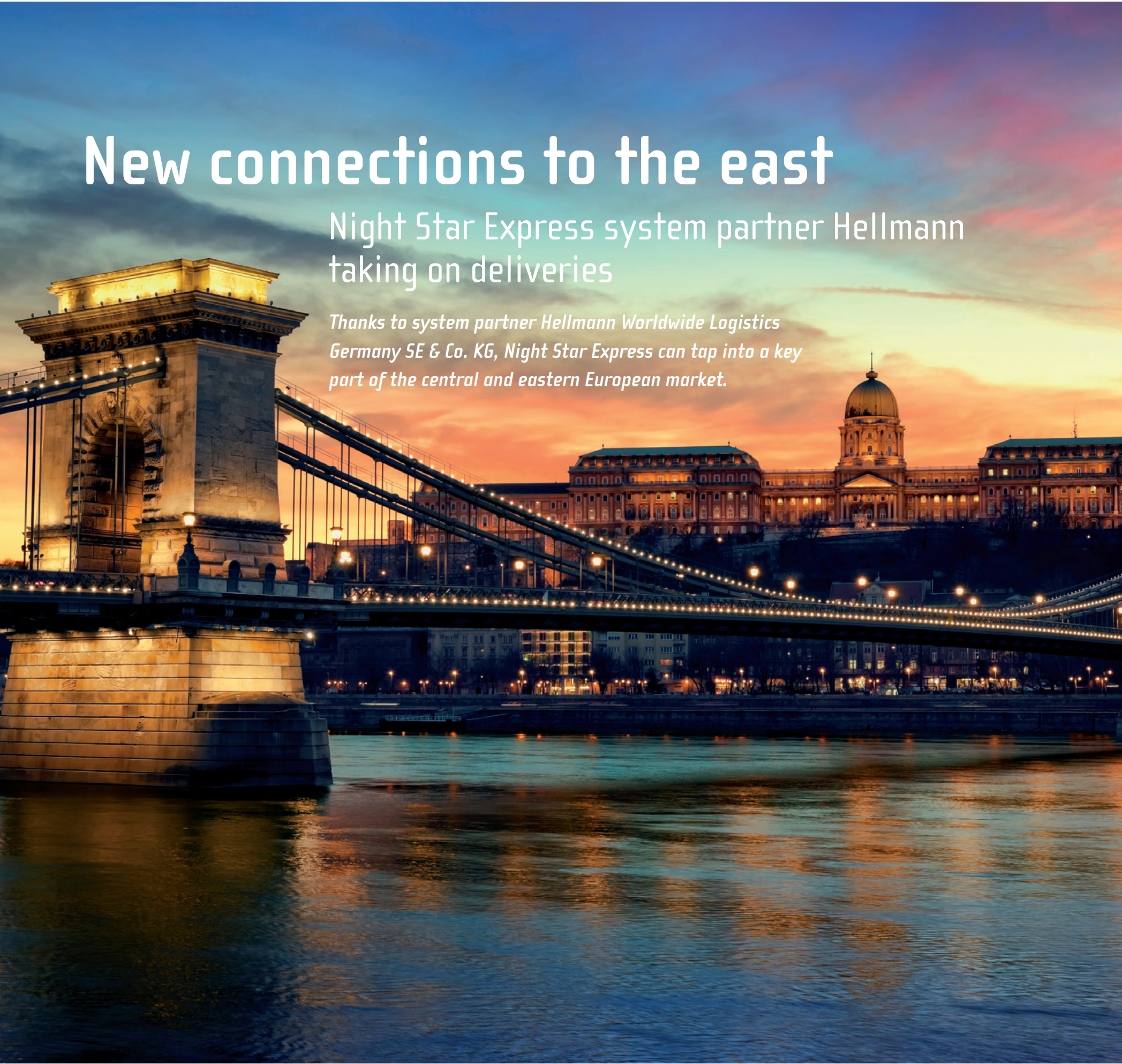


plot measuring 13 hectares, this will absorb around 8,000 tonnes of CO2, which corresponds to approximately 11–12 million kilometres driven. And we will continue to make environmental protection something you can feel.



Night Star Express as their service provider. Real-time information is a valuable source of information for logistics processes. This is where intelligent networks come into their own, ensuring the secure exchange of information between the partners in the Night Star Ex-





# New connections to the east

## Night Star Express system partner Hellmann taking on deliveries

*Thanks to system partner Hellmann Worldwide Logistics Germany SE & Co. KG, Night Star Express can tap into a key part of the central and eastern European market.*



Wilfried Hesselmann



Tamás Aradi



Zoltán Csombok

With the acquisition of Innight Express, based in Hungary and Romania, Hellmann Worldwide Logistics can now take care of the delivery of consignments to the eastern European countries of key significance for Night Star Express customers. Deliveries of consignments to Hungary, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Croatia are covered internally via our own overnight express network.

### DECADES OF EXPERIENCE IN EASTERN EUROPE

Since it was founded in 2004 in Törökbálint – 15 kilometres west of Budapest – Innight Express has become an overnight express specialist that primarily makes deliveries on behalf of clients in the automotive and agricultural sectors. For eight years now, the company has also been successfully represented on the Romanian market via its subsidiary Innight Romania Express in Ciorogârla. Both partners Tamás Aradi and Zoltán Csombok continue to act as managing directors, which means that there is no disruption to business operations and all business relationships with customers can be continued as before.

### EMERGING ECONOMIES

Wilfried Hesselmann, Chief Operating Officer CEP, Hellmann Worldwide Logistics, is confident: “The acquisition of Innight Express gives us access to two attractive emerging economies in the eastern European overnight express market. We were able to take on all 80 employees as part of the acquisition of Innight Express.” Night Star Express Managing Director Matthias Hohmann continues: “We are delighted that we will be expanding our European service within our joint venture. This will put us in a position to be able to offer our customers in eastern European countries the same high level of quality associated with Night Star Express.”

*If you would like to send consignments to one of the eastern European countries mentioned, please ask your contact partner at Night Star Express directly or send us an e-mail. We would be happy to advise you and provide all the information you need.*



# A successful partnership as equals!

## Bepco Parts and Night Star Express Hellmann B.V.

*Bepco Parts and Night Star Express Hellmann B.V. have been working together successfully for many years now. Every day, consignments leave the Belgian town of Hermalle-sous-Huy, headed for destinations all over the world. Night Star Express Hellmann B.V. takes care of the overnight deliveries for the Netherlands and Germany, as well as next-day deliveries within Switzerland and Austria.*



### A SPECIALIST AMONG GENERALISTS

Bepco Parts is one of the world's leading providers of replacement parts and equipment for tractors and agricultural machinery. As a reliable partner for companies all over the world, Bepco works exclusively with corporate clients. Bepco Parts supplies an extensive range of premium brands for competitive prices. Bepco Parts has been using the overnight express service from Night Star Express Hellmann B.V. for many years in order to supply retailers and customers with replacement parts as quickly as possible. All of the contacts at Bepco are unanimous: "The delivery performance of Night Star Express Hellmann B.V. to us in the agricultural sector has continually improved in recent years and, as a result, Bepco Parts is very happy with the partnership."

### HOW ARE BEPCO CONSIGNMENTS TRANSPORTED?

Several vehicles a day depart from the Belgian town of Hermalle-sous-Huy, where the main office and warehouse of Bepco Parts are located, headed for the Night Star Express hubs. Consignments for Germany, Switzerland and Austria are transported onwards via the Consolidation Hub West in Düsseldorf. The consignments for the Netherlands reach the hub in Maasmechelen in Belgium later in the evening, before going on to 's-Heerenberg in the Netherlands. A high level of quality is as-

pired to by all of these sites, so that Bepco Parts can offer all of its customers and retailers a premium overnight and daytime delivery service.

Daniel Siemes (Inside Sales/Account Bepco Parts, Night Star Express Hellmann): "The close contact with the various Bepco sites has been exceptional for years! The day-to-day operations are discussed informally and guid-

ance is provided where necessary. We can state with confidence that we are able to work together to achieve a high level of quality. 'Together' can also be seen as the keyword that enables us to continue our long-lasting partnership. All in all, Bepco Parts is a highly esteemed client within our network, and we hope that we will be able to continue this easy working relationship for many years to come!"

