

Logistics today and tomorrow

Logistics as we know it today still has very substantial potential for optimization. At the same time, with the convergence of the Internet and industrial processes, Industry 4.0 offers new opportunities.

The general euphoria often overshadows questions of costs and the real benefits to the customer.

A well-known, ISO 9001:2008 certified manufacturer installed window shutters despite obvious transport damage. These were replaced only after 6 months and a lot back and forth, and then the customer found that there were shade differences between the slats.

A world-famous washing machine manufacturer, a winner of several awards, contrary to all expectations operates a company-owned online shop just as a small retailer would. In the present case an approval is not obtained in time to enter the same article into the system with different article numbers, an order is forgotten (which the customer has noticed) and in the end, 2 orders for the same customer, are packed on the same day, not in a single carton, but as two separate shipments of which one is packed in a reusable container despite there being sufficient space in the carton. 3 days after delivery, the first reminder is received, mentioning that the recipient is already in default of payment for 26 days.

A book dealer notifies the customer of having dispatched the goods as soon as the goods are received from the supplier, and completely conceals the internal logistics. A market leader for entertainment electronics risks damage to the product, by selecting the wrong packaging.

Four current examples which show how logistics functions today - **or doesn't!**

On the other hand, driven by heavy research funding, there is the current discussion about Industry 4.0, the use of 3D printers and robots. This also includes the Internet which connects objects, information, people and machines with each other. Thus, for example, drones will soon be used in warehouse inventory management. For the researchers themselves, this exciting topic is obviously more attractive than, for example, the search for a solution to the age-old palette problem.

What is missing, as regards these innovations, is the attention to the high investments and operating costs which they bring along. The more complex the technology, the more intensive the costs and the dependence on the suppliers involved. Who can really afford this?

Amidst the general euphoria and spirit of optimism, the ultimate benefits which accrue to the customer remain unclear. Anyone who believes that logistical problems can be solved merely with the help of technological means is definitely barking up the wrong tree.

The best companies are those which have mastered their own processes and keep improving them continuously. This is the basic requirement in order to utilize new technologies in a logical and cost efficient manner. The initial approaches are already recognizable, in particular in the field of RFID technology and the 3D printer. These will undoubtedly have a marked influence on the logistics of the future.

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