Photos: Kaleris

More openness

by **Przemysław Myszka** & **Przemysław Opłocki**

Since the coronavirus pandemic, we have been seeing an accelerated uptake of digital solutions, also across the world of transport & logistics. We are talking with Scott Holland from Kaleris about whether the supply chain mess changed anything. We also discussed the challenges & opportunities that transportation players and tech companies serving them face (and is there indeed a difference between them).

Scott Holland, Chief Product Officer, Kaleris

■ **What has changed for Kaleris since 2022's TOC Europe?**

After the acquisitions we did, our portfolio includes many supply chain solutions – from yard management, via terminal operating systems (TOS) and shipper TMS, to rail & road operation & maintenance systems. Our TOS offer contains three key elements: cloud software-as-a-service, a solution for mixed cargo terminals, and, naturally, for container facilities (in two versions: cloud IT lean footprint for terminals with standardised processes and advanced container operations).

We have spent much time looking at what's happening on the market. Among others, carriers are moving more & more into end-to-end, vertical-integration solutions, which may be a promising avenue to explore for us. We have been upgrading our solutions to accommodate what this trend can bring about. The rail & road operation & maintenance systems would be one example of that: serving hinterland depot markets. We have also been investing heavily in the mixed cargo segment. There has been a noticeable change regarding client TOS expectations: from 'give me nothing but throughput/just get it through the yard' to 'more efficiency/uptime.' That is why we've invested in schedulers and yard management during the past year. Data provision & openness would be the thing that would properly close our recent to-invest list.

In short, the whole supply disruption reminded our customers about the importance of resilience and flexibility. If anything, this months-long perturbation has accelerated many companies' digital journey. While deploying technology and learning how to use it performantly takes time, erecting another yard would likely take (almost) an eternity longer. Specifically, our clients asked us for advice on creating a more frictionless integration with their trading partners. In other words, operators began thinking outside their terminals' premises. Data interchange became even more critical for trade, overseas likewise overland. Some work involved 'squeezing' more of the 'lemon' they already had. A company was using, say, 10% of Kaleris' suite and now wanted to go

to 20%, or from 30% to as much as 80%. We have lately had a lot of such scaling-up work.
While the rail & road community was in the past somewhat slow on adopting digital solutions – slower than the maritime industry, not particularly known for moving fast & breaking things – the situation changed for them pro-tech too. It is all a system of connected vessels: even if you don't solve an issue 100% (and doing so is hardly the case), you still improve the entire logistics chain. Bettering terminal operations will also benefit land hauliers, and vice versa.

What are the challenges & opportunities that lay ahead of your organisation?

I wish there was a difference to that question and that these were different ten years ago & ahead! Technology is there, and it's evolving. I would like to say the same about change management and stakeholder alignment, yet, there's a noticeable difference between the two sides of the digital transformation coin.
It would be a godsend getting different players – carriers, terminals, hauliers, etc. – to march in the same direction (agreeing on where & how). Executive sponsorship might be either a head- or tailwind: pondering whether investing in hard- or software will get you the most bang for the buck.
Change management might be exceptionally hard if somebody has been working with a solution that doesn't break (so why fix it?). 'Better is the enemy of good' can be a tricky message to throw over such a silo attitude. Learning new skills can also be challenging, as, more often than not, new solutions do not mimic what a company has been working with for years. And, of course, we'll be working on EDI issues in 30 years just as we did three decades ago... Europe deserves an honourable mention as it pays greater attention to standardisation and regulations (and compliance with thereof), which drives innovation, e.g., on lowering harmful emissions.
More openness is what we probably need the most: for cooperation (on standards); for thinking out of the box (how my investments will improve others' businesses); for technology (perhaps betting on software to do the job instead of buying machinery or pouring more concrete). Other than that, a global regulatory body that fines everybody $100 each time someone sends a bad EDI file would undoubtedly move the needle in the right direction! ■