

Interview: Nil Tunasîřar â?? Managing Partner, Transorient, Turkey



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Nil TunaÅ?ar, managing partner of Transorient, discusses significance of tracking performance metrics among 3PL providers, the organizationâ??s technology overhaul, and also highlights the type of logistics solutions encompassed under Transorientâ??s Life Sciences and Biopharma line of business.

As an introduction for our readers, Nil, please provide some insight into Transorientâ??s longstanding history in Turkey and give an overview of where the company stands today.

We started our journey at the crossroad between Europe and Asiaâ??offering freight forwarding services from Turkey to neighboring countries. Over time, the company changed its direction concentrating on more value-added servicesâ??allowing us to become experts in alternative forms of transportation including air and intermodal. Weâ??ve strived to provide services that cater to a broader spectrum of the supply chainâ??starting from order management to packing, warehouse handling, customs brokerage and quality control functions.

I receive lots of questions on how weâ??ve survived and managed to keep up a sustainable growth throughout our 54 years of history. In logistics, success is generally defined by two major criteria: seamless flow of information and speed of commodities. For Transorient, we always had a broader conception. Our success lies not so much what we do, but how we do it. We approach logistics with an analytical point of viewâ??designing robust processes and implementing comprehensive SOPs. We also meticulously measure our performances with both internal and external KPIs. The aim is to quantify our success and transform it into something tangibleâ??only then can we pursue continuous process and perform improvement, which is how weâ??ve come to secure our leading position today.

What makes Transorient the ideal partner for optimizing supply chain logistics?

We design and put all the processes on paperâ??now with roughly 25 internal SOPs. An on-going objective, we always push for incremental improvement and seek new ways of pushing the bar higher with regards to quality standards and customer satisfaction. Furthermore, we showcase our performance metrics for our clients to see, allowing them evaluate our competency using their own judgement. At the core of these measures, bringing these KPIs and SOPs together, is a comprehensive IT platformâ??the business activity management (BAM) software, which weâ??ve recently begun integrating. Many of our activities will be encompassed in the software, such as sending pre-alerts and notifying clients of triggersâ??effectively allowing Transorient to deliver an unparalleled level of service for our customers. This software constitutes increased transparency and reliability for all of our clients, agents, partners, and stakeholders. Before the end of this year, weâ??re rolling out the second phase of this new system implementation, and perhaps the most appealing aspect of this rollout is that there will be no disruption of service for our constituents. Few companies in Turkey have made the investments to adopt such a sophisticated system, though the rest of the industry is gradually starting to recognize the importance of a seamlessly connected

network and the overall value of technology from a logistics standpoint.

What direction do you plan on taking Transorient now, as managing partner?

We have two primary projects in the company right now. The first revolves around environmentally sustainable logistics. We are switching freight models that we've been traditionally strong into greener alternatives. By the end of this year, we're looking to switch 70 percent of our road freight traffic into eco-friendly intermodal solutions by combining inland waterways with sea and rail transportation into Europe. We're starting transition of all other industries, aside for pharma, into this newly established intermodal service which has consistently grown 15 percent every month now.

Through our expansive range of container assets, we also act as a service provider to many large multinational forwarders acting as a new profit channel.

The second major target is to improve the infrastructure in our pharma activities.

Transorient will probably be the first GDP certified 3PL company in Turkey in 2015. We plan to enlarge our warehouse and domestic distribution capabilities in the pharma industry by expanding our inhouse distribution network together with proper equipment in temperature controlled settings to handle biologic shipments.

We trust that these new features will further highlight our unique positioning in Turkey.

Can you elaborate on the type of services Transorient is offering the Life Sciences and Biopharma industries?

We launched the Life Sciences and Biopharma line of business in 2008. Today we are acting as a 3PL logistics service provider mainly in clinical trial sector: We import medicines and handle ambient and temperature controlled distribution to roughly 50 destinations in Turkey mainly hospitals and also direct to the patients in some cases. We also aid in collecting blood, urine and tissue samples from patients and send them to various central laboratories scattered globally.

In line with our history, we boast expertise and connections in accommodating customs regulations in the most streamlined and effective manner. Through our sister company that specializes in customs brokerage we give consultancy services in documentation, licencing and customs brokerage which is critical in a heavily regulated country. This service initiates a smooth platform for seamless importation for many pharmaceutical companies dealing with Turkey. Over the past eight years, Transorient has developed an unparalleled temperature-controlled collection and distribution network spanning 18 cities in Turkey through its own network. Before, we started off using courier services which is incompatible with the more fragile and specific needs of the industry placing even greater value on having our own network. Also, having established service contracts with multiple airlines, we are now one of the largest IATA agents out of 40 in Turkey.

What were the company's initial aspirations in targeting this market segment?

We've always enjoyed time-sensitive logistics operations that require meticulous and structured planning with no room for failure. For many years we have been active and premium service providers in logistics of live stage performances, music tours and movie-shootings. In such segment trust and reliability are paramount for a logistics company.

The pharma industry demonstrates many parallels to this characterization requiring the utmost standards in time-sensitive arrangements without failure. The most difficult part is creating the

infrastructure to maintain constant temperatures between 2 to 8 or between 15 to 25 degrees, as any conditions exceeding that band may destroy the biologic contents. Aside from cold chain management, we've made substantial investments in creating an expansive distribution network, allowing us to bring blood samples from Turkey to New York within 48 hours, guaranteed.

At the end of the day, we enjoy the challenge and stress associated with fulfilling that promise.

How would evaluate Transorient's positioning among other 3PL competitors offering sector-focused solutions?

Clinical trials within pharma is still a niche market in which multinationals are becoming more active. Logistics companies are restricted in this capacity. Overall, I would say there are no more than five major players in this space, including ourselves. This year, we have provided 3PL services to over 300 clinical studies. The big jump was actually last year, in 2014, when this particular line of business grew an impressive 52 percent, and we only see 3PL providers such as Transorient taking an increasingly larger role moving forward.

Spanning your tenure as managing partner with Transorient, what would you consider your greatest milestone or accomplishment?

Together with my staff, I'm proud of how we were able to transform Transorient from a small, but respectable family-owned company to a medium-scale, prominent worldwide 3PL brand. It's a 100 percent Turkish investment; all our progress and growth so far have been a direct result of our own hard work and efforts—not just from a financial resources perspective, but the visionary direction as well. We've assessed the market, analysed dynamics, established the proper infrastructure, and effectively capitalized on every single opportunity afforded to us, without sacrificing our quality standards. We currently have 68 people employed in the company and not aiming to expand rapidly—in terms of infrastructure and headcount. For us, it's about refining our current processes through automation, consolidation, or even elimination, and use the freed up capacity to develop more methods of improving client satisfaction.

Personally, I liken the Turkish industry landscape to a minefield. Going through the ups and downs of the sector without sustaining damage is far from a walk in the park. Consequently, my ambitions do not revolve around becoming an industry giant, but instead focus on helping Transorient navigate the volatile dynamics of the logistics industry, while preserving the utmost standards of quality, and in turn, customer satisfaction.

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