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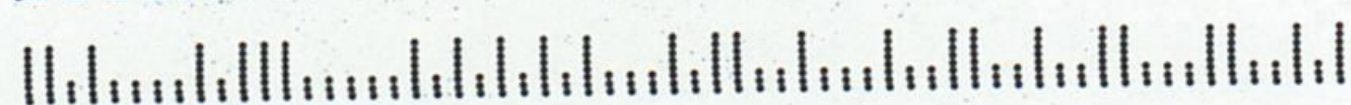
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Where will the air cargo leaders come from?

Not Just a Job!

by Ian Putzger



Careers in air cargo have to become less of an accident to draw in the leaders of tomorrow.

Over the past 18 months many of the heads of cargo at the large airlines in North America—from Northwest Airlines to Continental, from Delta to Air Canada—have moved on.

The afflicted carriers have been able to find talented replacements, but the exodus at the top raises questions where the industry's leaders of tomorrow will come from. This is not a North American problem but a worldwide challenge.

“There is a shortage of talent in the industry,” says Ram Menen, senior vice president-cargo at Emirates Airlines. Finding the right mix is tricky, he adds. “You need a blend of academic qualification and hands-on experience.”

Forwarders are facing the same dilemma. Helmut Berchtold, managing partner of logistics recruitment specialists adiConsult, finds that most candidates are either well-educated on the business front but lack a foundation in operations or vice versa. The situation reminds him of the early generation of IT managers, who typically were tech geeks with little knowledge of business parameters.

This is because many firms tend to recruit talent from within the industry, pilfering their competitors rather than bring in outsiders and train them in air cargo.

“Getting talent from the competition is the *modus operandi*,” Berchtold observes. ▸

Bob Imbriani, vice president-international operations of Associated Global Systems and an adjunct professor at Baruch College in New York, finds that except for the large multinational organizations, this is still an industry where experience counts at least as much as education. Many companies have been privately held, with owners and family members in senior management positions.

The picture has been changing slowly, on both ends of the paycheck. A growing number of operators look for an academic background as well as industry experience in their new generation of managers. For their part, graduates who enter the industry are showing a stronger focus on logistics and a clearer idea what the industry is about, says Hannah Kuebel, who looks after management development at Lufthansa Cargo.

In the past, air cargo was often an accident in the career. Traditionally, there seem to have been two main avenues into the sector. Either people were attracted by the romance of aviation and ended up managing boxes, or they just stumbled into the business.

Imbriani points out that air cargo has not traditionally been viewed by the public as a career. Logistics may seem less glamorous than merchant banking, but the public perception is to some extent the industry's fault, argues Berchtold.

"The work that the industry is doing to attract people at an earlier stage is not sufficient," he criticizes. "We need to be on the radar screen of people at an earlier age, prior to making a career decision. We need to make it a career choice and not a job, and for that it has to have an educational foundation."

Other industries have been more proactive, both in terms of recruiting talent at universities and sponsoring colleges and courses. Menen thinks that industry bodies like The International Air Cargo Association ought to launch campaigns designed to improve the industry's image.

"We have to bring the message across that cargo is not moving boxes; it's part of international commerce, he says. "Companies like Siemens go to colleges and talk

to the kids. Sometimes they offer scholarships."

During the past two decades logistics courses have sprouted at universities and colleges, but this seems to have brought little benefit to the air cargo sector, remarks Menen. Most of the graduates from these courses are bent on careers with large shippers. They view air cargo as a subset of the broader challenges of managing supply chains, and the classes usually do not go deep enough to foster a more detailed understanding of this industry.

Early last year, Lufthansa Cargo started a traineeship program designed to develop talent and groom them for leading positions in the organization.

"We look to get the right people and develop them internally more than getting good people from outside," says Kuebel.

Graduates who focused on logistics in their studies are eligible for the program, which runs 12-18 months, depending on the background of the candidates. During that time they are given a blend of theoretical and practical experience in opera-

tional, sales and steering functions. Upon completion of the program they are not immediately moved into senior positions, but they are marked for a trajectory to the top and receive further development support on an individual rather than a formal level, Kuebel says.

Emirates favors a strategy of bringing in people to teach them the air cargo business first before sponsoring their academic education.

"You can have all sorts of visions of grandeur, but if you're not in control where the rubber meets the tarmac, you're going nowhere," Menen comments.

Berchtold has a problem with the lack of standards regarding logistics degrees.

"Any school can run a program, and out comes a graduate with a logistics degree—but the hiring manager has no idea what's behind this degree," he says.

At the moment the only clear standard in the industry is the customs brokerage license. If there were something similar for logistics or freight forwarding, this would

(continued on page 36)



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Not Just a Job!

(continued from page 24)

be very helpful, agrees Imbriani.

adiConsult has joined hands with the University of Rostock in Germany to develop a program that would have clearly defined criteria. The university intends to launch a course next year that blends academic studies with practical experience.

For the first academic year this envisages 28 weeks of studies and 24 weeks of hands-on training. Teaching modules will include global logistics, leadership, business management, micro- and macroeconomics, strategy and marketing, accounting and controlling, maths and statistics, and corporate governance. The course will lead to a bachelor of science degree in global logistics, or a master of science in global logistics.

The concept has been met with lively

interest in the industry, and several top executives took part in a deep brainstorming session this summer to discuss what should be part of the curriculum, Berchtold reports.

He adds: "We look to less than 20 students to launch the program. We will have no problem getting that number."

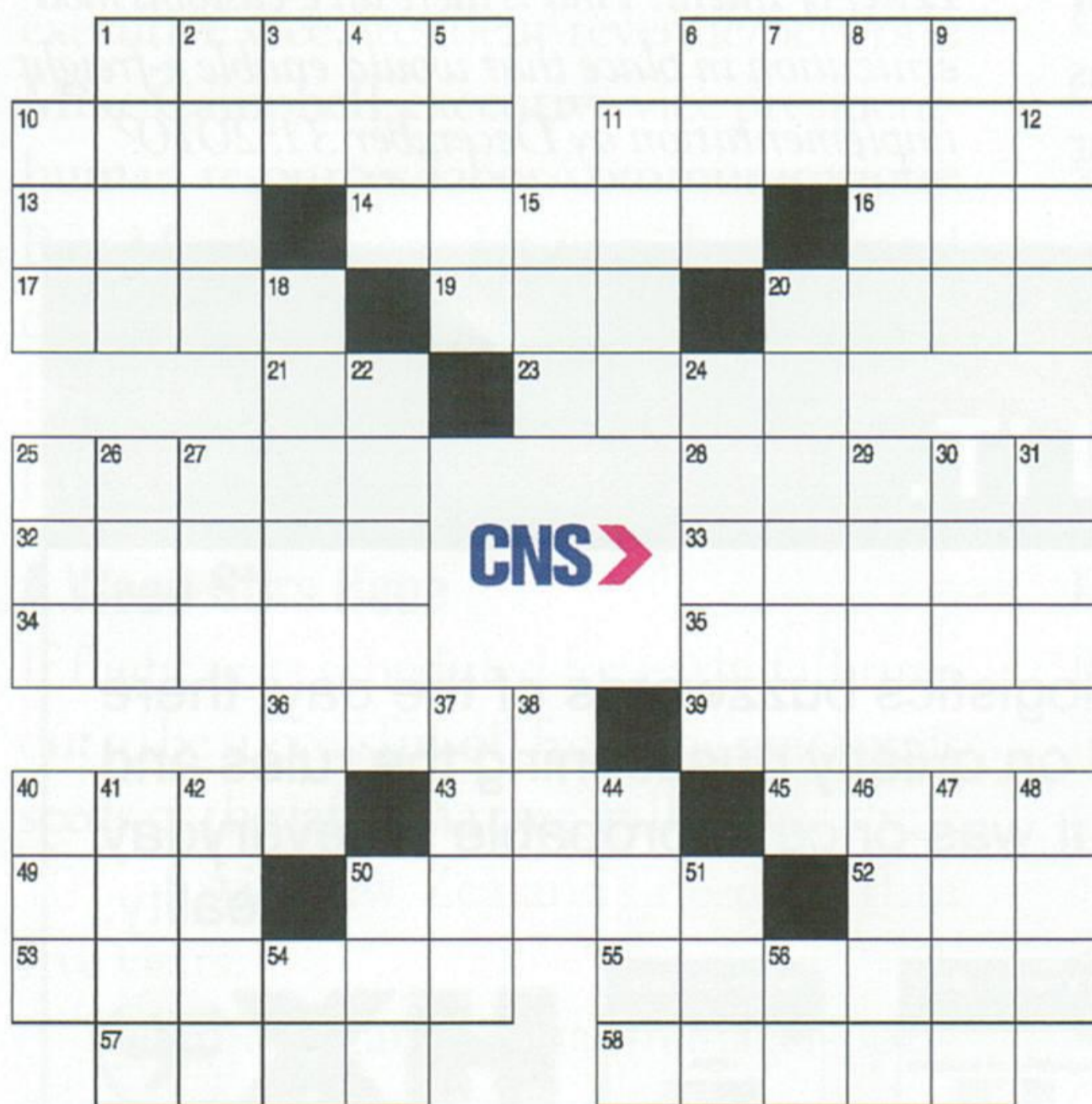
The course will be open to individuals as well as to students sponsored by their employers, but the bulk will most likely be sent by their companies, he figures. There are various options available, from a full company sponsorship to students covering the full cost of the course out of their own pockets. If the employer foots the entire bill, the student has to commit himself to stay with the firm for a number of years or pay back the education costs. Berchtold does not see this as a deterrent for candidates.

"You hit the ground running," he says. "You have a company to go to for the first few years after your degree."

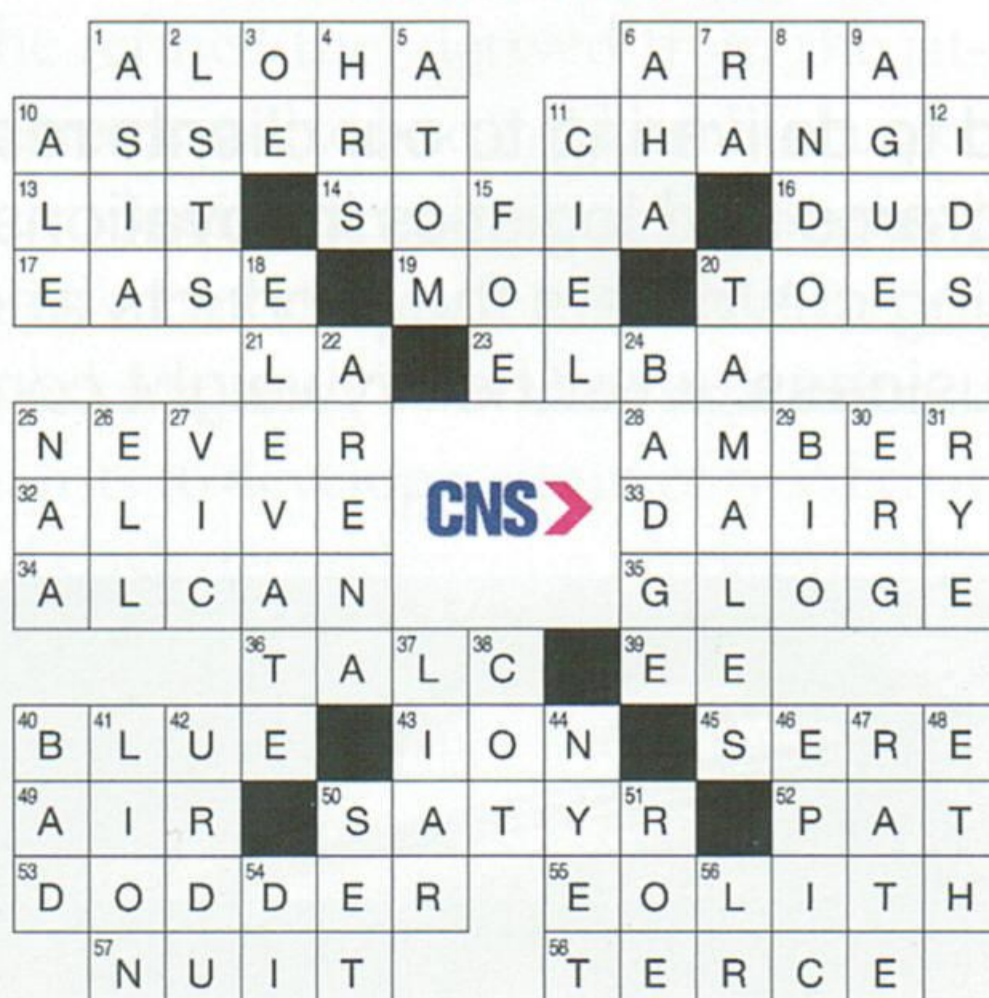
Lufthansa Cargo has no such clause in its agreements with participants in the traineeship program. Given the inclination in the industry to lure away the talent from next door, how worried should employers be about their carefully nurtured talent being poached by rivals? The German carrier conducted a survey to find out what its rising stars were seeking and came up with a number of interesting discoveries.

"Remuneration was not as important as we had expected," reports Kuebel. "People were more interested in what perspectives does the company offer to me. How can I advance my career? Am I given responsibility, challenges, and how are my achievements appreciated?"

Fall Crossword Puzzle



Solution to Last Issue's Puzzle



Across

- Active cargo division of bankrupt airline
- La Donna e Mobile*, e.g.
- State
- Singapore's airport
- Aglow
- Bulgarian destination
- Failure
- Stare rudely
- Without effort
- Twinkle ____
- Western city
- Italian island
- At no time
- Yellow fossil resin
- Far from departed
- Type of farm
- Highway, e.g.
- Inscription on a tombstone
- Magnesium silicate
- Robert Burns' "eye"
- Color popularly used in airline names
- Electrically charged atom
- Withered
- Beethoven's ____ *Ecossaise*
- Greek sylvan diety
- Stroke gently
- Totter
- Stone Age Tool
- Gounod's ____ *de Walpurgis*
- One-third

Down

- Region of high air cargo activity
- Wartime vessels (abbr.)
- Diphthong
- Four-baggers (abbr.)
- Tiny particle
- Exclamation of discovery
- Sun god
- Geographical combining form
- Under-the-weather symptom
- Popular beverage
- Sky, in PAR
- Proofs of identity (abbr.)
- One on the opposing side
- Raise
- Highly seasoned food items in MEX
- Locus for gladiators
- Scout's Merit ____
- Absolutely not! (colloq.)
- Former measure of length
- Popular name for London theater
- Combining form meaning life
- Work unit
- Cereal plant
- Baron Munchausen, e.g.
- Resting place
- Vile
- Indonesian air carrier
- Language spoken in BLR
- Soviet response
- Odyssey*, e.g.
- Air freight price
- Formerly suffix indicating third person singular
- Arrangement on a stage
- Asian deer
- Prefix for double
- Monogram of member of famous British stage family