

Integrated transport systems key to successfully operating in Africa

 By Cari Van Wyk

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With a growing logistics network between SADC countries, it's important to keep mind of the requirements to operate successfully in a diverse and often challenging African environment. We recently published [an article](#) in which Hennie van Wyk, general manager at Crossroads Distribution, a logistics company that provides a range of supply chain solutions, highlighted three areas Logistics partners have to get right. We asked Van Wyk to tell us more about operating in Africa.



Hennie van Wyk

What is necessary for a successful logistics/distribution operation in Africa?

Hennie van Wyk: Experienced management with integrated management systems including warehousing of goods, reliable vehicles and a driver team to support management effectively and accurately in decision-making. Reliability and to be on time goes a long way, especially with extended long-distance cross-border trips.

What are some of the biggest challenges logistics companies are facing in Africa?

Van Wyk: Inadequate road infrastructure and mechanical as well as operational backup.

Transiting procedures – non-harmonised transport rules and standards (user charges, cross-border charges, insurance, etc.)

Limited and uncoordinated customs working hours

Infrastructure impediments which negatively impacts on cross-border road transportation

Bottlenecks

Longer journeys that lead to higher production cost

High cost impacted by changes in the demand cycle.

How does the development of new ports and hubs influence operating in Africa, specifically SADC countries?

Van Wyk: New ports and hubs will increase road transport volumes, with a lack of rail transportation as an option. It will also change the game plan depending on where volume will be moving from and to, and will impact on the on existing hubs or infrastructure.

Based on the outcome of the Programme for Infrastructure Development in Africa (PIDA), the overall transport sector is to work towards an integrated continent where transport infrastructure and services enable the free movement of goods and people as summarised by the following statements:

- Improving the connection between African capitals and major centres with modern, paved roads;
- Satisfying demand at the least cost and by prioritising landlocked countries, while minimising the environmental impact;
- Developing modern African Regional Transport Integration Network (ARTIN) corridors and air transport services to bring

the performance up to international best practice levels with regard to efficiency, cost, reliability and safety.

- The SADC Transport Sector Plan (TSP) is in line with the PIDA outcomes as described above.
- Furthermore, the PIDA Priority Action Programme (PAP) for the transport sector contains four major programmes in the SADC region, namely: North-South Multimodal Corridor, Central Corridor, Beira and Nacala Multimodal Corridor and Southern African Hub Port and Rail Programme.

The TSP contains significant projects around the North-South Multimodal Corridor, as well as the Beira and Nacala Multimodal Corridor. Most of the projects are, however, centred in the vicinity of Dar-es-Salaam in the Central Corridor, with a concentration of projects in the Southern African Hub Port and Rail Programme.

■ **Technology must-haves for operating in Africa?**

Van Wyk: Integrated onboard management systems will assist with more effective operations and management. Vehicle Tracking, onboard cameras, e-pod and load volume control systems, for example, Bartech or similar technology on fuel transport tankers.

Onboard vehicle fuel and technical monitoring systems via cell technology.

Onboard driver monitoring system which can be utilised to assist driver training and improve bad driving habits.



Image sourced from [FleetWatch](#)

■ **What are some significant changes supply chains in Africa are experiencing?**

Van Wyk: Volume increase by road, change in commodity demand and price cycle, congestion, safety and compliance, and the integration of systems to accommodate regional challenges in the road transport corridors and borders posts.

■ **What can be done to address the complexity of logistics and distribution in Africa?**

Van Wyk: The integration of the SADC community systems interface can go a long way to assist in the distribution of products throughout the region.

For transport to play its role and to impact effectively on the integration of the SADC, multi-model transport systems should be developed. The SADC regional master plan (RIDMP) represent a step towards the creation of integrated regional transport infrastructure and operations inter alia through the construction of missing links as well as through the establishment of multi-modal interchange facilities along strategic transport development corridors.

SADC has formulated policies and strategies for regional integration in support of economic growth and development. The economic benefits expected from regional integration, as shown elsewhere around the world, include increased market size, improved intra-regional trade and investment flows, and increased transfers of technology and experience.

Hennie van Wyk answered the questions with some input from Pieter Verster who assists with Xborder operations at Crossroads.

ABOUT CARI VAN WYK

Cari Coetzee is a contributor to Bizcommunity Tourism, Agriculture and Lifestyle.

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