

Universal Transport makes unusually strong start to 2017

# Big firms look to SMEs

Despite lower supplier capacities, margins in the international heavylift market are under pressure. Holger Dechant's credo is that it is precisely the small, specialised service providers that score points with major enterprises. The managing director of Universal Transport offered Christian Doepgen a personal insight into his assessment of the market and the company.

## Mr Dechant, what is your assessment of the prospects for the heavylift and project logistics market?

We've currently passed the low point of the parabola – we're now definitely on the upswing. But the trend shows more peaks than waves.

## What is the situation in Universal Transport's individual business units?

The conventional sector is well positioned. The road business is suffering from the fact that truck drivers with experience are hard to come by. The 'more Indians, fewer chiefs' paradigm would be appropriate in this context. Unfortunately, this is not always taken into

account when it comes to the motivation of staff. Up to now, we've managed to solve the problem.

## How is business going at the moment?

We got off to a strong start in 2017. Typically, the first quarter of the year is weak, but this year it was different. We're also optimistic about the outlook for the rest of this year.

## What do you attribute this initial success in 2017 to?

Last year we made some changes to how we allocate responsibilities, and we're now reaping the first fruit of this effort. Also, the utilisation of our own

capacities in today's spot market plays an increasingly important role. We've also noticed that the shortage of supply in the market has strengthened demand.

---

"The current trend shows more peaks than waves."

---

## Where is your company's project business especially brisk these days?

We're currently focusing on project transports to and from Russia in places like Krasnodar and St Petersburg. A major Siemens project in Egypt, for which we founded Universal Transport Egypt, is also going well.

**AMERICAN Breakbulk**  
October 17-19, 2017  
George R. Brown Convention Center  
HOUSTON, TEXAS

**Goldhofer**  
Made for a mission.

**REFERENCE#19:**  
**TRANSPORTING A TURBINE.**  
**6.30 M WIDE, 5.70 M HIGH.**

For self-propelled or towed-trailer operations. With switchable extra tractive force. With mechanical disconnect at high speed. For transport operations without moving the load onto another vehicle for efficient fleet management: the ADDRIVE switchable drive. Manufactured by Goldhofer. Made for a mission. Your mission?

ADDRIVE

[WWW.GOLDHOFER.DE](http://WWW.GOLDHOFER.DE)

### Your takeover of Züst & Bachmeier Project really made some waves...

Yes, Züst & Bachmeier Project is now a 100% subsidiary of our company. We're very pleased with the acquisition, which gives us a strong position in Russia. This brand has allowed us to position our services in a broader radius.

### Was it all about the name?

No, of course not. I see the company's staff as the most important asset. We've acquired 39 experienced project forwarders with regional expertise.

### How is your company positioned today?

Universal Transport generates a turnover of around EUR 180 million a year with its 700 employees. We're aiming for organic growth, and it works in our favour that large corporations frequently prefer medium-sized service providers that can offer more personalised service.

### What is your recipe for success?

Here's the philosophy: never a single sector, never a single customer, never a single employee should be alone. This

Photo: ITJ



**Holger Dechant** (on the right) considers the employees to be one of the firm's important assets.

is how we avoid monoculture and dependency.

### What poses the greatest challenges for management?

In the area of staffing, carefully selected, mixed teams based on regions and sectors have proven themselves. In addition, in today's environment, long-term planning over a six-to-nine month time-frame is critical. Along with demand,

deadlines for official permits are a factor that cannot be underestimated at all. A tower for a wind turbine that we have to deliver over ten trips requires ten permits. And we also have to factor in any potential delays.

### What is your motto?

Don't worry, be heavy. You've got to be able to listen to your customers and be worthy of their trust.

An advertisement for Geodis Super Heavy Lift. At the top center is the Geodis logo, a stylized figure in a circle, with the word "GEODIS" in large white letters below it. Underneath the logo is the tagline "We logistic your growth". The background is a dark blue gradient. In the lower half, there is a large, detailed model of a multi-decked cargo ship, heavily loaded with blue and yellow containers. The ship is shown from an elevated perspective, with other smaller vessels nearby. At the bottom of the advertisement, the words "SUPER HEAVY LIFT" are written in large, bold, white capital letters.