



Little over a year ago **the world's largest outsourced ULD management firm** went through a rebranding exercise. CHEP Aerospace Solutions became **Unilode**. And the company has not looked back. In the last **12 months** it has **expanded its business** and **restructured the organisation with future growth in mind**.

In September, former president and CEO Ludwig Bertsch – the person responsible for guiding the company through the rebrand – moved upstairs to join the board of directors. Benoit Dumont stepped into the vacant role. It seems both the rebrand and change of management is faring well for the firm.

Chief Commercial Officer Don Jacobs tells *Freightweek* that since the rebrand, the company has bolstered its ULD management customer base to in excess of 40, serving them with a fleet of more than 120,000 ULDs. Among those new customers are Cargojet, FlyGlobal, Surinam Airways, Thai Lion Air, and Western Global.

"We have also renewed our ULD management partnership with AirBridgeCargo and are in the final stage of signing a ULD management agreement with a number of airlines in Europe and Asia," says Jacobs. "We see an increasing appetite for outsourcing ULD management and expect that the market will double within the next five years."

From a network perspective, the company opened - and will be opening - several new repair centres, most notably in Cincinnati, Sao Paulo, and Jeddah.

"We have a ULD management office in Santiago de Chile and in São Paulo to support our ULD management partnership with 

Unilode eyes growth through digitisation



Don Jacobs,
Chief Commercial Officer, Unilode

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DON JACOBS, CHIEF COMMERCIAL OFFICER, UNILODE



LATAM,” says Jacobs. “Given that Latin America’s largest airline is already a Unilode customer, we cannot expect a huge expansion in the region, nevertheless, we have a few carriers in our pipeline for ULD management or repair business.”

This isn’t the end of the line though. Jacobs says the company will be further expanding its US repair network in the near future.

“This will further strengthen our ULD management and ULD and galley cart repair business,” he adds. “Doing so offers an excellent opportunity for airlines to repair their equipment at outstations rather than shipping damaged assets back to their hub, leading to higher asset availability.”

And while the US remains important, it is the Asian market that offers Unilode the biggest potential. Jacobs says this is in terms of both fleet management and repair opportunities.

“Singapore Airlines Cargo and Cathay Pacific Airways are our largest customers in Asia and as we are intensifying our business development efforts and are looking at establishing a presence at key hubs in the region, we expect to grow our business with major carriers in the near future,” he continues.

“Our CAAS and EASA certified repair station in Singapore has recently moved into a larger facility, and carries out ULD repairs for airlines based in Singapore, Australia, Hong Kong and the USA. Our global operations centre is located in Bangkok, and works 24/7 to support our ULD management customers, and we also have a ULD management office in Hong Kong.”

As well as bringing more customers on board, the firm has also sought to boost its offering. Since the start of the year, Jacobs says Unilode has intensified its efforts towards digital transformation. This accelerated process resulted in the firm

announcing plans to bring its own ULD tracking solution to market.

This solution is based on Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) tag, which is fully embedded into the structure of the ULD and is supported by a global interoperable reader infrastructure. In developing this product, Jacobs says the company has partnered with technology provider OnAsset Intelligence, and ULD manufacturer Zodiac Aerospace. Furthermore, it brought customers including AirBridgeCargo, Air Canada, Cargolux, and Cathay Pacific into the discussion. Bringing the carriers on board, provided much needed user input.

“When building the digital skyway there is no place for proprietary technology and therefore we have decided to make the technology protocols fully interoperable with the technology provided by other suppliers,” Jacobs continues. “This approach greatly enhances flexibility, which is what the industry and our customers are looking for.

“We will launch new products and services in addition to our core ULD management and ULD and galley cart repair services so that we can offer a more integrated ‘one-stop-shopping’ solution to our current and future customers,” he adds.

Jacobs also sees track and trace playing an important role in Unilode’s pharmaceutical and cool chain operations. While the company does not directly participate in the market, it provides strategic repairs for leading temperature-controlled ULD manufacturer Envirotainer and supports some of its ULD management customers with logistics support.

“Our digitisation project will provide significant benefits for the track and trace of high value goods as well,” says Jacobs. “And as this includes pharmaceutical products shipped by airlines, this might be a potential growth spot for our ULD management business.” ■