

AT Special Transport expands

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Working for the environment

Environmental work has always been an integral part of Ahola Transport's operations. If possible, our environmental efforts are more extensive than ever. A lot of work is needed, not least in our efforts to meet the environmental goals that the EU has put in place for transports in Europe by the year 2030. This magazine showcases many of the initiatives that are already visible to our customers and partners in the form of new investments and available services.

Since the start of the year, Ahola Transport has launched a new product called Green kilometers. The product is aimed at customers that are interested in and ready to commit to emissions neutral transports. We already have a number of customers who see this as an excellent way to achieve sustainability in their operations. For Ahola Transport, it is extremely important to be able to boost the achievement of a higher level of sustainability for both us and our customers.

We have started up a large undertaking to modernise our fleet of vehicles with the goal of lowering emissions. In 2020, our goal is that the majority of our trucks will be the highest Euro 6 class and the rest Euro 5s.

However, technology isn't the only area that Ahola is focussing on to reach its environmental goal. Our drivers took part in a Europe-wide competition for economical driving. It involved drivers from 60 different transport companies and many European countries. Ahola Transport's drivers came out on top in the competition. We are so proud and we want to share these driving skills with our customers in our daily work. Congratulations to our drivers!

One of the best methods for lowering emissions is to reduce empty trips and improve the capacity utilisation rate. These measures bring amazing results in terms of emissions from vehicles. So far during 2019, we have managed to reduce empty trips and improved the capacity utilisation rate. We will continue with a strong focus on our goal to significantly cut emissions.

Simultaneously with our focus on environmental work, our goal is to expand the range of services and products offered to our customers. The Special Transport segment has broadened its service portfolio through the acquisition of the company AT Install. We can now offer a total solution including transports, project management and installation, which has been well received and is in demand among our customers. The acquisition has already proven to have been a success for Ahola Transport. And more recently, AT Install's service portfolio has been further expanded through the acquisition of a prefabricated concrete installation unit in Oulu, Finland. We can now offer project management and installation in three areas: steel fabrica-



tions, worksite barracks installation and prefabricated concrete elements. All of these contribute to better service for our customers who are increasingly looking to buy bigger packages.

The strategic co-operation with Scania continues, above all, through the ongoing test driving of semi-autonomous trucks, also referred to as platooning. During autumn 2019, an upgrade of the transport equipment will take place. The new vehicles will be equipped with platooning technology. Collaboration with state agencies will continue with new tests during the autumn. The joint project consists of three parts, of which semi-autonomous driving is the biggest. At Ahola Transport, we are grateful for the chance to co-operate with a state agency.

This issue of Ahola Transport's magazine AT Info, contains information on the new alternative fuel HVO, how our vehicles are kitted out, our investments in marketing and social media efforts, or new steering system and our company's new employees. We hope this magazine gives you a look into Ahola Transport's operations and the latest news from the transport industry as well as what our company has to offer our current and new customers.

Have a pleasant and successful autumn and winter!

Hans Ahola

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New work method puts the focus on people

During 2019, Ahola Transport has taken new steps towards more proactive and effective transport planning. The new work routines benefit both customers and drivers.



More proactive transport planning improves efficiency, and both quality and the environment benefit.

Planning of the new work method that includes all tasks within transport planning began already in summer 2018. The new system improves both customer service and communication with the drivers and, at the same time, boosts efficiency and benefits the environment.

“The system has been carefully planned based on all of the tasks that are carried out within transport planning,” says Joakim Asplund who has been in charge of the development project.

The system takes customer service to the next level through proactive transport planning of customers’ goods flows. It can factor in customers’ transport needs in loading plans, making it more efficient and eco-friendly already when the customer books a delivery. At the same time, transport capacity can be utilised more effectively, which benefits both the environment and customers alike.

“We achieve both higher efficiency and better use of resources, while being better able to meet our customers’ transportation needs in a sustainable way,” says Asplund.

Better communication with the driver

After the system development, training and test period in autumn 2018, the system was completed at the turn of the year and was evaluated until summer 2019. The new system will reshape Ahola Transport’s operative organisation to work based on demand and supply of transport services in two roles: Customer Care and Route Planning.

“Our Customer Care department serves our customers and creates proactive transport plans for their flow of goods, creating a picture of how demand for transport services will look like going forward,” says Asplund.

This entails carrying out transport planning at an earlier stage, which frees up re-

sources for further optimisation at the time the transport takes place. At the same time, communication with the driver is strengthened with each vehicle receiving its own contact person. Asplund sees this as a huge improvement. It makes the driver’s day run more smoothly and ensures transport quality and efficiency.

“The new system enables transport planning that is not bound to a specific registration number; instead a freight unit is not linked to a register number until the booked loading date,” he explains.

Giving each driver a contact person puts the focus on the person and improves the communication between the driver, customer and transport planning.

“We wish to create even stronger relationships with our subcontractors and drivers,” says Asplund.

Complimenting digitalisation

The new system also meets Ahola Transport’s mission “taking responsibility for the flow of goods”.

The system improves operations both in terms of planning and out in the field, at the

office, at the load optimisation centre and for drivers in their trucks.

Transport Director Åke Nyblom also sees major benefits in the new system. He talks about considerable changes for both drivers and in the entire mindset at Ahola Transport.

“Behind every truck is a driver and it is the driver that does the work. The new system provides each driver with a single contact person, regardless of where they are. We also make sure that everyone receives service in their own language. This is key as Ahola Transport has large cross-border operations and subsidiaries in several countries,” Nyblom explains.

This is how they make sure that human contact receives the attention it deserves. As everything becomes more digitalised, also at Ahola Transport, there is a risk that people will be sidelined.

“Digitalisation is something we are focusing on big time. It is important and benefits us all, but we can’t forget about human contact. Throughout all this we wish to take care of our personnel who are, in the end, our most important resource,” says Nyblom. ■



Better communication between the driver, planning and the customer benefits all of the parties.



90 per cent lower emissions with HVO

Ahola Transport's new concept Green kilometers and a major push into renewable diesel will reduce environmental impacts for both customers and Ahola Transport itself.

Green kilometers

Without the logistics sector, modern society would come to a standstill. At the same time, countless daily transports from town to town and country to country lead to high emissions. The transport sector currently produces around 25 per cent of carbon dioxide emissions in the EU. The total emissions need to be reduced by 80 per cent by 2050. As a long-standing pioneer in this work, Ahola Transport is now taking new steps.

"Climate issues are the thing of today and the transport industry is one of the biggest sources of emissions. Cuts must be made wherever possible and we want to contribute to this process. We are focussing on digitalisation and environmental issues, and our goal is to be a pioneer within the transport industry," says Jimmy Ahola, Marketing and Communications Manager at Ahola Transport.

Already for years, Ahola Transport has pursued goal-driven environmental work. Effective transports, a high capacity utilisation rate, a modern and fuel-efficient fleet of vehicles and training for drivers have resulted in many milestones, certifications and climate successes.

"We are tackling climate issues in sever-

al ways. Our concept includes the way we carry out transports, with direct transports. We don't have a terminal network, we don't drive any set circuits or routes; our starting point is the actual need. We construct the routes based on the customer's routes to avoid sending out empty trucks," says Ahola.

"This year, the goal is to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by nine per cent."

Clear goal already this year

But the environmental work doesn't end there. New ambitious environmental goals are in place for 2019.

"This year, the goal is to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by nine per cent," says Jimmy Ahola.

Lower fuel consumption will achieve a reduction of two per cent and the remaining seven per cent will be achieved by using alternative fuel in the vehicle fleet. This

is where HVO fuel comes in and in order to succeed in this work and give customers a chance to contribute to a better climate, Ahola Transport has begun to offer a new concept during 2019.

"Our add-on service Green kilometers allows us to reduce the environmental impact of our transports significantly and easily quantifiably. Transports under Green kilometers use HVO fuel. The fuel gives the same performance as traditional diesel but produces 90 per cent lower emissions of greenhouse gases," says Ahola.

The abbreviation HVO stands for Hydro-treated Vegetable Oil and it is entirely manufactured from materials like cooking oil and fat from the food industry and restaurants. In other words, the raw materials are 100% renewable and do not cause additional CO₂ emissions.

Supplemented by digitalisation

The new service further expands Ahola Transport's total concept and environmental focus.

"In addition to the Green kilometers concept, we are reacting to climate challenges

through digitalisation," says Jimmy Ahola. This work has continued for several decades but took off for real in the 2000s.

"We are focusing intensely on digitalisation in a relatively traditional sector. It's a key component of our operations. We have an in-house-developed ERP system, Attracs, for steering our transports. The development of the program started in 1996. The program was implemented back in 2003 and the development is on-going," says Ahola.

In addition to the more technology-heavy

"We stay up to date on developments in both gas-driven and e-vehicles."

solutions for mitigating climate change, the company trains its drivers in economical driving. The Green Wheels programme involves technology that both measures improvements and coaches drivers in real time. Factors that can increase the eco-friendliness of drivers are measured and analysed in order to maximise the conservation of energy.

"All of this, combined with our new Green kilometers service, gives us an excellent ca-

pability for effective and eco-friendly transports," says Ahola.

A call for better infrastructure

HVO fuel is a relatively new phenomenon in the industry. In practice, HVO is a big win for the climate but unfortunately also involves certain challenges for daily operations at Ahola Transport.

"The infrastructure sadly does not support the use of HVO fuel. The fuel is not available everywhere and this, of course, involves some challenges for us," says Transport Director Åke Nyblom.

In Sweden, the infrastructure is better, but Finland is still behind in this respect. The actual use of the fuel does not involve anything out of the ordinary for the driver or the vehicle. The concrete experiences have so far been nothing but positive.

"We are really pleased but we will continue to monitor how the fuel impacts combustion, consumption and so on," says Nyblom.

Although Ahola Transport is currently focussing on HVO, it is open to other options, depending on what the future holds.

"HVO is right for us now, but progress is made all the time. We stay up to date on developments in both gas-driven and e-vehicles," says Åke Nyblom. ■

Satisfied subcontractors

For the Estonian company CH Trans, HVO works just like normal diesel but is much more eco-friendly.

One of Ahola Transport's subcontractors that is already using HVO is the Estonian company CH Trans OÜ from Tartu.

"We haven't noticed any difference compared to normal diesel. Two out of three trucks that drive for Ahola Transport run on HVO," says Mikko Haljasorg from CH Trans.

CH Trans uses HVO based on a customer's wishes. The deliveries are made between the Baltic countries and the Nordics.

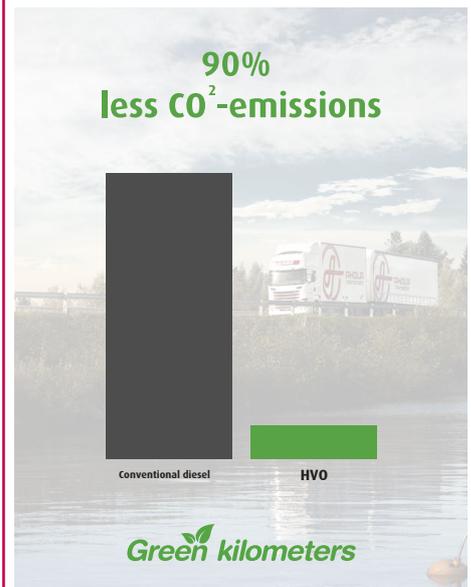
"We haven't noticed any difference compared to normal diesel."

"Ahola Transport pays for the difference in fuel price, so all we need to do is drive," says Haljasorg.

CH Trans has driven for Ahola Transport since 2014. ■



Ahola Transport's experiences with HVO are very positive. Regardless, Transport Director Åke Nyblom likes to stay up to date on developments in both gas-driven and e-vehicles.



New initiatives support EU limits

Solutions such as platooning and renewable diesel will help Ahola Transport to meet the upcoming tighter emission limits for heavy vehicles within the EU up until 2030.

Within ten or so years, emissions from new trucks and busses within the EU should be reduced by 30 per cent. This is the aim and the decision made by the European Parliament and the EU's member states earlier in 2019. This is the first time that the EU is instituting binding emissions limits for heavy vehicles. As early as 2025, emissions must decline by 15 per cent.

Today, heavy traffic accounts for a quarter of traffic emissions and six per cent of overall emissions. The limits will apply immediately

to large vehicle combinations, which account for the majority of emissions from heavy vehicles. In 2022, the emissions will also apply to light trucks and busses.

The new limits will apply to new vehicles and may contribute to minimising carbon dioxide emissions by an estimated 54 million tonnes over a decade.

Negotiations have been continuing for some time and various parties have criticised the limits as being either too high or too low. The limits can be viewed in the light of the

EU's goal of limiting climate change in line with the Paris Agreement. The agreement calls for a 40 per cent reduction in greenhouse emissions by 2030 compared with 1990. Greenhouse gases need to be reduced by 80 per cent by 2050.

Ahola Transport's many initiatives increasing the efficiency of transports, reducing fuel consumption and cutting down on emissions are a step towards achieving these goals. ■

Continued stable earnings development

The first half of the year continues to show a stable growth in turnover and profitability at Ahola Transport.

An improved capacity utilisation ratio and more effective transport setup led to an operating profit of over EUR 1.4 million in the first six months of the year, somewhat higher than the corresponding period of 2018. During the first half of 2019, the operations have experienced an improvement in their result.

The Ahola Transport Group also shows a slightly higher turnover for the first half year. For the first six months of the year, the turnover was EUR 53.2 million, compared to EUR 52.6 last year.

Within the road transport segment, profitability has doubled, while in IT and special transports, the volume and earnings development have been somewhat weaker during H1. Both IT and special transports are

expected to achieve better results during the second half of the year.

The outlook for the future appears positive overall. The goal of improving customer service and effectiveness in general have begun to yield results. Even though the European market is flagging slightly, development in the Nordics is positive and stable. The shortage of drivers, on the other hand, continues to be a challenge for the entire sector.

Within special transports, the new concept that includes installation has been a success. The IT operations' focus has been tightened. New overall systems are being built and are expected to create long-term results. In addition, the strategic collaboration with the truck manufacturer Scania involving semiau-

tonomous driving continues.

During the spring, Ahola Transport has also renewed its financial arrangements, transferring from accounts receivable factoring to using invoice factoring. This decreases the balance sheet total as the accounts receivable and long-term loans decline; but also affects liquidity in the short term. The goal is to restore the liquidity when the implementation has been completed.

Thanks to the good demand on the market and the positive development within the industry and trade, Ahola Transport's expectations for the first half of 2019 were met. Ahola Transport also believes in continued positive development and estimates that both the turnover and result for 2019 will improve compared with 2018. ■

Unique enthusiasm for new ideas

"It was the challenge that attracted me. There are few companies of this size in the area that also have their head office here. This was a challenge I couldn't turn down."

So says Niklas Kankkonen, Ahola Transport's new CFO who started in the summer. Even though the transport industry is completely new to him, he has significant and diverse experience in finance, administration and sales in Finland and abroad. He has worked in everything from receivable collection to training and learnt a thing or two about administration and people along the way.

"My previous job was about financial administration, personnel issues, sales and legal issues. There were very few areas that I didn't have contact with. I think that's a benefit to me now. At the same time, Ahola Transport is several times larger, both in terms of turnover and personnel, so of course it presents a challenge, but a challenge that I am looking forward to," he says.

People before numbers

In addition to Ahola Transport's size, Kankkonen is looking forward to working with and for the people at the company.

"Even though I work with data and numbers, people are what make a workplace and business. And this place seems to have a great sense of community."

Kankkonen points out that the financial department is primarily a support function, but in addition to existing for operational purposes, a CFO has to understand the company to allow it to operate as effectively as possible.

"There's no point in typing in figures if you can't understand the company and it doesn't support the operations."

Kankkonen believes that his varied career can be a benefit in finding new solutions at Ahola Transport.

"I've noticed that there is more than one way of doing things. Finding and improving ways of working is something that has always defined my career. I like fixing things, finding something that doesn't work, which happens in all companies, whether big or small."

As a new recruit to the company, Kankkonen praises Ahola Transport for its many efficiency-boosting and improvement initiatives over recent years.

"It's great to see that so many things run smoothly. People have worked hard, but the job is never done."

Kankkonen is also happy with the positive attitude towards change that defines Ahola Transport.

"There is an incredible enthusiasm and willingness to accept new ideas. People are never satisfied with what has been achieved; they always want to do better. This is what the ability to develop is based on."

Being a listed company helps

Kankkonen also has a positive view of Ahola Transport as a listed company. Being listed on the stock exchange always offers positive visibility.

"Ahola Transport is a well-known brand in the Nordic countries and Baltics. Being listed on the stock exchange has somewhat increased its visibility, which is something we can build on."

At the same time, Kankkonen is aware of the fact that listed companies face certain requirements.

"Operations need to be effectively organised. The organisation needs a quality management system. We also need to maintain contact with the stock exchange, investors and society in general. As a publicly listed company, we don't exist just to create value for our owners and customers, but also for the whole of society." ■



The challenges of a large company and a drive for continuous development attracted Niklas Kankkonen to Ahola Transport. He has been CFO since June.

AT Cargo best at eco-friendly driving

Ahola Transport took home first place from among close to 9,100 drivers and 120 teams at the European Vehco Eco-Driving Challenge. Ahola Transport was the victor with the best result in the Freight Companies category.



Caj Björkskog was handed Ahola Transport's prize for most eco-friendly freight company at the prize ceremony in Sweden in March.

Ahola Transport's representative was its subsidiary AT Cargo. Among the competitors were close to 60 other companies from around Europe. The competition ended after the final quarter of 2018 and when the points were added up, AT Cargo was the winner among the Finnish competitors and had the best index among all of the transportation companies.

"In 2006, we asked the entire personnel if they believed that we could be the best in the world at something and whether we wanted to take on the challenge. The goal was to be able to offer the most efficient transports possible and create added value for the customer. Since then, it has been written into our strategy to continuously remind us of our goals. We have now definitely reached some of them."

So says Carl Björkskog who had the honour of accepting the first prize at the Eco-driving Challenge prize ceremony in Sweden in March. Björkskog works at Ahola Transport with driver training, for example, and has worked on the company's major initiatives in eco-friendly driving for a long time.

"We have now reached the goal of being the best in economical driving behaviour in the Freight Companies and Freight Companies in Finland categories."

Björkskog carefully, and somewhat jokingly, ventures the opinion that Ahola Transport can now call itself the world's most eco-friendly transport company.

"As there are still no global behaviour indicators for drivers, I suppose this counts as a world-class win."

The work continues

In last year's Eco-driving Challenge, the company competed in seven different classes, according to country and type of company. 4,200 vehicles, 120 teams and more than 9,100 drivers competed for the win.

Ahola Transport and AT Cargo won first prize with an index of 82.2, with the average index for the challenge at 68.8. The index is made up of six different parameters: overspeed, idle, rollout, coasting, harsh braking and wasted energy.

"Most importantly you have to plan ahead and drive carefully. A lot of it happens between your ears. You have to be interested and care about how you drive."

"The standard equipment fitted to nearly all of the trucks driving for us enables our drivers to continuously monitor and adjust

their driving behaviour while on the road," says Björkskog.

Ahola Transport has also been successful in earlier competitions involving economical driving. Despite this, they are not planning on slowing down.

"We still have a massive job ahead of us before the entire fleet reaches world-class levels in eco-friendliness. But with the tools we have and with an open attitude towards changes and improvements, we can do it. Our goal remains the same," says Björkskog.

Experience brought home highest points

Björkskog is still extremely proud of the progress so far.

"Our drivers scored excellent results in the competition."

AT Cargo's driver Frank Enlund succeeded several times in reaching a full 100 on the index. He is modest about his success.

"The routes were pretty easy and I had a light load and I didn't need to stop very often. Some luck came into play as well." Still, Enlund thinks there is a lot to think about in order to do well.

"Most importantly you have to plan ahead and drive carefully. A lot of it happens between your ears. You have to be interested and care about how you drive."

When approaching intersections, motorway exits or similar, it is important to judge when to let the vehicle roll and use engine braking. Braking suddenly just before intersections should be avoided as much as possible.

"Judging the distance and how the truck will react is something that you learn over time," says Enlund, who has driven for AT Cargo since 2005. ■



Proactive driving, in which the truck's rollout is used optimally, such as at intersections, saves both fuel and the environment.



A home on the road with ultramodern connections

For truck drivers, cabs are both their place of work and home. This is why both comfort-enhancing features and technical aids for safety, the environment and work are essential.

Fridges, microwaves, alco locks, coffeemakers, ADR fire extinguishers, personal protective equipment, navigators and specially built computers that help to optimise driving and plan journeys. The list of equipment in Ahola Transport's modern fleet of vehicles is long.

"There is a lot of stuff and the drivers can take along whatever they want. Many take their computers, some might install a TV."

So says Markus Lindell who takes care of safety and administration of the fleet of vehicles at Ahola Transport. While reviewing the list of equipment in the trucks, he points out that the most important thing that Ahola Transport has out in the field and in the truck is the driver. Without the driver, the equipment is unnecessary, but at the same time, the equipment helps the driver both in their

work and to wind down during their breaks.

"And of course things have moved forward over the past decade. Today, the comfort level is high and is, alongside the equipment, approaching that of a car," says Lindell.

"We focus on what really helps and what the driver needs."

Rapid development

However, it would be pointless to compare a car with a modern truck by Scania or Mercedes, which Ahola Transport uses.

"A lot has been going on at truck manufacturers in recent years," says Alf Nyblom, Acting Site Manager in Naantali, who is also responsible for the extensive administration of Ahola Transport's large fleet of trucks.

Mats Wargh, who outfits new vehicles mostly at Ahola Transport's load optimisation centre in Naantali, agrees with Nyblom.

"Before, we used to install things ourselves, even the microwaves, but now most things come ready installed and integrated by the manufacturer," says Wargh.

Ahola Transport goes the extra mile, however. Besides the normal equipment, Ahola Transport installs a specially built computer and alco lock in its new vehicles.

According to Markus Lindell, unnecessary interior decorations or fittings are spared, however, because this does not bring any

Mats Wargh fits Ahola Transport's new vehicles with, for instance, on-board computers and alco locks.



tenance, with pictures and text illustrating any faulty equipment and how it is repaired.

"Everything is documented electronically. It is a massive help," says Nyblom.

Inside the truck it is the on-board computer that helps the driver. The computer is also important for optimising driving in terms of environmental impacts. It provides precise statistics and teaches the driver to use the truck's power optimally.

"And of course things have moved forward over the past decade. Today, the comfort level is high."

"In addition to training, the computer helps to improve driving behaviour. In any case, trucks have become more fuel-efficient," says Markus Lindell.

Finding solutions in Naantali

Mats Wargh spends a large portion of his workday installing computers in new trucks. He has spent close to ten years equipping vehicles for Ahola Transport.

"Installing a computer in a vehicle takes around 30-40 minutes. The wires to the tachograph need to be connected, but it's really quite quick to do when everything has been prepared in-house. The preparations take around an hour."

Alco locks, around twenty a month, take a little longer because they need to be connected to the transmission.

"Of course, everything needs to be calibrated and documented," says Wargh.

In addition, the trucks receive safety and ADR equipment, slings, cargo body and trailers when they arrive in Naantali from the factories.



The alco lock guarantees extra safety.

"They are wrapped and registered. When the driver arrives, all they have to do is turn the key," says Markus Lindell.

In Naantali, they also monitor drivers' feedback on the vehicle and additional equipment.

"Their feedback usually comes through our subcontractors but of course we will try to solve any problems. We always come up with something," says Lindell. ■

added value to the company or its customers.

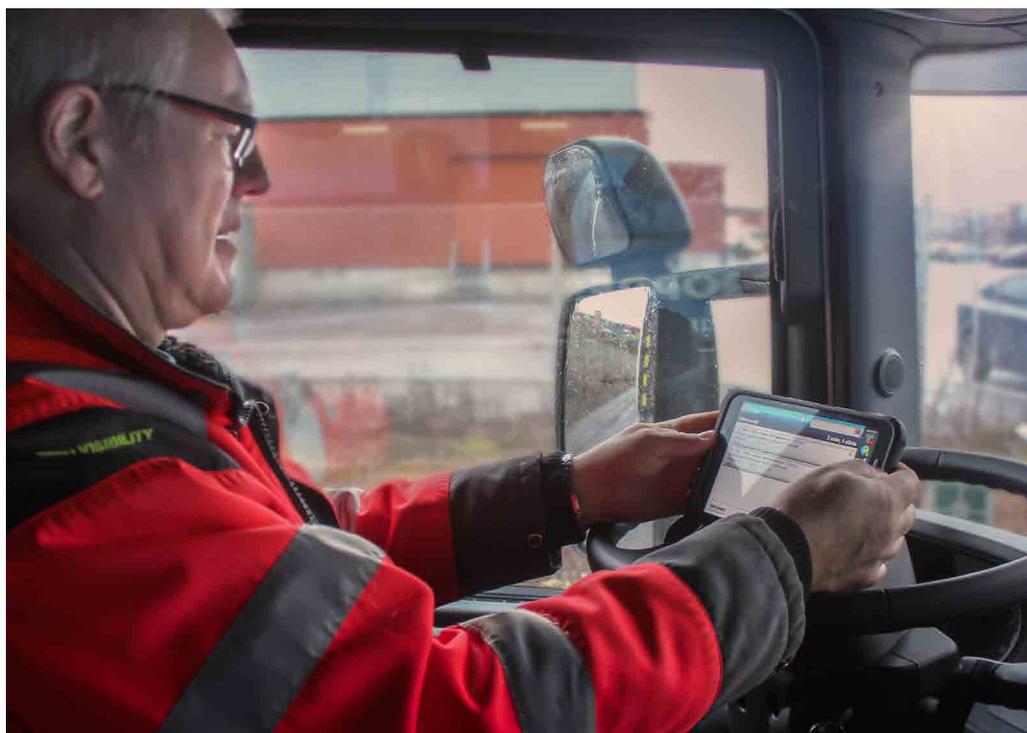
"We focus on what really helps and what the driver needs," adds Wargh.

Extra focus on safety

Ahola Transport's focus on the alco lock and Vehco on-board computer add to safety and optimised driving – something customers appreciate.

"The safety equipment also very much corresponds with the wishes and requirements of the customers. Which is why we have careful quality control in place in Naantali," says Nyblom.

Attire software, which Ahola Transport has been involved in developing, collects deviations anywhere from tyre to trailer main-



The equipment makes the everyday life of the driver easier.

Celebrating rapid growth in Estonia

Over a decade, Ahola Transport's Baltic operations have grown from a modest unit in Tallinn into a transportation network spanning the entire Baltic region.



Ahola Transport's new office was opened in Tallinn in August. The personnel is excited for the future.

It all began in 2009. In January, the new load optimisation centre was completed, and two months on, the tiny staff of office personnel moved into the brand-new office at the same address. Three years later, the four employees had become twelve and the operations had expanded exponentially. One of the new recruits in summer 2012 was Sander Seppel.

"The transport sector is always slow in the summer when companies have their holidays. I remember it being really quiet in the terminal and I wondered why I'd been hired. It gave me time to learn the ropes, however, because when the work began to pick up pace, it became really hectic," says Seppel who started out as a forklift driver but has since moved on to work as a shift manager and transport planner.

The autumn that followed the quiet summer of 2012 was busy. The operations continued to grow and more people were hired.

"Since then, the unit has grown substantially. When I started in 2013, the staff in Tallinn had begun to grow. After that, several functions have moved here and people have had a chance to prove their capacity to learn and grow together with the company," says Kadri Grynbaum who works in planning support and invoicing.

Both Grynbaum and Seppel praise Ahola Transport's laid-back and motivated atmosphere and feel that the resulting flexibility is a partial reason for its success. Annual development discussions also help to build up personal competence and many colleagues have become good friends. All of this serves to create an atmosphere that leads to progress and growth.

Moving forward on all fronts

The start of the Estonian operations was, however, tainted by local bureaucracy and, sometimes, long waits on important mat-

ters. When the load optimisation centre was supposed to get its internet connection, it was taken care of through overhead lines from an adjoining building, but the installer could not hook them up. Finally, Ahola Transport's site manager at the time and a friend with IT skills finalised the cabling and the office was able to go online. They also had to wait two years for the asphalt next to the terminal to be laid.

"I want to see us grow even bigger."

These days things work much more smoothly. Over the past year, the entire transport planning operations for the Baltics have moved to Tallinn from the head office in Finland. In July 2019, they also moved to a bigger office.

"Ahola Transport's operations in Estonia hold a key role in terms of the Baltic and

Eastern European markets," says Thomas Ahola, who is responsible for Ahola Transport's operations in the Baltics and CEE countries.

He sees the relocation of transport planning to Tallinn as something of a fresh start.

"The new steering system was implemented in conjunction with the move, giving each driver their own contact person on the planning team. Load optimisation and distribution services are now also offered to external clients and suppliers at the Tallinn centre, and we have focussed strongly on local marketing to strengthen the Ahola brand in Estonia and the Baltics," he says.

Thomas Ahola believes in a successful future.

"Generally speaking, economic development in Estonia and the rest of the Baltics is positive. The economy is growing and companies have an optimistic outlook. Unemployment is low and several sectors are looking for more workforce."

Clear vision

This same optimism is felt by the employees.

"I want to see us grow even bigger, maybe build our own logistics centre, employ more people and become a big name in Estonia," says Kadri Grynbaum.

"The jubilee year feels special because we're growing. We have a lot of new initiatives in the works in Estonia and it feels good. This is just the beginning," says Sander Seppel.

In Seppel's eyes, the Ahola Transport of the future will continue to build trust with its clients and meet their wishes – quickly and effectively. Thomas Ahola also has a clear vision.

"Ahola Transport's vision in the Baltics is to be the obvious choice for everyone when it comes to logistics. This means that we want to be a more effective, more reliable and more eco-friendly choice in the logistics sector." ■



In 2009, the new load optimisation centre was completed in Tallinn. Since then, the unit has grown in leaps and bounds.

Strong presence at Tallinn Truck Show



At the end of July, Ahola Transport took part in the Tallinn Truck Show and successfully highlighted its quality concept for suppliers, drivers and other logistics professionals.

The Tallinn Truck Show is the Baltics' largest exhibition for artistically designed and customised heavy vehicles. The show brings together thousands of people with an interest in heavy vehicles and trucks from across Europe. For Ahola Transport, the show is the perfect opportunity to talk about Ahola Transport as a company, employer and partner.

"We had a great spot at the show, which meant a lot of visitors. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and many people, especially drivers, were interested in Ahola Transport," says Thomas Ahola who heads Ahola Transport's Baltic operations.

Right now, Ahola Transport is focussed on

strengthening its brand in the Baltics and participation in the Tallinn Truck Show was a successful step towards achieving this goal. Ahola Transport also showcased its Training Center and the truck that it started its international deliveries with in the 1970s. The goal was to talk about the company and the concept that steers its operations.

"Today, quality matters more and more in the logistics sector, which is why Ahola Transport wanted to take part in the Tallinn Truck Show as an operator that is the obvious choice for both suppliers and drivers who wish to succeed and grow," says Thomas Ahola. ■



Tallinn Truck Show attracted thousands of visitors.

Mini portrait



Name: Jelena Letner

Family: 8-year-old daughter

Place of work and position: Ahola Transport, Tallinn, Transport planner

What is your favourite pastime? Sports and spending time with relatives and friends.

Your favourite food and drink? That's hard to answer since I like all kinds of food.

What makes you happy? A perfect balance between work and leisure and happy, open-minded people around me.

What makes you angry? That there are just 24 hours in a day.

Your dream holiday: In a warm country near seawater.

What was your first job? I sold homemade candy at school.

Any special memories from your working life? Our unique and supportive team.

What is going on right now in your job? Planning the volumes of goods flows from Finland to the Baltics.

How do you envision Ahola Transport in 5 to 10 years?

I have high hopes for the innovations that the company has come up with in recent years. I want to have a job where I can work dynamically and be engaged in society and Ahola Transport definitely meets that description. I think my job is a perfect match for my competence and my experience and gives me the chance to grow professionally. I hope I can be part of it and contribute for as long as possible.



Success through teamwork and experience

It all began with boat transports from the local factories in the area around Kokkola. These days, AT Special Transport solves the most complicated long, tall and heavy transport jobs according to the customer's most specific needs.

The team is a small one where everyone has their specialty and they all help each other. That is how Benny Sundqvist describes AT Special Transport. Sundqvist has worked at AT Special Transport since 2011 and before that at Ahola Transport since 1995.

"The most interesting part of my job is that every day is different. My job includes customer contacts, different solutions for customers and fast processes."

Sundqvist works mostly in sales and provides offers on transports, but is also the supervisor for the in-house drivers and the contact person for a large number of subcontractors. In addition to the drivers, AT Special Transport has eight office employees in Kokkola and Espoo. They work with anything from transport planning and administration to sales and permit applications.

Long-term experience

Despite the extensive expertise that AT Special Transport has, it is a relatively young company. It was founded in 2007, but part of its secret lies in the fact that its parent

company Ahola Transport has carried out special transports since the 1980s.

"That's why we have a lot of experience, but we made it a separate company in 2007. We started off mostly transporting boats. There are many boat builders in the Kokkola region and there is demand for a specialised boat hauler," says Managing Director Jonas Ahola.

Today, AT Special Transport transports everything from boats to large industrial structures, wind power stations, machines, engines, silos and prefab houses.

"The company has developed a lot over the years. These days, we offer project and special transports throughout Europe and even globally. We can offer total services, including planning, transport, lifting and installation," says Ahola.

The company's goal is to buy new equipment and expand its market area each year. In 2018, they acquired the project management and installation company AI Install in order to broaden the service offering, and this year, investments have been made in a special trailer with modular axles, which

enables the transport of super heavy loads using its own equipment.

Major investment and growth

AT Special Transport's turnover is some nine million euros per year. It has an extensive fleet and bright future. Recently, the company carried out projects in the Baltics and gained some new customers.

"At the moment, we have several ongoing jobs. The biggest one is the transport of prefab houses from several places in Estonia to Helsinki," says Jonas Furubacka, who heads the operations at AT Special Transport.

They are also excited about introducing the new advanced transport equipment in their fleet of vehicles.

"The investment is something we thought about for a long time in order to be competitive in transports that we could not compete in earlier," says Furubacka.

The new trailer consists of different modules and axles that are combined in various ways depending on the need. This means that AT Special Transport will be able to of-

for even better solutions for its customers starting this autumn.

"The customers value the fact that, based on our experience, we can give them the costs for the different dimensions of the goods. The customer can then analyse what the most cost-effective solution is. It is important for us that the customer can find a competitive solution for their own customers," says Furubacka.

The customer learns whether it is worth dividing the goods up into smaller portions or maybe even make the transports bigger to minimise the number of driving rounds and thus stay on schedule.

Nothing is impossible

To achieve all this, AT Special Transport's employees need to work hard. They need to

take into account weights and dimensions and evaluate the routes and obstacles. They have to plan everything down to the smallest detail, while few things follow the standard routine of a normal truck transport.

"Together with the customer, we go over what is possible to transport along roads and what might require a ship or barge," says Furubacka.

When the customer confirms the order, official permits are still needed and the vehicles need to be booked.

"Our work can vary a lot depending on whether we are planning or carrying out a transport. Sometimes a customer might need a transport at short notice, for example if a machine breaks down. Often, we can carry out the transport immediately."

Just like Jonas Ahola, Furubacka has been with the company since the start of 2007

and agrees with what everyone says about what makes the job enjoyable.

"Our tasks vary a lot and that makes the job interesting."

Extensive transports can require dozens of people to drive the pilot cars, move power lines and other obstacles and take care of loading, unloading, installation and the transport itself. Neither height, weight nor length are a problem if everything is planned carefully. ■

Follow
AT Special Transport
on Youtube



Added growth in installation business

In the past year, the project management and installation company AT Install has supplemented AT Special Transport's services in a number of ways, most recently through a business acquisition.

The transportation and installation of steel structures, prefab houses and concrete elements for offices, industrial buildings and factories. AT Special Transport and AT Install together offer a comprehensive range of services that has also grown dramatically since Ahola Transport bought AT Install in 2018.

"Currently, AT Install has a staff of 13 installers and three office employees. When it gets busy, we also utilise a broad network of subcontractors," says Teemu Hietala who manages the company together with Kari Hietala.

This year, they also acquired a prefab concrete element installation business. The installation business, which is located in Oulu,

brought AT Install new customers, expertise and personnel.

"Our vision is to become a major supplier of total services for construction projects together with AT Special Transport," says Teemu Hietala.

For the time being, the company is focused on Finland, but it has its eye on Sweden too. The most hectic period in the installation sector is from May to December. That's when the company has 25 installers working for it.

"Our workdays vary a lot depending on what sorts of projects we have. Others require a great deal of planning, while others are more routine," says Hietala. ■



Kari Hietala



Teemu Hietala





Mihkel Tammo heads a growing company that acts as an example for many others in the sector.

“Sustainability is the only way”

AT Special Transport’s new partner, the Estonian process equipment manufacturer Estanc, follows a strategy that may be the only way for companies to survive in the future.

The mindset that has defined the family-owned company Estanc for a couple of years so far is still relatively unusual, but according to its Managing Director Mihkel Tammo, it may soon be a more critical factor than simply being the cheapest option for customers.

“Sustainability is the path everyone is taking right now. A few years ago, people just talked about it and had some ideas, but more recently a lot has started to happen. Now it is being put into practice.”

For Tammo, sustainability, especially with a focus on the environment, has been close to his heart for a long time.

“Sustainability is the only way to go. And now that our customers are also beginning to see results through sustainability, a change is happening. It has also completely turned around our corporate culture,” he says.

Earlier, Estanc’s business was based on being a more affordable alternative compared with its competitors. Now, its high quality and sustainability that are bringing in the customers. At the plant, rainwater is reused and energy consumption is minimised, in the yard electric cars are charged, there are solar panels on the roof and the office has rugs made from plastic collected from the ocean.

“We try to be practical but one also needs to have a certain mindset and strategy,” says Tammo.

Estanc has also hired a Sustainability Coordinator and Tammo is often invited to speak about sustainability at seminars and in the media.

“Our goal is to be active in society and show that it’s worth it. A major shift is taking place.”

Shaking up the business world

Tammo believes that this shift could be the next major crisis that will shake up the business world. Companies that fail to become sustainable will begin losing customers.

“The next global crisis will not be an economic crisis, it will be about changing values. I believe it will take place within a decade and we want to be ready for it.”

“Sustainability is the path everyone is taking right now.”

This is why Estanc strives to be a company defined by sustainability and collaboration, which has to benefit both the customers and

society at large. The new co-operation with AT Special Transport is a step in the right direction.

“Jonas Ahola and I got to know each other at a meeting of an association of family-owned companies. To start off with, we kept in touch on a personal level, but then we realised that our companies have a lot in common.”

Sustainability was one of the main factors. “I was surprised that Ahola Transport has had it as their strategy for so long. It is really unique to see a company do that on a practical level in this industry,” Tammo says.

A fresh approach on many levels

The collaboration is just one year old, but it has already advanced a long way. A shared take on sustainability and the fact that both Estanc and AT Special Transport are family-owned and headed by young people have meant a lot.

“If we are going to change the business world, we need young people with a fresh approach who see new opportunities,” says Tammo.

Since the beginning a year ago, AT Special Transport has transported several of Estanc’s major projects requiring special transports.

The products have included process equip-

Estanc joins Global Compact

- In 2019, Estanc signed the United Nations' Global Compact.
- The compact is the world's largest sustainability network for businesses and includes close to 10,000 companies that have committed to the UN's global sustainability targets and to monitoring their sustainability using ten principles. Companies participating in the Global Compact need to achieve concrete annual development targets.
- The ten monitored principles cover human rights, work, the environment and anti-corruption.

ment from steel, such as pressure vessels, pipelines, scrubbers and large silos weighing several hundred tonnes. That is where AT Special Transport's expertise comes in.

"I am certain that we can work even more closely in the future. It's even beginning to take root on the shop floor; there is direct collaboration and communication before transports. We are also planning other strategic collaborations," says Tammo.

Openly declaring a partnership between what is essentially a service provider and a customer is unusual, but Mihkel Tammo believes that that too will become more common by and by.

"It doesn't mean that AT Special Transport will automatically get to deliver for us. If some other company is more suitable, we will go with them. But, generally speaking, I believe more in co-operation than competition."

Co-operation benefits everyone

The partnership allows Estanc to think in the long term and see the big picture. It is an entirely new philosophy that Tammo introduced a few years ago. The result is the collaboration with AT Special Transport and now they are initiating several other similar partnerships with, for instance, subcontractors.

"This is a complicated sector with complex projects. Any number of small details can mean either success or failure for the entire project."

According to Tammo, the collaboration with AT Special Transport benefits both

partners. The quality of the transports and cost-effectiveness improve, while communication becomes more direct and each company can be prepared for the other's investments and decisions.

"It allows a sharper focus for both companies and creates concrete benefits."

Since AT Special Transport and Estanc share some customers, there is plenty of know-how and information to share.

"The majority of companies will continue to think of each other as competition. But I think that will start to change soon," says Tammo.

Exports make up 97 per cent

Estanc's road has been a long one. Estanc was founded by Mihkel Tammo's father in 1992 when Estonia had just regained its independence.

"The beginning was definitely a struggle. There were very few companies and no business legislation or structures in Estonia. We started literally from nothing."

Thanks to a similar company and partnership in Finland they were able to get help and gain some customers.

"That was how we started. We still have such strong roots in Finland that we are often seen as a Finnish company. But we have achieved significant growth in 20 years."

Today, Estanc's products can be found in not only its target area the Nordics, but also globally, in more than 70 countries. Altogether 97 per cent of what they produce is exported.

"As our customers like Andritz, Valmet,



Estanc's current plant has been expanded almost every year since 2012. The plant is unique in Europe and specially built to accommodate Estanc's requirements concerning special projects and lifting capacity.

Wärtsilä and Neste are all global giants, our products have a global reach," says Tammo.

A global example

Mihkel Tammo is certain that sustainability can bring business, also for medium-sized companies and for companies whose customers are other companies.

"That has been very unusual up to now. Very few have taken on this challenge, but we are now able to show our customers that it has been a success," he says.

Thus far, Estanc has been able to prove it. During 2019, its turnover has grown from just under EUR 19 million to the budgeted EUR 31 million. Currently, the company employs around 150 people and the plant outside of Tallinn is running at full capacity. The company is a leader in its sector across Northern Europe and Tammo says that its growth will continue.

"The next global crisis will not be an economic crisis, it will be about changing values."

"This is a major step forward for us. Right now, we are building Estanc's story. We are growing and expanding from contract manufacturing to making our own products. We are already setting an example in the Baltics, but we have our sights set on doing the same thing globally. This is a challenging goal and we can't know how we will succeed, but I believe that our sustainability strategy will take us there." ■



AT Special Transport has transported several heavy and big loads for Estanc in 2019.

The same puzzle in a forklift and at the hub

Less than ten years ago, Guy Gäddnäs started working as a forklift driver at Ahola Transport's load optimisation centre in Nykvarn. He is now responsible for the hub's entire operations.

"It is important to have responsibility. It makes me feel good. That's why I can't see myself in a job that starts when I open the door to the workplace and that I can just forget when I go home."

So says Guy Gäddnäs who has been the new Site Manager for Ahola Transport's load optimisation centre in Nykvarn, Sweden since December 2018. Being the Site Manager involves overall responsibility for both the operations and finances and above all the personnel.

"A happy staff is my number one priority. It helps our day-to-day work run more smoothly."

Taking the "scenic route" helps

Gäddnäs enjoys his new job, but he is also extremely thankful that he has taken the "scenic route" through Ahola Transport to get there.

"It was, without a doubt, the best training. As a forklift driver I got to know the goods, as team leader I got to know the drivers, ferry bookings and coordination work."

This gave Gäddnäs the opportunity to become transport planner at the head office in Kokkola, after nearly two years in Nykvarn, and after several years at a different

company, he found himself back at Ahola Transport.

"I guess I missed Ahola and was asked to take on the job of Project Manager. It felt great to come back."

Not long after, he was offered the Site Manager position in Nykvarn and he accepted the challenge.

From a joke to a job

Gäddnäs is from Jakobstad near Kokkola but has also always liked living in Sweden. He has been involved in Nykvarn from almost the beginning.

"I knew some of the people involved in starting up the operations in Sweden and drove by on a caravan holiday. I made a joke asking them if they have any jobs available. A few hours later I got a phone call."

The joke became much more than a joke, but Gäddnäs regrets nothing.

"Working as a forklift driver was really fun. Each day is different and nearly everyone agrees. Loading each truck was like solving a puzzle."

Gäddnäs loved the practical work and couldn't even think about taking on a desk job.

"However, my supervisor talked me into

trying it and I liked it."

Flexibility as a secret weapon

It is the responsibility but also the puzzle solving that attract Gäddnäs to the job of Site Manager. This new job was a challenge that he couldn't turn down.

"It is a huge and exciting challenge involving both personnel and finances, but I have the world's best supervisor that supports me in every way. I went in with the attitude that I would be critical of everything and keep costs in check. Now I feel like I've got a handle on things," he says.

Right now, the outlook for Nykvarn is good. Efficiency and quality have improved further and several customers have adopted the new Cargo Center service. Among other things, they reload humanitarian aid for a Swedish aid organisation.

According to Gäddnäs, Nykvarn's speciality is flexibility. The staff of around ten is patient and flexible with the number of trucks they handle varying between 15 to 60 and the weather and traffic often causing changes at short notice.

"But we should never be satisfied, we can always do better," Gäddnäs says. ■



Guy Gäddnäs has taken the "scenic route" from forklift driver to Site Manager at Nykvarn. According to him, it was the best way to learn.

Vehicle transports growing

Transports of trucks and chassis from Finnish ports to customers around the country became part of Ahola Transport's operations back in 1997. Since then, the unit has grown and this year the company has managed to gain a foothold on the Swedish market.



A small niche, but also a successful one. Transports of new trucks and chassis became part of Ahola Transport already in the late 90s and has proven to be a successful component of the major transport company.

"We are the leaders in Finland but we also want to expand our operations. Starting in April this year, we have taken over transports from factories to ports in Sweden," says Alf Nyblom, who has been in charge of the transports for more than a decade.

The unit used to be called Motortrans but it was made part of the road transports business area at Ahola Transport from the start of this year. The unit has a long and successful history.

"In 1998, we got our two first trailers. Today, we have five trailers, all of them more or less specially built, three of our own tractor units and two tractor units from subcontractors," says Nyblom.

Synergies created by new market area

The trucks and other heavy vehicles driven by Ahola Transport today are made by Scania, Mercedes and Iveco, and are imported to or through Finland.

"Some are special vehicles that receive cargo bodies in Finland and are then sent back to Scandinavia, for example, garbage trucks," says Nyblom.

The vehicles arrive through ports in Hanko, Turku and Helsinki and are driven to various locations around the country. The expansion to Sweden means that Ahola Transport now

drives many vehicles all the way from the factory to the customer.

"We see many benefits to taking care of the whole process. These transports require a lot of planning, logistics and thought in terms of efficiency and the climate," says Nyblom.

Careful planning

Jean Gustafsson, who has been driving chassis transports for Ahola Transport since 2001, agrees. Planning is vital and experience helps the job go smoothly.

"We see many benefits to taking care of the whole process."

"Above all, it's about knowing which route to take. Height is the key issue in these types of transports."

The process can be fast and transports are loaded and unloaded around the clock.

"We often have a time window within which the load needs to arrive at the destination. The vehicle can't be too early or too late," says Alf Nyblom.

Despite the sometimes hectic schedule, Gustafsson likes the steady and calm pace of the work.

"We aren't forced to be at a certain place at a certain time. Usually the schedules are fairly loose."

This also allows the drivers to do a good job. In addition to careful planning of the routes, loading and unloading also require a lot of preparation. Additional equipment that is in the way has to be removed and then replaced when delivering to the customer.

"And when loading, you have to remember how many and which vehicles are going to which customers, if the load is for more than one customer. In addition, the vehicles need to be driven on so that they get the best place on the combination," says Gustafsson.

A good team up for the challenge

A normal workday for Gustafsson means driving from morning until night, from ports in southern Finland as far north as Rovaniemi.

"But it all goes smoothly thanks to the small and close-knit team that runs it all."

Alf Nyblom agrees. He takes care of most of the things that are needed at the office, everything from sales to invoicing, but this year there is a new transport planner to help them.

"We want to continue to be efficient and meet our customers' wishes. Of course, there are also challenges. Cars are getting taller, heavier and longer. Electric vehicles are also an interesting development. All of this places demands on transports and has to be taken into account." ■

From local one-man show to European industry leader

In the 1930s, a one-man company started manufacturing hay rakes for the local farmers in the little village of Lahnakoski. Today, the company is Europe's leading producer of wooden oars.



In a small village in Finland's Ostrobothnia lies a company with a long history and interesting journey behind it. The company Lahnakoski, which borrows its name from the village, has transformed from a one-man show in the 1930s into an industry leader.

"As with many other old companies, we don't precisely know where it all began but sometime in the 1930s my grandfather's father started a carpenters' shop just a stone's throw from here," Björn Sandström recounts Lahnakoski's history.

These days, Sandström, representing the fourth generation in the family-owned company, is CEO and continues to build on the life's work of his ancestors.

"In 1936, my grandfather's father bought a steam engine from the neighbouring village. We consider that to be the founding year."

In the beginning, they manufactured all types of farming tools and household items for the local area. They made doors, windows and furniture, but the workshop became best known for its hay rakes. In 1954,

the company moved to the location where Lahnakoski's plant is today and the operations took off quickly with the next generation at the helm.

Success through flexibility

Today, the plant has a selection of 275 products and each year, hundreds of thousands of products leave the plant for export to almost 30 countries.

"We want to serve our customers. While our competitor might have 5-10 products in their range, we also make a number of different special paddles, flagpoles and boat masts," says Sandström.

The plant with its 15 employees has been expanded more than ten times and significant flexibility defines the operations. They train new employees on site, maintenance of machines is taken care of by the personnel and Sandström himself often works on the shop floor. Thanks to this, and many other factors, but above all a strong will, oar

production still lives on in the region.

"Many have said that we should move our production abroad, but here we are."

Being local and carrying a social and environmental responsibility are important for Lahnakoski. All the energy for the timber drying kilns comes from the chips left over from the manufacture of wooden oars and paddles, and despite a highly seasonal business, Sandström wants the employees to have work year-round.

"I wouldn't dream of doing it any other way."

Favouring local companies is a priority

The same thinking applies to transportation partners: Ahola Transport has taken Lahnakoski's product to Sweden and Norway for decades.

"We favour local companies and that is why Ahola was an obvious choice, but the price needs to be right as well. For us, the most important thing is for the transport company to understand our needs," says Anita Laakso who is in charge of transports and sales at Lahnakoski.

Communication and the opportunity to give feedback if things aren't working are also important.

"We're pretty demanding, which is why it is important that they listen to us. With Ahola, our opportunities to impact transports is much greater. If something happens, we get a fast response and information," says Laakso.

During the autumn season, a fully-loaded truck from Ahola Transport rolls out with



Lahnakoski manufactures everything from classic wooden oars to modern SUP paddles. What matters most is the quality of the wood.

Making an oar can involve up to fourteen different steps. Careful quality control is important for Björn Sandström.



Lahnakoski's products each week. The products head both to shops and boat manufacturers. Björn Sandström hopes that the collaboration will continue and gives us an anecdote about how the exports, also handled by Ahola today, started up for Lahnakoski back in the day.

"My grandfather's brother won a trip to Sweden in a lottery. So they went off to Sweden and brought some oars with them. That is how our exports began."

High quality requirements for wood

Today, the oars sail away as far as Mexico. Long-standing traditions and high quality, as well as customers' nostalgia for wooden oars, have contributed to Lahnakoski's success.

"Even though it might be hard to believe, the availability of wood is the biggest challenge," says Sandström.

The oars require the best wood and knowing what wood is suitable is an art form in itself. Just around one per cent of the wood produced by sawmills meets the quality requirements.

"But we have good, long-standing relationships with our suppliers. Most of the wood comes from forests in southern and eastern Finland," says Sandström.

The main competitors in oar manufacturing can also be found close to home in Finland and the Baltics. In Sweden, production has died out due to a lack of high-quality wood.

"You can't make oars if you buy a truck full of wood but end up with just a wheelbarrow of raw material that is good enough." ■

Trust brings added growth

In just three years, the co-operation between Ahola Transport and its subcontractor Raijarit has grown in leaps and bounds. The two trucks used in autumn 2016 have now become 12.

Ahola Transport's subcontractors include everything from one-man operations to bigger players. One of the big ones is the quickly growing and successful Raijarit from Oulu in northern Finland.

"During recent years, our operations have grown significantly. One reason for this is our co-operation with Ahola," says Raijarit's Managing Director Esa Koskiniemi.

The co-operation with Ahola Transport began in 2016. At the beginning of the year, Raijarit began driving for Ahola Transport with one truck, at the end of the year they added one more. Today, 12 of Raijarit's 40 trucks drive for Ahola Transport in Finland, Sweden and Norway.

"Ahola is a key strategic partner for us and we want to form long-term partnerships with partners that are easy to work with," says Koskiniemi.

Openness leads to success

Despite having 40 trucks and 50 employees, Raijarit is a relatively young company. It all began in Oulu in 1995 with a delivery van for Finland's postal service.

"Today, we deliver pharmaceuticals, baked goods, furniture and general cargo. In addition, we install household appliances," says Koskiniemi.

Their fleet includes everything from vans to the trucks they drive for Ahola Transport. The skilled personnel do their all to make sure the customer is happy. Koskiniemi points out that all for all the parties to win

they have to, above all else, collaborate and not just provide services.

"Long-standing customer relationships are important to us. We want to take care of our customers and work together. We focus on the future by investing in our fleet of vehicles according to our needs and listening to our customers."

The same applies to the partnership with Ahola Transport. As Ahola Transport's subcontractor, Raijarit wishes to work openly and based on the concept of succeeding together. That is exactly what Esa Koskiniemi thinks works best between the two companies today.

"Both companies have clear roles that they live up to successfully. A reliable and major partner provides security for the future and we can be certain, for example, that payments will arrive on time and that we won't suddenly run out of work."

The drivers make all the difference

This is why Raijarit hopes that the co-operation with Ahola Transport will both continue and develop in the future. There is always room for improvement in daily communication, to avoid extra work, but in general things go smoothly.

Koskiniemi's biggest concern is the lack of skilled and motivated drivers in the sector.

"But we have to be happy that we have succeeded in finding such a fantastic team for Ahola's transports. We can be certain that the work will get done and that transports will arrive on time, the co-operation with Ahola runs smoothly and the fleet is kept shipshape. It wouldn't be possible without skilled drivers." ■



Raijarit's Managing Director Esa Koskiniemi is happy with the success and growth that have resulted from the collaboration with Ahola Transport.





Major recognition for visionary work

The Logistician of the Year prize was presented to Hans Ahola in Helsinki in February 2019.

A vision, courage and successful growth were the criteria when Ahola Transport and CEO Hans Ahola received the Logistician of the Year award in Helsinki in February.

"It is important to be courageous, not just in the transport industry, but also within business overall. When you are brave and don't take the road well-travelled, you can't always succeed, for sure, but as a whole, I see trying new things as a positive thing."

So says Hans Ahola who was presented the Logistician of the Year prize from the Finnish purchasing and logistics organisation LOGY in February.

The recognition has been bestowed by LOGY annually since 1986. The recipient must be a person who is active in the logistics sector, but competition is tough and earlier prize winners mostly come from major Finnish companies like Nokia and Kesko as well as universities, port companies and logistics corporations. Since 1986, just three people from an actual freight company have received the recognition, Hans Ahola being the latest in this category.

A win for the whole company

In the prize criteria it says that Ahola Transport has succeeded in many areas and become a pioneer in the logistics sector.

"It feels great, naturally, and when I was handed the prize I said it feels twice as good because they are giving it to a former truck driver. It's recognition for long-term work," says Hans Ahola.

Even though the prize is presented to a single person, he feels that it has the most

significance for the company.

"It's the company that has done the work even though I happened to get the prize. It's our people that made it possible, everyone who was involved, committed and willing to develop Ahola Transport. This is a win for the whole company."

Even though Hans Ahola says that it's hard to put a finger on exactly what it is at Ahola Transport that made the win possible, he lists a few aspects.

"I think they appreciate the fact that we think a little differently and don't follow in the footsteps of other transport companies. It isn't so common, for example, for a transport company to begin developing its own IT, but it's a big deal for us."

The criteria also state that Ahola Transport has shown courage within its branch, which is something Hans Ahola can get behind.

"We are brave, maybe too brave sometimes."

Profitable and ambitious

In the award criteria for LOGY it says that Ahola Transport is one of the few companies in Finland that have succeeded in running a successful transport company in the market area Nordics, Baltics and CEE countries. In addition, the company has been strong in digitalisation, also early on. Ahola Transport developed its own optimisation system for transport planning already in 1996 and has



even taken major steps within truck technology, the latest being the efforts in platooning.

LOGY emphasises how Hans Ahola as CEO has presided over the company from a small family-owned business to one of the country's largest transport companies. Ahola has led the company with enthusiasm and courage.

Giving a company and CEO such as these the prize supports LOGY's goal of highlighting Finnish competitiveness and promoting the development of the logistics sector. With the prize under its belt, Ahola Transport plans on continuing along the same lines.

"Our vision is to be a company that reinvents traditional logistics. We have done just that and will continue to work according to our vision," says Hans Ahola. ■

Waybills and business trips in new podcast

After hearing a Swedish company's podcast, Juuso Savolainen and Ville Lindholm began to put one together for Ahola Transport. The concept is unique and attracts a broad range of listeners.

Ideas began to flow when Marketing Coordinator Juuso Savolainen and Salesperson Ville Lindholm listened to a Swedish podcast by a company's marketing employee and salesperson.

"We could see ourselves in their roles. We listened to an episode and felt that we should start doing the same thing at Ahola Transport," says Juuso Savolainen.

Also, both Savolainen and Lindholm liked the idea of a person from marketing and a salesperson getting together and talking about their work and the industry in general. Since spring, they have been recording a ten-minute episode at least once a month.

"In the podcast, we talk about what is happening in the company and industry, and show that marketing and sales can work closely together. I think that's a good message to be sending our customers," says Lindholm.

Universal and unique

In the beginning, the concept took a while to come together but the podcasters feel that they've finally got going for real.

"We had no roles to begin with. Now we always decide who will lead and who will ask the questions. A bit of planning is needed," says Savolainen.

At the moment, the podcast is available in Finnish on LinkedIn. Savolainen and Lindholm would love to do it in other languages, but considering that many of Ahola Transport's customers are in Finland and because there aren't that many local podcasts, Finnish was the natural choice.

"I think we are pretty unique, at least in Finland and the Nordics," says Lindholm.

The podcast's target group is primarily people in the industry, but also people work-

ing within marketing, sales and business in general can find interesting discussions and questions in the podcast.

"We have received a lot of feedback. For example, someone was grateful that we explained how a waybill works," says Lindholm.

Improved image and trust

Savolainen and Lindholm have also talked about what makes for a good business trip, with regard to making the trip enjoyable and customer visits, for instance.

"You need to prepare for the trip and plan where you will stop," says Savolainen.

"Then you can tell the customer that you visited a certain restaurant or took a walk in a nearby forest. It gives you a nice shared topic for smalltalk," adds Lindholm.

Savolainen and Lindholm believe that the podcast can help customers to form a better picture of Ahola Transport as a company. Companies and partners have already discovered the appeal, ease and community offered by the podcast.

"It also helps to create trust," says Lindholm.

The podcast has also been fruitful for Savolainen and Lindholm personally.

"It's fun to challenge and develop yourself like this," says Lindholm.

"It requires a little time to plan and prepare, but the effort is definitely worth it," adds Savolainen.

During the autumn, the podcast will focus on improving the quality, both technically and in terms of content. The podcast will also become available on Spotify and several exciting guests will appear in upcoming episodes. ■

Mini portrait



Name: Markus Corin

Family: Wife, 13-year-old bonus daughter and a cat

Place of work and position:

Ahola Transport Kokkola,
Business Unit Manager

What is your favourite pastime?

Travelling

Your favourite food and drink?

Nothing specific, but I like anything good.

What makes you happy?

When something goes well, no matter what I'm doing.

What makes you angry?

Injustice.

Your dream holiday:

A trip around the world for an undefined period of time.

What was your first job?

Ahlskog's leather factory in Kronoby.

Any special memories from your working life?

When we were at a transport planner event in Naantali many years ago. We stayed the night at Ruissalo Spa. When we arrived an ambulance was picking someone up and the same thing happened when we checked out. It smelled like an old folks' home in the hotel and there was hardly anyone else there in addition to us and the personnel that didn't need assistance getting around. We felt really young.

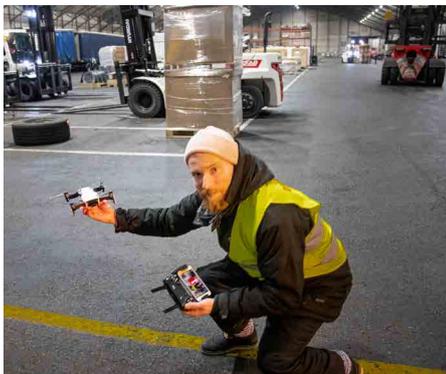
What is going on right now in your job?

We are transferring to a new setup in planning and trying to get everything to run as smoothly as possible.

How do you envision Ahola Transport in 5 to 10 years?

Reaching our goals together with a good team.

Ahola Transport from the air



To improve and increase its photo and video material, Ahola Transport has filmed more material during the year at its various operations, out in the field, at ports and with customers. A few marketing clips have been produced for social media and traditional channels. The material has been filmed



and photographed from the ground and using drones. This initiative continues Ahola Transport's stronger focus on marketing and communications over the past few years. The new clips and photos are continuously available on Ahola Transport's Facebook and Instagram pages. ■

New trade fairs in the autumn

Once again, Ahola Transport will show up at the industry's key trade fairs in the Nordic countries and the Baltics during the autumn. First in line is the Alihankinta subcontractor fair in Tampere, Finland, in September. After that, Ahola Transport will focus its attention on Sweden and take part in Logistics & Distribution in Stockholm in October and Elmia Subcontractor in Jönköping in November. At the end of November, Ahola Transport will participate in Tech Industry in Riga, Latvia. ■

Celebrating Hans



In June, a party was held for Ahola Transport's CEO, Hans Ahola, in honour of his 65th birthday. Following the party and speeches, Hans Ahola was given a bicycle by the personnel. ■



Interest in golf growing Ahola Transport's traditional golf event in Naantali is a June staple. Interest in golf among employees is growing and at Ahola Transport the personnel receive the majority of their annual fees and training for golf as employee benefits. ■

Are you interested in buying an electric car?



Jari Ratia

Forklift driver
Naantali, Finland

I would be interested in an electric car and we've even talked about it, but there is still a lack of experience. It also raises a lot of questions: the higher price, battery lifetime and its range. I've also heard that charging times would be pretty long with a 16A socket.



Anna Kajdy

Transport Planner
Warsaw, Poland

Considering the prices, not yet. It might also be a bit too soon, especially in Poland. Personally, I think that hybrid cars are the optimal way to go for now. But for countries with more renewable energy sources, electric vehicles may be a sensible choice already now.



Tobias Hagnäs

Sales
Kokkola, Finland

I will probably drive an electric car in the future because of the low operating costs. For the time being, however, a spacious electric car is too expensive, so I'll make do with my diesel car for a while.

New initiative communicates the Ahola spirit

Ahola Transport's new Marketing and Communication Manager wishes to strengthen the brand, spread the message and communicate the atmosphere that the family-owned company has long been known for.

Jimmy Ahola already has a long career at the company under his belt. He has worked both in practical transport planning and management roles. Since April this year, he has been responsible for Ahola Transport's marketing and communications.

"In practice, this means launching campaigns together with our sales department, planning and coordinating events and trade fairs and planning and producing content for social media, ads and so on," he says.

He works closely with Marketing Coordinator Juuso Savolainen. Together, they are in charge of marketing and communications, both internally and externally. For Jimmy Ahola, different forms of communication are what make his job interesting.

"It is important for me to communicate the right message about our company."

Ahola Transport does this through producing high-quality material in various chan-

nels, in order to reach several target groups and to be able to effectively tell Ahola Transport's story and communicate what the company has to offer.

"We also achieve this by spotlighting all of our hard-working colleagues," says Jimmy Ahola.

Clear vision

The new communications position is part of Ahola Transport's intensified initiatives in communication and marketing over recent years.

"Since we are above all a service company, this is very important to us. We need to maintain a strong brand to reach new customers, employees and suppliers," says Jimmy Ahola.

To achieve this, Jimmy Ahola hopes to use and communicate the Ahola spirit that he



has experienced during his 14 years with the company. And from there, he is looking to the future.

"Our vision is to be the obvious choice for everyone who needs to transport something. My goal for our marketing is to make the choice self-evident." ■

Tip:

If you are interested in the articles and reporting in earlier issues of AT Info, they are available in pdf format on Ahola Transport's website. The website also has individual articles in different locations.



Are you interested in buying an electric car?



Viktor Asplund

Controller
Kokkola, Finland

I'm keeping up with developments and would rather drive an electric car instead of my diesel. But I don't think that'll become a reality until the price of used electric cars falls and until their range reaches the magical limit of around 1,000 km per charge.



Marika Nurk

Chief Accountant
Tallinn, Estonia

Just today morning when I was in a traffic jam, I thought about this topic. I thought how much an electric car would cost and how refueling is done. It would be nice to have an electric car in Tallinn and drive in the bus lane. Also parking in Tallinn city centre would be free.



Peter Nylund

Special transport planner
Kokkola, Finland

Not in the near future, they're all too expensive still. And apparently they can't pull a trailer, so it's not the kind of car I want.

My hobby...



From socks to blankets

Three years ago, Petra Nyman rediscovered a hobby that she had from her childhood until her teenage years. What matters to her are creativity and sustainability and that the hobby is an actual hobby.

A hobby that you can take with you anywhere, that is an outlet for creativity, that can take as much time as it needs and that acts as a counterbalance to work. It sounds perfect and it really has been that for Petra Nyman for three years.

"This is an excellent hobby for a brain that tends to go into overdrive. It's about both relaxation and doing something practical to counterbalance the mental work I do in front of a computer," she explains.

In her free time, whether in the car, in front of the TV or outdoors, Petra knits and crochets everything from socks to sweaters and shawls.

"I started knitting and crocheting about the same time I started talking. It was so long ago that I can't even remember it."

Many projects waiting

Her inspiration came from her grandmother and it was also she who taught Petra the basics.

"Then I took a 20-25-year break. Other interests took over in my teenage years and I went to school and moved away from home. I took a more active interest in my hobby as an adult, around three years ago."

Petra has tried sewing but especially working with a sewing machine is not her thing.

"I like working with my hands and with knitting needles, crochet hooks and yarn, the work is easy to take with me wherever I go and pick up at any time."

Petra has no lack of inspiration. She collects pictures and discusses different projects, patterns and creations on Instagram and different Facebook groups. She mostly makes clothes for herself, her family and relatives.

"I have a massive folder of projects that I want to do. I have the inspiration, it's the time that I'm lacking."

Crocheting and knitting have become more and more trendy in recent years and social media offers unlimited opportunities to share hobbies and ideas with others.

"I established an open Instagram account to stop terrorising my Facebook friends with images of my woolly socks," she says.

On Instagram, Petra's creations get comments from people she knows and the designers whose patterns she uses.

Green motivation

In addition to the trend of making one's own clothes and having a hobby where one can see the fruit of one's labour, for many, ecological aspects are the reason to knit and crochet in their free time. For Petra, it is a strong motivator.

"I prefer working with natural fibres, 100 per cent wool, organic if possible."

She values handicrafts and dreams of restoring furniture in the future.

"Maybe when the kids are a bit older. I think I'm fairly handy and I'd like to do more of that kind of thing in my free time. Anyway, there is some old furniture that needs fixing up at home."

Her current hobby is also evolving. Three years ago Petra started with socks. Now she makes sweaters. In addition, she has a bigger long-term project: a wool blanket that will be big and warm.

"I don't mind if it takes a while. I don't get stressed over my projects. Sometimes I don't do anything for several weeks and some evenings I can sit and knit for hours."

Preferably Petra wants to have two projects at once.

"I like to have something simple that I can work on in front of the TV and something more complicated that requires both thought and concentration," she sums up. ■

Petra Nyman

Title: Sales Administrator

Born: 1981

Family: Husband, two children and two dogs

Lives in: Nedervetil, Finland

Education: Bachelor of Hospitality Management



Petra Nyman crochets and knits almost anything. She shares her finished work on Instagram at @peesenjohanna.