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# Staci: a new era

Staci is a major player in multi-channel logistics. CEO Thomas Mortier talks to us about the company's recent strategic and technological developments.

**T**his is a major turning point for Staci, the European leader in specialised logistics. Since August 2024, the company has come under the wing of bpostgroup, the Belgian Post Office, following its acquisition by the Ardian investment fund. 'This acquisition marks a new stage after four LBOs. It gives us a stable and ambitious shareholder base, with increased investment capacity', explains Thomas Mortier.

The integration does not stop there. Radial and Active Ants, two of bpostgroup's ecommerce logistics entities, have now joined the bpostgroup Logistics BU under the management of Thomas Mortier. This

geographical synergy will enable Staci to expand its presence, particularly in Poland and the United States. 'We recently announced the opening of Staci Poland using an existing Radial warehouse. In the United States, we now have 16 warehouses. These developments reinforce our expertise in sectors such as cosmetics, fashion and food supplements', he adds.

## **Multi-channel logistics undergoing radical change**

The logistics sector has undergone profound changes, particularly with the rise of e-commerce. 'The current challenge is multi-channel, where customers combine

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B2B flows, e-commerce, marketplaces such as Amazon, and physical points of sale,’ stresses Thomas Mortier. Faced with this growing complexity, Staci is banking on its flexibility. ‘ Unlike ultra-mechanised players, we are capable of managing a variety of flows: parcels, multi-packages, pallets and even multi-pallets. Working with giants like Amazon? That doesn’t scare Staci, but it does imply some specificities. ‘ In the United States, Amazon picks up products from our warehouses. But that requires strict compliance with their processes, whether for packing or product identification. Each customer, whether Amazon, Leroy Merlin or Carrefour, has its own packaging constraints’, he explains.

## **Innovation for performance**

Technology plays a central role in Staci’s adaptation. Among the key developments, Thomas Mortier highlights the use of drones for stocktaking. These drones scan storage locations in real time, without interrupting the flow of goods. It’s fast, accurate and less expensive.

Another innovation is artificial intelligence applied to packing. ‘ A camera connected to an AI application films the movements of operators as they prepare orders, checks the conformity of parcels in real time and alerts them to any errors. This guarantees a 100% service rate. The system also has a positive impact on the operators. ‘ They are more relaxed and work faster, knowing that an error will be detected immediately,’ he adds.

Staci is continuing to explore the potential of artificial intelligence in its internal processes, particularly within its customer services department. Thomas Mortier explains: ‘ We have set up a tool that scans and analyses customer requests in order to classify them: is it a transport problem, a request for information or even statistics? This means that each request is automatically directed to the right person in-house’. The system also ensures rigorous monitoring of complaints and responses. ‘ If a response is delayed, an alert is sent to the manager concerned, guaranteeing that it is dealt with quickly and efficiently. These AI solutions enable us to

considerably improve our administrative productivity,’ he adds.

## **Unbeatable adaptability**

Staci faces constant challenges linked to our customers’ sales forecasts, which from time to time can be quite far from reality. ‘ Forecasts are rarely accurate. A customer may anticipate sales of one product and end up selling another. Promotions can also change at the last minute, generating unexpected peaks in orders’. Flexibility therefore remains the watchword for Staci, which strives to respond to customer requests in record time, while meeting its KPI commitments. ‘ This ability to adapt is at the heart of our DNA,’ stresses Thomas Mortier.

## **Sustainability: an essential criterion**

Environmental and social concerns are playing an increasingly important role in the logistics sector, and Staci is no exception to the rule. ‘ Today, not having an environmental plan is eliminatory for our customers. It is becoming the number one selection criterion’, says Thomas Mortier. To meet these requirements, the company has invested heavily, setting up a new dedicated team, independent audits and the publication of a societal and environmental report. ‘ We have transformed our approach to integrate these issues into all our activities,’ he continues. The first phase of this approach involves pooling flows and Staci’s own warehouses. ‘ Unlike dedicated warehouses, which are in the majority among our competitors, where energy is consumed even when there is no activity, our pooled approach avoids this wastage. Our warehouses are shared between several customers, which ensures constant activity and more evenly distributed energy consumption. This model is part of an optimisation strategy, particularly when it comes to international transport. ‘ For example, we noticed that product flows for a major player in the luxury goods sector were making unnecessary round trips between Asia and Europe before being redistributed in Asia. To solve this problem, we opened a subsidiary in Asia and another in the United States two years ago. This ■■■





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/// means that products manufactured in these regions can be stored and distributed locally, avoiding the need for goods to travel thousands of kilometres. The underlying idea is to offer efficient, respectful logistics tailored to the needs of each customer.

### **The Race for Speed: Between Demands and Adaptability**

Faced with the diversity of customer expectations in terms of speed of delivery, Thomas Mortier explains that Staci has to adapt to sometimes contradictory trends. 'There is indeed a strong demand for speed, particularly in large cities where consumers expect almost immediate delivery, influenced by players such as Amazon. But at the other end of the spectrum are platforms like Temu, where customers accept longer delivery times in exchange for lower prices'.

This dichotomy reflects a shift in the distribution strategies of Staci's customers. 'Some are stopping their e-commerce flows for profitability reasons or choosing to use marketplaces, while others are successfully maintaining a multi-channel organisation.

The dominant trend, however, remains one of urgency and speed, especially when a product is sold at a certain price, which creates a legitimate expectation of rapid service'.

To meet these varied needs, Staci relies on its operational flexibility. 'It's in our DNA to manage peaks in activity, whether for marketing campaigns, seasonal flows or atypical situations. Most of our warehouses also operate at night, with late cut-offs to absorb these variations. During the peak season, around a third of our sites also operate at weekends,' he adds. This agility is made possible by highly committed teams. 'We are fortunate to have a stable workforce, with a high level of seniority and 50% female employees. This human capital, combined with our logistical expertise, is a major asset in meeting the growing demands for speed and flexibility.

### **Post-pandemic resilience and geopolitical opportunities**

Thomas Mortier looks back at the impact of the pandemic and recent geopolitical events. 'Today, we



are clearly in a post-pandemic phase, but the logistics market is in the process of regulating itself after a period of euphoria. We are seeing a downturn in the market, with many companies in our sector filing for bankruptcy. As for geopolitical tensions, Staci has been relatively spared. ' We were not in Russia or Ukraine, but we are still feeling the indirect effects, particularly in terms of inflation and more cautious consumption. However, these effects are mitigated by the diversification of Staci's business sectors. ' When the automotive sector slows down, retail picks up again. During the pandemic, the opposite was true, with technology and telecoms compensating. This diversity is a real asset, enabling us to maintain a balanced business despite crises. For the future, Staci is banking on the strategic alliance

with Radial and Active Ants that we mentioned in the preamble. 'These companies bring highly complementary e-commerce expertise that considerably strengthens our multi-channel offering. Active Ants, in particular, is a benchmark in e-commerce mechanisation and logistics. This alliance brings us full circle, providing our customers with even more effective solutions tailored to the needs of e-commerce. This partnership marks a decisive step in Staci's strategy as it continues to innovate and adapt to the changing needs of the market. Thomas Mortier concludes: ' Thanks to this complementary expertise, we are confirming our position as a leader in multi-channel logistics and pursuing our mission to serve our customers with ever greater flexibility and expertise. ■



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