

Living e-commerce

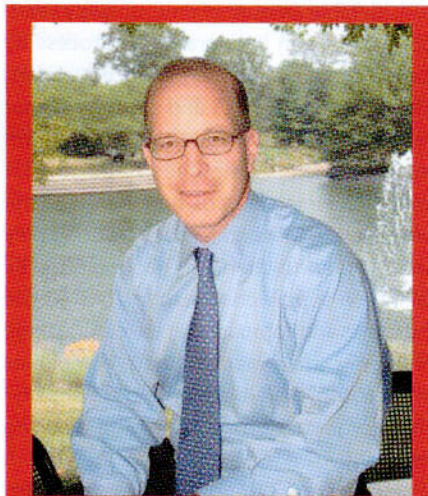
Strong organizational alignment, a set of clearly defined goals, and development of a product that makes absolute sense, are some of the ingredients that have contributed to INTTRA's seemingly unstoppable growth. **Simon Saunders** talks with **Ken Bloom**, the man at the helm of the company that has been described as the Google of the shipping industry.

For a company considered a mere baby compared to many in the industry, INTTRA is fast making a name for itself in the supply chain and shipping industries. And it's doing this by streamlining and standardizing traditionally inefficient processes and enabling the management of cargo across multiple shipping lines in a single integrated process. Sounds fairly straightforward, but behind this brilliantly simple concept lies much innovative thinking and a huge amount of hard work. Ensuring that INTTRA stays on track as its growth rockets is Ken Bloom who joined the company as CEO in early 2001.

With a background in shipping and considerable experience in e-commerce, Bloom brought with him the precise mixture of experience and skills which the young company needed. "I was attracted to INTTRA for three reasons: first, it set out to solve an important problem: how to create efficiencies around a, then, non-standardized process. Second, INTTRA founding carriers recognized that to solve this problem, competing carriers would have to work together...and they have done and are doing that for the benefit of the entire industry. Third, INTTRA, as an industry portal, has the breadth and depth to solve the problem," explains Bloom, who continues.

"I think the two key skills are my ability to motivate people to work on solving large, industry problems. Remember that before INTTRA, this was all uncharted territory which required the creation of a new global operation organized around a common mission and set of goals".

Bloom was brought on board with a mandate to spearhead global growth and he has more than achieved this with the company blossoming at an average of 6%



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per month for the past five years, a growth figure he points out that many companies would be happy to achieve in a year. But also something which throws up challenges in itself. "The greatest challenge, and one that is quite fun as well, is managing a fast growing company. While of course it is good to have, rapid growth (for such a long time) has its own unique challenges, and I doubt that there are many companies in the world who have experienced such growth. We feel we can write a good book on it!"

Obviously, a company as sophisticated as INTTRA is no one-man band and Bloom is the first to put the success down to the support of his clients and everyone in the company, in particular the extremely experienced management team whom he maintains has worked day and night to make the company the great place to work that it is today. "We believe in strong organizational alignment. This means that we value candour, receptivity to feedback, and clear, measurable articulation of corporate, developmental/regional, and individual goals. I believe that everyone appreciates these values and for me it's the only way to manage a global, professional workforce," says Bloom.

INTTRA's global workforce today exceeds 200 professionals in eleven countries and in Asia. It has succeeded in building a strong team in key markets and is now looking forward to continuing to build relationships and offer localized services and products to the community. But Bloom also understands that INTTRA has a long way to go. "We are really only at the beginning of the journey. We would like more organizations to gain the benefits of standardization, and, with that, we will create a large community of supporters."

It is this standardization which has been key to INTTRA's success and although looking back is not something that comes naturally to Bloom, he does concede that INTTRA has made a unique contribution to the industry. "I think that our greatest contribution is that we fulfilled a longstanding industry request. Yesterday the 'e' in e-commerce may have stood for esoteric; today, you can say it stands for everyday." And when it comes to the future, he is a little less restrained but equally to the point. "I want INTTRA to be a top 100 place to work," he says. ■