



About one quarter of all containers worldwide are booked via the Intra platform. (Photo: Getty Images)

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Well about 5 percent have increased the global container traffic last year. For many ship owners, ocean freight forwarding agents and other participants in the maritime supply chain, that was a reason to finally pop the champagne corks again. Sea freight operator Intra from New Jersey would probably not even have been served with 5 percent growth. The company thinks in other dimensions. The volume booked via the platform increased by 13 percent last year. And in the current year, they also want to grow clearly above the market, said the top management in late April in Hamburg at a press conference.

In fact, the Intra network is growing and growing. At the beginning of March, four shipping companies were involved in one go, including Unifeeder and with Evergreen the last remaining liner shipping company from the global top ten. And just last week Intra won another member. Salam Pacific Indonesia Lines (SPIL) is the first Indonesian carrier to partner with them. This is proof that increasingly regional shipping companies rely on the platform, the company said. In total, well over 60 carriers and NVOCCs are connected. This would allow customers to book 80 percent of global container ship capacity via Intra.

50 percent market share

And they do it eagerly. A good quarter of all boxes worldwide are now handled via Intra, CEO John Fay proudly said. This corresponds to about 77 million teu. Looking only at the electronically booked boxes, Intra even has a market share of 50 percent. 30,000 shippers use the network, and they can track over 40 percent of global container shipments electronically.

Founded only in 2001, the service provider with just 200 employees is thus the secret ruler of an increasingly digitized maritime logistics chain. Accordingly self-confident, CEO Fay gives himself. "We have no direct competitor," he says, "at most phone and e-mail."

But with Intra one assumes anyway that the Tipping Point of the digitization is reached in the meantime and thus the processing over sooner or later digitized area-wide. Data sovereignty on the world's oceans reaches out to the platform operator behind the four founding shareholders Maersk / Hamburg Süd, MSC, Hapag-Lloyd / UASC and CMA CGM, as well as the financial investor ABS Capital. About a year ago, Intra acquired Avantida, the European leader in empty container management. 365,000 containers per year are handled by the company based in Antwerp or its platform. According to Intra management, business is growing by 50 percent a year, and by 2018 expansion to Asia is planned.

Another boom through Blockchain

At the same time Intra strives to digitize more and more parts of the ocean freight process and handle it via its platform. "We want to be a network for the entire business and not just for the operative part," says COO Inna Kuznetsova. So soon the rate management via Intra should be possible. The same applies to payment processing and invoice verification. In a further step, real trade finance solutions are planned.

Intra uses blockchain technology for these applications. "At the end of last year, together with a carrier and several freight forwarders, we provided the proof of concept," says Kuznetsova. For the second half of the year, a pilot project with several shipowners and freight forwarders is planned.

Competition from the numerous start-ups in the sea freight market must not fear Intra otherwise than possibly forwarding agencies. The Twills, Flexports and Co. of this world were keen to use Intra, according to CEO Fay. Although these supposed disruptors can build comfortable front-ends for quotations and bookings, they are usually blank in the actual processing of shipments and thus rely on providers such as Intra.

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