

Ambitious WFS preparing to take the business up to the next level



Still less than a year since taking over as chief executive officer (CEO) of cargo handler heavyweight **Worldwide Flight Services (WFS)** - Craig Smyth has been busy building what he describes as a "suite of centralised services" designed to take WFS to the next level.

Like any new CEO of a global company he has travelled extensively to get a feel for what's happening on the ground, and is happy with what he has witnessed.

Smyth is quick to acknowledge the entrepreneurial spirit that flows across a network spanning 18,000 people and stations at 188 airports in more than 22 countries on five continents.

He values the importance of local people who understand local cultures and customers, and his focus is to "make them feel even more supported".

To do that, Smyth has been enhancing WFS' central capability, not to replace what already exists but make WFS' strong regional presence better coordinated as a network and to deliver the tools, support and direction that will enable its teams to deliver the per-

formance levels its 300-plus airline customers need and expect.

Key to this focus are three core central components; safety and security, people and technology.

This has seen three new appointments to WFS' executive team in Paris including David Clark as global head of safety and security after he was snapped up from **British Airways** where he had spent 17 years.

Pedro Garcia was appointed as chief information officer after leaving WFS' main rival **Swissport** where he was vice president of cargo information systems.

Completing the trio of senior appointments was Fabienne Bricaud as global head of people. She was previously group HR director for **Mobivia Groupe**.

These are all part of the upgrading of WFS to cement its position in cargo handling and to build on its reputation as a leading global provider of ground handling and technical services.

Evolution and not revolution

For Smyth, it's a process of evolution and not revolution. "What I have seen as I have travelled around the WFS network is an experienced and committed team of professionals working closely with our local customers.

"We want that to continue and we want to build on everything WFS has already achieved over more than 40 years by providing the support that will ensure we are working as one global team with common goals.

"We want our customers to consistently experience the same high standards wherever in the world they engage with us.

"Safety and security is our number one priority and our investments in our people, technology and training are all geared to making us a world class organisation in safety and security.

"We also want to harness technology in a more useful and efficient way that benefits WFS and its customers, and want to not only attract the most talented people to WFS, we also want to give our existing employees the best opportunities to develop their careers. We don't want our best people to feel they need to go

elsewhere to make personal progress," he says.

He is just as passionate about increasing the footprint of the WFS brand.

This is already under way with **Consolidated Aviation Services (CAS)**, the North American handler acquired at the start of 2016 and now fully integrated under the WFS umbrella.

Smyth calls the decision by WFS' parent **Platinum Equity** to acquire CAS as a "statement of intent", coming just six months after it also purchased a 51 per cent stake in **Fraport Cargo Services at Frankfurt Airport**.

The future for WFS is likely to prioritise organic growth but Smyth has no doubts that there will be more money available to invest if the right opportunities come along for growth through acquisitions, in either existing or new markets.

Smyth makes no secret of his aims to grow WFS' ground handling capabilities. Ramp and passenger services are already an important part of its business, but its network of services is scattered and still small compared to its cargo handling infrastructure. It's something he says the company will address strategically but "not at the expense" of ignoring WFS' cargo business.

He states: "We have a strong cargo business and a proven pedigree in the industry. We have a commitment to grow and develop cargo and will continue to invest in the business."

Smyth is sure that this is an agenda that will see WFS establishing footholds in new markets and take extra capacity to boost existing airport operations, while he also does not rule out making future acquisitions.

For Smyth and the entire WFS team, taking the company to the "next level" means nothing is ruled out but as CEO he knows whatever steps WFS takes, it will be doing so from a position of strength.



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