



of a Boeing 707 or DC-8.

“Undoubtedly, the real major step to reaching adulthood in the air cargo business has been made possible by the arrival of the fabulous “Jumbo” 747F aircraft, and of the parallel developments in the computer field of commercial and operational software processes, for commercial inventory, pricing, cargo handling procedures and various other issues,” explains Jean Claude Raynaud, spokesman for Air France-KLM.

While there has been a lot of talk recently about the lack of willingness of the industry to embrace IT changes, slowly but surely the industry is moving ahead – despite numerous different platforms.

“In the early 1970s, the industry was all essentially in manual mode,” explains Ted Braun, of Braun and Associates.

“Developments in technology, together with growth in cargo volumes prompted the IATA Cargo Traffic Procedures Committee to launch an historic undertaking, which culminated in the Cargo Automation Research Report (CART) in December 1975.” CART became the blueprint for all cargo systems.

But, notes Braun: “Taking a step back, the sad conclusion must be that the promise of automation hasn’t been fulfilled to this day, despite millions of collective industry dollars invested.

“The air cargo challenge has always been ‘competition or co-operation?’ and a dual, or paper and computer-based regime, is actually more expensive, complex and inefficient than a purely manual one. Automation is great when it’s rigorous, and implemented consistently, but it’s a terrible burden and waste when it’s not, and that’s where we still are in 2011.”

One, evolving issue has also impacted the business significantly, says Ram Menen, Divisional Senior Vice-President Cargo for Emirates.

“There is now a greater awareness of what logistics is all about,” he says.

“In the past, it was all little groups on their own, but now people are realising they are all part of the same industry. The creation of TIACA in 1992 was instrumental in that, and gave a common platform to everyone who is involved in the business.

“The bottom line is now supply chain management – and the biggest driver is globalisation. We have all become experts in procurement, inventory management and logistics, and we now do all of those things. The manufacturers can concentrate on the design, and we can take care of the rest. That is the biggest change.”

Osinga agrees: “The combination of global sourcing and consumer buying has had a major impact on air cargo and will continue to do so. There is a global marketplace, and where there used to be single traffic flows, now there is a far more complex management of logistics streams.”

But, he adds, much like security, which has altered operating conditions but not changed the fundamentals of the industry, although the drivers for the industry have changed, airlines and airports have not.

“Cargo has become more professionally managed at airlines,” he concedes. “But overall it has been the integrators that have developed the market.

“In some ways, the total lack of change is what is obvious.”

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