



# ASPEN LOGISTICS SERVICES

KEEPING COOL UNDER PRESSURE





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*Sujen Padayatchi, managing director of Aspen Logistics Services, tells Jane Alverca why the company can stay cool under pressure better than any other player in the transportation industry*

Maintaining the cold chain during transit is fundamental to a brand's reputation



The customer base served by Aspen Logistics Services wants a provider who can literally stay cool under pressure. For blue chip retailers of perishable fast moving consumer goods (FMCG), maintaining the cold chain during transit and having the right goods available in store on a just-in-time basis is fundamental to their brand integrity and their market reputation.

For those who operate in the high-temperature zones south of the equator, the stakes are particularly high. Bacteria here need very little encouragement to run riot and even a tiny lapse in vigilance can produce catastrophic results. Operationally, it is a demanding, high-pressure environment with no margin for error.

Sujen Padayatchi is managing director of Aspen Logistics Services, a leading supplier to the FMCG logistics sector in Southern Africa. Although the core business is located in South Africa, Aspen also services a growing customer base in Botswana, Namibia and Mozambique.

Aspen has focused on the logistics niche that deals with express overnight transportation of mostly perishable products, due for next day in-store delivery. "We chose this market because it is highly consistent with year-round dependability and little seasonality. It also has huge growth potential with an emerging middle class who aspire to eat better quality food which includes many chilled products. We have partnered with major blue chip clients who are particularly well placed



**GEA Refrigeration Africa** has been a proud supplier to Aspen Logistics for the last 8 years. It is a great privilege to be associated with Aspen Logistics operational team and to be part of their daily business which is refrigerated transport.

**GEA Refrigeration Africa** supply, install & maintain the Thermo King SLX400 (30) transport refrigeration units which Aspen Logistics uses to maintain the cold chain to deliver their customer's product in the highest quality and freshness. Our business partnership has grown over the years as Aspen Logistics requested higher service levels to introduce a higher level of service to their customer. Aspen Logistics maintain & service their Thermo King Refrigeration units regularly and thus keep their units in excellent condition ensuring minimal downtime.

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Aspen Logistics' drivers are among the best in the industry

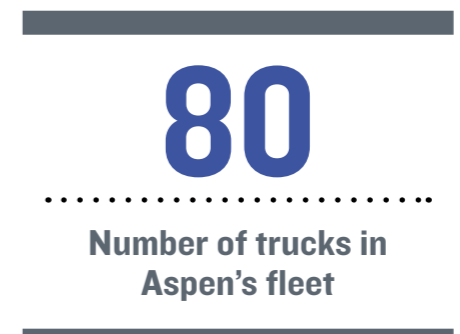
to service these customers and grow with the market," he explains.

He is clear about why the company has become the partner of choice. "We have an exceptionally high standard of operations with an advanced technological infrastructure and a very high standard of equipment, including our fleet of trucks. All financial, operational and technical aspects of the business are integrated and the data is available on a real-time basis. This has allowed us to create a key competitive advantage—which is the speed at which we can respond to customer demands."

In this business, a sense

of urgency is even stated as a core business value. Unscheduled downtime is non-negotiable and Padayatchi is passionate about the condition of the company's 80-strong fleet of trucks. "We use Caterpillar engines throughout the fleet because of their global reputation. Our drivers are among the best in the industry and our maintenance programmes are strictly adhered to," he states.

As part of Aspen's sustainability drive, great attention is also paid to reducing carbon emissions from the fleet, year-on-year. "We are committed to protecting our environment at all times through new and



# Serco

Serco was at its creative best in building interlink combinations for a Johannesburg transport company which needed innovatively designed trailers to handle new dry freight business it had acquired. The company, Aspen Logistics, does a lot of refrigerated work but a contract won to transport high value goods for Makro

required something a bit different—and Serco came up with the answer. Aspen wanted a trailer combination suitable for long distance work with the capacity to carry 36 pallets but with maximum flexibility when loading and offloading.

That flexibility was essential for rear, through and side loading and—most critically—when loading at docking bays. The front trailer on an interlink is often the cause of problems because of the rear link section which makes it difficult—sometimes impossible—to get close enough to the docking area for efficient loading.

Serco’s managing director Clinton Holcroft said the company’s design department brainstormed and decided a sliding bogie was the answer. “The concept is simple and does not require hydraulics and pneumatics which have caused problems in similar trailers already on the market. The single sliding chassis, with the minimum of mechanical parts to ensure reliability, makes it easy

for the front trailer to dock. The sliding mechanism is locked in place ensuring the bogie and chassis stay aligned as well as maintaining stability and a reduction in wear,” said Holcroft. Aspen is now able to use the interlinks as either semi-trailers or in an interlink combination. The sliding mechanism allows the front link to be quickly and simply converted from a semi-trailer to an interlink. And that’s not all—there was more innovation from Serco in the vital area of fuel saving! Most interlinks have dual axles which put more rubber on the road, making the vehicle heavier and leading to higher diesel consumption. The reason single tyres haven’t been used is because of their maximum eight-ton rating in South Africa which results in decreased payloads. However, Serco sourced a super single tyre with a 10-ton rating from Goodyear in Europe and used it on the new interlinks, providing the same payload capacity as dual tyres but with a significant fuel saving and longer tyre life. Aspen Logistics has taken delivery of four of the new age interlink combinations and is over the moon with the new vehicles, according to managing director Sujen Padayatchi. “We are very impressed with the interlinks and consider them to be far superior to anything currently on the market. Serco built them to suit our needs and has produced something very special. We certainly envisage placing more orders with Serco in the future,” said Padayatchi.



# ASPEN LOGISTICS SERVICES



All vehicles are monitored on a constant basis by a flagship satellite tracking system

# SERCO

*Delivering great products to transporters*



## SPECIALIST MANUFACTURERS OF:

- Truck bodies and trailers that are relied upon by leading transport operators
- Fibreglass dry freight and refrigerated vehicles offering superior strength and corrosion resistant panels
- New generation ‘Super Reefer Lite’ which offers a substantial weight reduction



“WE HAVE THE CAPACITY TO CONTINUALLY IMPROVE OUR SERVICE OFFERING IN LINE WITH THE EVOLUTION OF THE MARKET”

innovative technology,” he continues. “For example, our trailer builders have embarked on a number of environmentally friendly initiatives in their factories. We operate Thermoking SLX refrigeration units which have made enormous strides in reducing CO2 emissions as well as reducing fuel consumption and reduced noise pollution.”

The attention to managing risk on behalf of customers is unparalleled. All cooling

units, for example, are equipped with downloadable data logs. The operations room is staffed 24/7 and all vehicles are monitored on a constant basis by a flagship satellite tracking system. This offers real time data not only on location but also digital and analog inputs giving information on driver identification, vehicle immobilization and accident sensors.

In addition to the company’s internal



systems, there is also independent verification from an off-site, outsourced tracking company which specifically tracks and monitors alarm signals, vehicle route deviations and other information that affects vehicle utilization.

Providing a service at this sort of level is a costly and complex challenge and Padayatchi notes that the logistics industry is currently poised to see a big wave of consolidation. “Clients are more and more demanding which is increasingly difficult for smaller players who cannot meet their more stringent quality requirements. While we have the capacity to continually improve our service offering in line with the evolution of the market, a lot of smaller companies simply cannot keep up.”

At present, he believes the company is ideally placed to win more business within South Africa’s dynamic food market through straightforward organic growth, but he admits that acquiring smaller companies without the finance or infrastructure to grow may also be an option for closer consideration in the future.

He also sees a big opportunity beyond the border. “We would definitely like to expand our geographical footprint and we see Africa generally positioned for huge growth in

demand for refrigerated products as a result of rising living standards. At present, the warehousing and infrastructure to support refrigeration are poor but with big names like Walmart moving into Africa, there will inevitably be a surge in demand for quality transportation providers able to operate within its very tight guidelines.”

Padayatchi believes that Aspen Logistics is particularly well placed to exploit these

new opportunities because it has the distinction of being the only Level 3 BBBEE accredited business to specialize in refrigerated transportation—credentials that he is especially proud of. It is, he points out, an ongoing process and Aspen is continually striving to upgrade its rating. The next phase of development will deal with gender empowerment and he hopes to see a greater female shareholding in future as well as more female directors on the board.

“We are at Level 3 at the moment but we will soon be moving to a Level 2 rating which places us in a unique position in the refrigerated transportation sector,”

Africa is poised for huge growth in demand for refrigerated products

**FMCG**

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**Fast moving  
consumer goods**

he explains. “Our rating reflects our sustainable business model and the drive towards black economic empowerment which is occurring at all levels of society, and we hope it will put us in a strong position to win even more business

in Southern Africa. We want to work in partnership with other companies who share our values and ideals to make Africa the continent of the future,” he concludes. **BE**

**“WE ARE COMMITTED TO PROTECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT AT ALL TIMES THROUGH NEW AND INNOVATIVE TECHNOLOGY”**

For more information about Aspen Logistics Services visit: [www.aspenlog.co.za](http://www.aspenlog.co.za)



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