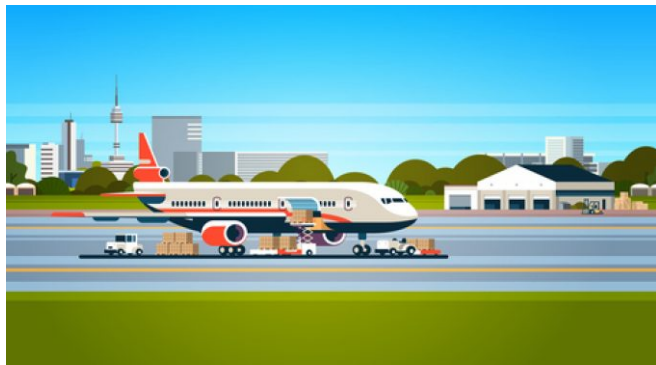


News / Complacent airports should pay more attention to their cargo operations



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By [Alex Whiteman in Abu Dhabi](#) 02/02/2023

Airports must be more appreciative of their cargo terminal operations if they are not to be usurped by upstart gateways.

The VP of airline relations and cargo at Dallas Fort Worth (DFW), Milton de la Paz, said despite its cargo terminal generating more than half the airport’s regional economic impact, there remained a disconnect with its wider leadership.

“It took us to tell the board that cargo was responsible for a \$20.3bn annual regional economic impact before they paid us any attention,” he told delegates at the World Cargo Summit in Abu Dhabi this week.

He said the lack of attention paid to the cargo sector became apparent during the pandemic, when the cargo terminal was operating at full capacity, but needed updated infrastructure.

The situation is not unique to DFW, he said, with the average age of US airport facilities between 40 and 50 years. And aviation consultant Chris Notter questioned whether airports cared.

“If airports take things seriously, [cargo] could be huge for them but it requires a focus on people, profit, and planning,” he said.

Echoing the views of Tiaca director general Glyn Hughes, Mr Notter said there needed to be much more attention paid to training and making the industry an attractive one for the next generation of employees.

He said there was also work to be done when it came to resource management, urging “real digitisation and modernisation” – but he

value of this sector, the wider industry can help this shift by refusing to accept mediocrity," he added.

"Customers want consistency and transparency and, if we continue with individual players focusing on their own agenda, outside actors will affect the field of play."

Mr de la Paz noted that the necessary changes would require outlay, but questioned who, if anyone, was willing to pay for this, stressing that airports would not be able to achieve the required changes alone.

Former Liege Airport commercial director and founder of consultancy firm FB Cargo Strategy, Steven Verhasselt, said any change had to focus on the needs of cargo owners.

"There is a long way to go when looking at airports in terms of making the improvements that cargo owners are looking for, but improving reliability is undoubtedly the most important thing to get right," said Mr Verhasselt.

"But with most airports government owned, or heavily embedded within the community, it is important to re-emphasise their importance if change is to happen."

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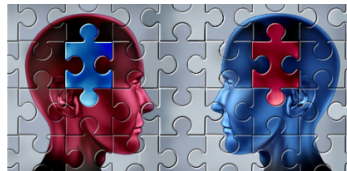


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