John Kandylis – General Manager, Olympias Logistics, Greece



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John Kandylis, GM of Greek logistics market leader Olympias, discusses his company's unique service offering, negotiating the issues brought about by the financial crisis, and retaining a family-run spirit while expanding internationally.



Olympias SA is positioned as a market leader in logistics with deep expertise in the field. Could you please provide us with a brief background and history of the company?

Olympias is a long-established transport and logistics company based in Athens, Greece; we have always been family-run but over the years we have developed an international clientele in the areas we operate, always with respect to our humble past. In the 2000s our activities were centralized around foodstuffs but as time demanded, in the period 2010-2017 we have expanded rapidly into pharmaceuticals, military, ship supplies, duty free products, high-tech products and most recently FCMG. We are a small business and we are flexible, we keep developing year after year, always aiming to be one step ahead of the competition and challenging only our previous

goals. You have needs and we have solutions to offer.

Your portfolio consists of transportation of foodstuffs, hi-tech military/defence equipment and pharmaceutical products. How important is the healthcare and pharmaceutical part of the business to your portfolio?

Our portfolio is highly diversified and since 2010, when we first entered the healthcare and pharmaceutical industry, this has increased significantly. It comprises between 35 and 45 percent of our weekly volumes and the more we specialize in this field, the better we become.

You boast a commitment to “Just in Time” deliveries. Why is this a valuable business model for a country like Greece?

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“Just in time” deliveries should not be bound to Greek borders because when it comes to the transport of pharmaceuticals, they should reach their destination always on time because otherwise it might be too late for a variety of reasons; pharmaceuticals are a very demanding product, mainly due to their fragile nature, and their transport calls for high specialization and responsibility. Just in time deliveries are therefore critical for pharmaceuticals and any kind of product. For Greece, which is a peculiar market, boasting just in time deliveries comprises a competitive advantage and increases the trust of clients towards your company. At this point, it is very important to focus on quality as well, we have managed to upgrade all our services to TAPA level; this in combination with the GDP and HACCP certfications that the company already boasts completes the pyramid of quality, security and optimization.

How do you differentiate yourselves from the competition? What is your USP?

Until now, we have avoided comparing ourselves to our competitors. We try to be always one step ahead of the competition. As mentioned previously our just in time deliveries are one of our strongest points but our USP is the high quality of service offered to our clients throughout the process; we never make any discounts in our service level.

Why is it important for you to offer a full range of solutions with supplementary services, as opposed to merely getting products from A to B?

As mentioned previously we hold a diversified portfolio to minimize potential risks as much as possible. Transportation nowadays is not merely about getting products from point A to point B; it is a whole package of continuously upgraded services. We aim at high quality services therefore

we should always offer a solution to any potential problem that might occur.

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Given the economic crisis of the country, many local (traditionally family-owned) businesses in Greece are increasingly becoming more extroverted and looking at international markets for exports. Has this trend provided greater business opportunities for Olympias?

Olympias is a business whose clientele consists in the largest part of multinational companies and this has assisted in the well-being of the economics of the company. If not the first we were one of the first to look at international markets for exports and expand our operations. As a result, this helped in our growth and progress from every aspect.

How important is it to build a rapport with the international life sciences network in Greece?

It is quite important especially for a company that works in the healthcare and pharmaceutical industry mainly because our international life sciences network provides us with insights in the field, useful knowledge, collaboration opportunities, development opportunities and the chance to promote our work.

As the Greek market is laden with market access issues and product launch delays, has there been an impact on the logistics side of the operations?

The main impact we have experienced on the logistics side of the operations since the capital controls started was liquidity; companies lack liquidity and fail to meet their obligations. As a result, finding partners that have credibility and reliability has become an extremely difficult task. Investments on the other side are stopped at the moment, causing a decay in the market. We invite investors to trust Greek companies and Greek Businessmen for many reasons but there is one significant difference between a European businessman and a Greek one and that is the will to survive by growing smart in a hazard but profitable environment.

What key trends and opportunities do you see in the healthcare landscape as a whole that could potentially have a significant impact on logistics businesses and the way products are transported?

As far as I can see, the Middle East and Far East markets are emerging rapidly and by the end of 2020 will most probably be leaders in the field of pharmaceuticals. Bigger and bigger is growing

the demand for eastern pharmaceutical products and needless to mention that the demand is two-way because both the Western world and the Eastern one are seeking to collaborate. A new way will eventually be developed combining truck and container for transporting pharmaceuticals under a new GDP to satisfy new needs. And we are preparing for it.

How would you like the Olympias name and range of services to resonate to your clients in Greece and abroad?

Optimization of security quality in pharmaceutical transport, with use of the latest technology in our daily operations ensuring Safety and Quality at a much higher level than the big market leaders.

What are your overarching strategic proprieties for the next three to five years?

In the next few years, we want to focus on increasing safety in our transport, optimising our internal activities and processes, offering new solutions to our clients, investing in quality systems, investing in new trucking technology, expanding our cooperation with multinational freight forwarders and offering our services directly to the Middle East.

What is your final message to our global executive readers who could potentially partner with you?

We are always open to new collaborations and partnerships, open to new ideas and open to progress.

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