



Maurizio Catino, Executive Vice President Global Sales & Solutions

## FOCUS ON SOLUTION COMPETENCE

**As Executive Vice President Global Sales & Solutions, Maurizio Catino has been the Interroll Group's global Head of Sales since the beginning of July 2020. We talked to him about current market trends, the advantages of digitalization and the importance of solution competence for future success.**

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**With lockdowns in many countries, collapsing economic data, company bankruptcies: What influence does the coronavirus pandemic have on the market for material handling solutions?**

**Maurizio Catino:** The pandemic has made the global intralogistics market even more dynamic. While other industries have been hit extremely hard, e-commerce in particular has generated strong demand for material flow solutions due to the rapid and abrupt increase in online purchasing by consumers. The reason: Only with automated solutions for conveying, sorting, storage and order picking can e-commerce providers increase their capacities to meet customer requirements with fast delivery times. The swelling of the flow of goods triggered by internet orders is indeed impressive.

**Couldn't this just be a flash in the pan?**

No. Of course, nobody can predict the future exactly, but the increased order volume via the internet is due not only to the more intensive use by consumers who are already internet-savvy, but also to the development of completely new target groups. An example: While

my father consistently rejected smartphone use before the pandemic, today he is on the internet every day, also as an online shopper. This change in behavior will continue. At the same time, logistics as a whole has gained social importance. A broader public has now become aware of the system-relevant function of this industry, for instance in supplying people with food.

**And what is the situation in other industries?**

Many industries today have recognized that there is great potential for productivity in material handling in order to significantly improve their own competitiveness, for example in the area of industrial production. Simultaneously, however, parcel service providers and courier services are increasingly in the process of decentralizing their networks for capacity reasons, such as setting up smaller, additional distribution centers on the outskirts of or even in the city center. Conveyors or sorters are also needed for this. So, there are a number of trends that give us additional tailwind, both in winning new customers and in upgrading solutions for existing customers. As an international technology leader, we are excellently represented in these and other growth areas with our modular – in other words, flexibly combinable – product range, which we have also consistently expanded with our high-performance sorter, the new Split-Tray Sorter and to which we will add the new Smart Pallet Mover, for example.

**In coronavirus times, the internet may well have gained in importance for Interroll's sales activities.**

That's how it is. It was crucial that the Interroll Group Management did not waste any time after the beginning of the crisis by letting the initial pandemic shock throw us off course. On the contrary, we immediately took measures to ensure unrestricted supply availability for our customers. For the sales department, this meant first of all not letting the close relationship with the respective customers be interrupted by the cancellation of trade fairs and the lack of opportunities to visit, but making customer contact and conducting consultation online from the home office. By the way, this went far beyond the usual use of video conferencing. Livestreams about new products or interactive webinars were used. Our employees met these challenges with the necessary flexibility and great commitment, in exemplary cooperation with marketing and product management.



Maurizio Catino at the Interroll headquarters in Sant'Antonino

**So, will the sales department only work via online channels in the future?**

No. The basis of a successful sales activity will always be non-media communication between people. The rapid switch to online channels worked so well, in large part because our customers already knew us well and trusted us. However, the coronavirus crisis has already accelerated the existing trend toward virtual interaction and its use has now become a natural, additional instrument in daily sales work. The new opportunities offered by social media, especially for new customer business, are a good example. They allow sales staff to enter into initial contact with decision-makers much more efficiently and precisely, without first being passed on from one internal department to another.

**Now the internet is not only a technical tool.**

Correct. The internet is also changing the role and tasks that salespeople have to face. Today, customers can find out about Interroll's product range themselves with just a few mouse clicks. And that's exactly what most of them do, even before their first visit to Interroll. What does that mean? It means that as a sales representative I no longer offer the customer added value as a product catalogue on two legs. What is required is proactive solution and consulting expertise as well as knowledge of the benefits of the entire portfolio that Interroll has to offer. Of course, this also requires an understanding of the business objectives and workflows of the end users in order to effectively support system integrators in their work. For example, when visiting a running application, you must be able to immediately identify possible optimizations for the particular operation. As a salesperson, you should also understand the directions in which the market and the industry are developing. This is one of the reasons why we conduct appropriate training courses at the Interroll Academy, where we also draw on the expertise of leading research institutes such as Fraunhofer Institute for Material Flow and Logistics (IML).

**Doesn't this turn toward solution orientation also need to be anchored in internal structures?**

Yes, that's why we have developed our successful industry sales organization into a global solution sales organization that supports our customers on an equal footing even with the most demanding projects. Incidentally, we didn't need to set up an additional sales organization for this purpose, but we can now make even better use of the know-how already available in the respective industry environment. Furthermore, these vertical functions not only support the existing, geographically oriented sales force, but also represent an important link between sales and the product managers in our global competence centers. Through this exchange of know-how, we ensure that the market requirements to which we orientate our sales work are directly incorporated into the innovation process of our company.

**Now, with 28,000 customers that you look after, it's not always just about larger projects?**

Exactly. Just as important as the project business is the sale of key products that customers already know and want to integrate into their material flow solutions in order to add value. Online channels play a central role in this area. For example, we have experienced a great deal of customer interest in our new online shop that we launched last year.

**Where does digitalization still play a role?**

For example, in the value-added advantages that our globally used enterprise resource planning (ERP) system offers. You have to understand that most of our major customers are global corporations that operate on the basis of end-to-end, digital, just-in-time supply chains. Besides the new and already mentioned online shop we offer a so-called headless approach. This means that customers who are interested in automated purchasing can use interfaces to connect with us through the platforms they use. The order request to

Interroll is then generated by a software. On our side, we use then the SAP CX Commerce cloud in combination with electronic data interface (EDI) to translate this request into an offer. This is a lean process and convenient for our customers. Hence, as a global partner, we meet their requirements by integrating our digital processes with theirs, from ordering to delivery. That means: already in the order processes we add value to the customer by saving time and cost and thereby help them remain successful in their businesses. One more reason for them to choose Interroll.

But this is just one aspect of the opportunities that the digital world opens up for us. With the launch of a web-based Layouter tool, we are able to provide our customers with sales support as early as in the planning and project phase. This service dramatically simplifies and shortens the engineering effort, especially for medium-sized system integrators. In this way, we also help this customer group to become even more competitive.

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