

EQUIPMENT Alliances



Carly Fields asks whether alliances and partnerships really do deliver on their promises

ARE ALLIANCES THE Holy Grail in better functioning and more cohesive port soft- and hard-ware? Apparently so, if manufacturers and developers are to be believed.

Promising an extended network, optimised offerings and cost savings, these partnerships offer a link between what might otherwise be competing manufacturers and flighty customers: out is the go-it-alone approach; in are MoUs, alliances and partnerships in many guises.

One such union that has turned heads recently is the Navis Star Technology Alliance. Launched in September 2010, the technology "package" offers a one-stop-shop approach, integrating selected supplier add-ons with Navis' software products.

Current alliance partners are OCR and process automation provider APS Technology Group; wireless position detection systems and anti-collision solutions provider Symeo GmbH; e-services provider arl-shipping.com; and Zebra, Navis' previous owner and provider of bar code, kiosk, card and RFID printers as well as real-time location solutions.

Speaking to *Port Strategy*, Matt Ramsey, director of business development at Navis Star Technology Alliance partner APS Technology, explains how a customer can benefit from such an alliance: "Being able to engage in a 'single source' project discussion lowers both the risk and the administrative complexity of a multiple system project. The customer can rely on the primary vendor to resolve any issues during implementation, rather than chasing multiple vendors to determine where the issue resides.

"There is also a tremendous benefit of supportability after the fact, in that the solution design and the integration of products is clearly defined among all parties; any performance issues can be isolated and corrected, again without the need for the customer to engage multiple parties."

A UK-based software consultant speaking to *Port Strategy* sees the worth of such pairings, but with

Michael Scheepers
Cavotec



“Alliances tend to greatly improve product quality and service”

A happy union



WIRED IN: Cavotec's partnerships with port customers enables it to meet specific equipment requirements

one caveat: "From the terminal point of view yes an alliance can be good – as long as there is choice."

However, he adds: "My fear would be that some terminals may find they are having stuff pushed on them that they perhaps do not need. And there is always the danger of overkill; buying a sledgehammer to crack a nut."

"From a technical point of view, if you go with an alliance partner, they will make sure that all the systems will work together – so the advantage in all of this is going to be on the technical side, rather than operational."

Global engineering group Cavotec also sees the appeal in partnerships with select customers and alliances with other suppliers to boost its offering.

"We tend to form partnerships with our customers who see the benefits of this approach through long-term, stable relationships that enable them to ensure the equipment they use is best suited to their specific requirements," says Michael Scheepers, director, Investor Relations & PR at Cavotec MSL Holdings Ltd. "Such partnerships also require and encourage an open dialogue and the sharing of best practice and engineering expertise.

"When it comes to forming partnerships with other suppliers, again, our customers receive the added benefit of pooled expertise and experience."

Taking the Navis Star Technology Alliance as an example, APS and Navis have a shared development "sandbox" where current and future releases of either company's software are

Chuck Schneider
Navis



“The Navis Star Technology Alliance . . . allows our customer to save significant time in vetting, selecting and integrating from the multitude of options available”

functionally tested – pre-delivery – guaranteeing systems data integration and a, hopefully, painless implementation of the project.

As an added bonus, the partners share a common development roadmap, meaning future innovations from either organisation will be available to shared customers with the same delivery guarantees.

Alliances EQUIPMENT

APS' Mr Ramsey explains: "Because the integration of multiple vendor systems can be a major liability in these projects, being able to rely on an organised and unified delivery approach not only reduces the risk of implementation, but minimises the timeline for operations management to realise their return on investment."

Mr Scheepers concurs: "We would tend to stress the fact that such alliances tend to greatly improve product quality and service, and that professional engineers are unlikely to attempt to solve a problem that does not exist."

But these coalitions are not without their detractors. One criticism levelled at alliances is a potential loss of choice for customers, something that Mr Ramsey is keen to address.

"Every customer has options," he says. "The idea is to make the implementation easier, not the selection more difficult. Ultimately, every project should be a solution for our customers, designed specifically to achieve their KPIs. We follow a detailed, consultative process that helps align the solution to the operational need, and if none exists, we come to a mutual agreement that perhaps the project shouldn't proceed.

"The [Navis] partnership was formed to provide a greater benefit and value to the customer, so we are obliged to focus on that end."

Navis' Chuck Schneider, vice president Business Development, lists the benefits of alliances as

threefold: one vendor providing a turnkey solution, product alignment and data integration, and a single vendor taking responsibility for support. "Within the Navis Star Technology Alliance we have selected a single vendor for each solution and we work very closely with that partner. This allows our customer to save significant time in vetting, selecting and integrating from the multitude of options available.

"In all cases our customers have the choice to purchase a solution from Navis or purchase from other vendors that integrate with our TOS through standard APIs. To assist other vendors Navis does offer the NavisReady certification program."

NavisReady is a program designed for technology partners who want to test and certify that their solutions are compatible and work with Navis terminal operating systems. To become NavisReady, a partner engages Navis with details about the products to be certified.

From there, Navis develops and executes test plans to confirm that the partner products work with the Navis TOS. NavisReady certification is performed against major releases, and partner products can be re-certified with each new major release of the Navis products.

Current NavisReady partners include wireless data provider LXE, mobile computing specialist Psion Teklogix, and mobile device technology provider Motorola. **PS**

Matt Ramsey
APS Technology



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Combined approach offers unique solutions

ONE BENEFIT OF alliances that can pay dividends for end users is the development of solutions that did not previously exist.

The knowledge-sharing and transparency that partnerships offer can, it's claimed, lead to innovative thinking to meet unique challenges faced by ports.

Matt Ramsey, APS Technology Group director of business development, points to APM Terminals' Pier 400 terminal at Los Angeles as an example of the benefits of a combined approach.

"Here, the customer needed greater visibility to train-based equipment and movement in order to properly manage the loading/unloading process.

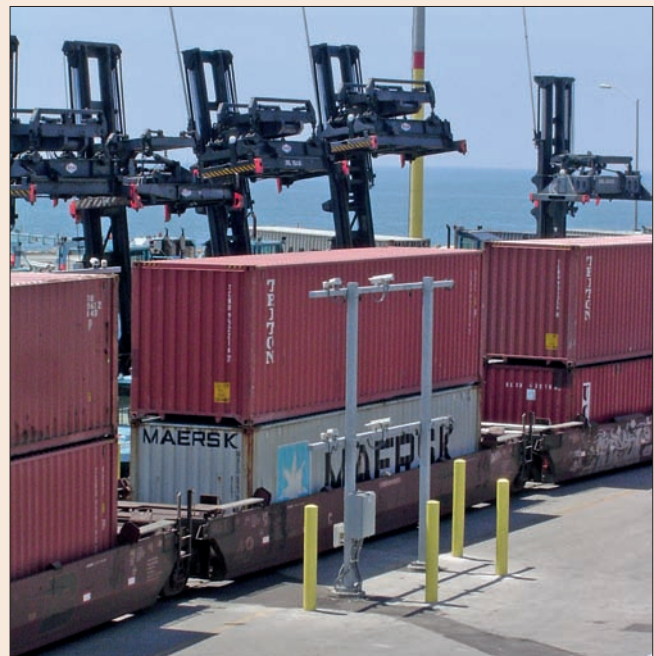
"Together with Navis, we delivered a system that automatically creates a train inventory, provides GPS-level coordinates of all railcars and containers on each track within the facility, and allows for the

assignment and confirmation of work instructions, all without manual intervention.

"No single application could meet the objectives of the final solution and it required tight integration of multiple parties to successfully execute," says Mr Ramsey.

"Navis and APS have recently deployed OCR technology to improve quay crane operations at APMT. By purchasing the solution Navis and APS has pre-integrated, we were able to reduce the deployment time and eliminate any custom development that would have been required," adds Navis vice president of business development, Chuck Schneider. "Since Navis has pre-integrated the APS OCR solution into our software, APMT was able to work with us to deploy a turnkey product that Navis will support going forward."

Navis is currently undertaking similar projects for some of its



ON TRACK: a combined Navis and APS approach at LA's Pier 400 improved train-based visibility

customers in Long Beach, which it believes will result in "shorter projects, less custom development

and a solution that will be supported over the long run by Navis".