

2020

Ahola Transport turns 65

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Celebrating with green values

Dear reader.

In 2020, Ahola Transport has turned a respectable 65 years of age. In addition to this anniversary, the year has brought with it decisions with great significance for the entire group. A major strategic decision was to unite the entire group under one brand. In the future, Ahola as a group will share a common brand, with the various segments connected through the AT logo. The new main segments will now be the road transport segment - Ahola Transport, the special transport segment - AT Special Transport, and the segment for digital solutions - AT Digital Solutions.

Today, Ahola is a strong brand within transport and logistics, as well as in superior digital solutions for the sector with a strong focus on environmental performance. The environment is one of our guiding principles, and overall environmental performance is one of the key focal areas for 2021.

In our world, zero local emissions is not a sufficient goal; we look at overall environmental performance. Regardless of whether we use biogas, electricity or traditional fuel, it is never eco-efficient to drive with a low load factor or make a large number of empty trips. Even if emissions are close to zero, some type of energy is always consumed, inevitably resulting in waste and wear to infrastructure and equipment.

Naturally, it is important to be able to offer our customers emission-neutral transports with the help of, for instance, biofuel, but in order to reduce the chain's total emissions, several alternatives are required. Environmental impacts need to be reduced in all of the functions and processes.

Within the road transport segment, we are focusing on developing services for food and temperature-controlled transports. This investment has taken off successfully and there is demand among both our current and new customers.

In the special transport segment, we will also expand the offering with a major investment in new equipment. This investment will be strongly geared towards even larger and heavier transports, including for the growing wind power industry. We have high expectations concerning these investments. At the same time, the installation

unit Installation & Assembly is also growing with customers increasingly seeking turnkey solutions.

Within the digital solutions segment, we find ourselves in a powerful development phase with the building of new end-to-end systems moving forward. The focus for next year is on further developing the Road Transport platform and various solutions for multimodal supply chains.

Regardless of the exceptional times we are living in, the Ahola group is looking to the future with confidence. During the company's 65 years in business, we have dealt with our fair share of different crises. In 1956, one year after the founding of the company, Finland experienced political unrest, mass unemployment and a general strike. The 1960s and 1970s offered more profitable years of growth, but even then there were challenges to be met. One example was the global oil crisis of 1973, which is forever stamped in my mind. That year I carried out the company's first cross-border transport to Sweden together with my father. I clearly remember hearing on the return journey the news that we might run out of oil. The authorities immediately put restrictions in place. Electricity consumption was restricted and street and advertising lighting were shut off. It gave a young man a definite doomsday feeling.

At the start of the 1980s, a smaller oil crisis occurred and fuel prices shot sky-high. The rest of the 1980s was still defined by general growth as the Bank of Finland reduced the restrictions on the financial markets. At Ahola Transport, we started to get a bad feeling. The market became severely overheated due to the freed-up financial markets. We therefore began to look for a few more legs to stand on.

As most people know, the 1990s saw a major economic crisis. Ahola Transport was, however, well-prepared for the crisis since we had already introduced our concept of direct transports from supplier to consignee, later dubbed the OnLine concept.

Several crises have occurred since then. The financial crisis in 2008 was probably the one that had the worst impact on Ahola Transport. The crisis hit following a long period of growth. Like the Norwegian saying goes: "The most dangerous wind is a strong tailwind".

Right now, we are in the midst of a global crisis due to the coronavirus pandemic. This is something entirely new that none of us has experienced before, which makes it perhaps more frightening than any crisis before it.

During our company's history, around ten major or minor crises have taken place. Crises come and go. A crisis always means challenges, but also new solutions. That is why, despite the current crisis, we have confidence in the future. We believe that nothing happens by accident. We will continue to offer customers the best possible service and keep the wheels of society turning as smoothly as possible. Our personnel, our customers and our various partners are always in our thoughts. We will keep on working, together.

Enjoy your read!


Hans Ahola

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Eco goals met – tens years in advance

Less than half the emissions and a huge reduction in empty trips compared with 2005. Ahola Transport has already achieved the EU's climate targets for 2030.

Through active development work, far-sighted decisions and careful monitoring, Ahola Transport has already achieved the climate targets that the EU set for the transport sector for 2030. The results have been checked by the University of Oulu and verified by the certification company DNV-GL. They show that the logistics group has succeeded in reducing its carbon dioxide emissions by as much as 59 per cent compared with the 2005 benchmark value, already in 2019.

"In practice this means that the EU target will be met a whole decade in advance," says CEO Hans Ahola.

Ahola Transport has thereby demonstrated that sectors not involved in emissions trading can meet their targets, even well before the set time limits.

Empty trips reduced

With increasingly eco-friendly transports, Ahola Transport is meeting both an increase in demand among customers and national and international environmental regulations.

"Our work doesn't just help us meet our environmental targets, it also allows us to quickly react to and meet customer needs," says Hans Ahola.

The increase in efficiency is unmistakable. In 2005, 800 million tonne-kilometres of goods in Finland generated 44,700 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions, while at Ahola Transport in 2019 just 18,300 tonnes. Improvements in terms of empty trips have been significant. In 2005, perhaps more than a quarter of vehicles drove without cargo. Today, the Finnish average is slightly above 20 per cent, but Ahola Transport has come even further.

"Now we're down to around 13 per cent," Ahola says.

Digitalisation makes all the difference

The huge improvements are not just down to the reduction in empty trips. Progress has

been made within all four areas of Ahola Transport's environmental programme.

Drivers' driving behaviour and training is improved continuously in the area 'education and skills'. New and more advanced trucks featuring the latest technology optimise the fleet and renewable fuels result in eco-friendly energy choices.

The fourth area consists of digitalisation, which is a decisive factor. Digitalisation enables route optimisation, increased utilisation rates and reduced empty trips, but also the measuring and reporting of the actual results.

"Our long-term digitalised development work has had an unmistakable impact on reducing emissions. Three quarters of the reduction has been achieved through digitalisation. Alternative fuels and vehicle technology make up the remaining quarter," says Hans Ahola.

Our work continues

Finland's share of the EU2030 target is a reduction in carbon dioxide emissions of 39 per cent within the sectors that are not involved in emissions trading. For heavy traffic, the target has unfortunately been

met with skepticism on a national level, but Ahola Transport has shown that it is more than possible, thanks in no small part to digitalisation.

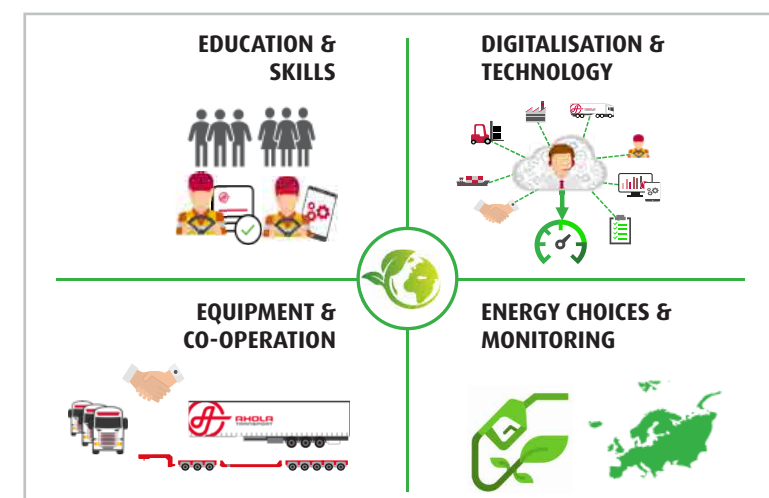
"We have invested in development and utilisation of digital systems for more than 20 years and in recent years the rate of progress has been faster," explains Hans Ahola.

New services like Ahola Transport's concept Green Kilometers are a concrete way to guarantee sustainable transports. Through the add-on service, customer transports are carried out entirely without local emissions.

Emissions reductions at Ahola Transport and other heavy traffic in Finland are key in terms of the environment. The majority of the goods flows within Finland takes place on wheels and the heavy traffic makes up a third of all emissions on the country's roads. That is why reductions are a must. Ahola Transport wants to be a leader in this area.

"We are delighted with what we have achieved so far but our work for sustainable transports continues," says Ahola.

For 2020, Ahola Transport's goal is a reduction of a further 5 per cent compared with the previous year, which brings total reductions in emissions to 61 per cent.



Growth and development together

In 1993, Mika Ahlqvist began fixing heavy vehicles that had broken down along the streets and roads of the Turku region. A year later began his co-operation with Ahola Transport and since then the companies have grown together.

Right in the middle of Finland's difficult recession of the 1990s, Mika Ahlqvist became unemployed. However, his bad luck quickly took a turn for the better. Ahlqvist soon found his niche: repairing trucks whose engines had stalled or experienced other road-side problems.

"When I saw someone parked next to the road, I could stop and help. I quickly noticed that there were many people that needed help and I even started receiving calls from companies.

The year was 1993 and Mika Ahlqvist suddenly had more work than he could ever have hoped for. Just a year later, he had leased a small workshop in Rusko, outside of Turku, Finland and established his own company.

A family firm

Today, almost 30 years on, the company goes by the name of Ahlqvist Services. The small facility where most of the work took

place outdoors has grown to roughly 5,000 square metres of space, over a total of four locations.

"In addition we have for example a new washing facility underway. It is important to continuously develop the services," says Ahlqvist.

At the start, only Mika Ahlqvist and his wife Teija worked at the company. Today, his son Tony works as Managing Director, while his daughter Tia is in charge of marketing, among other things.

"Of course, I have been involved in the company since childhood and worked here in the summers, but I had other plans at first," says Tony Ahlqvist.

After he finished his studies, he began to gain an interest in the family company and in 2013 he returned full-time. He has held the position of Managing Director since 2019.

In the family company, hierarchy is unimportant, however. The responsibility is shared and everyone does what they do best. This applies to the entire personnel.

"Even though our facilities and equipment are extremely important, I have often said that it is the personnel and customers that make the company what it is," says Tony.

Growing together

Mika Ahlqvist initiated the co-operation with Ahola Transport already in 1994.

"I recall the first job for Ahola Transport was at an unmanned petrol station in Mynämäki, north of Turku."

"It is the personnel and customers that make the company what it is."

The co-operation expanded quickly and Ahlqvist saw a lot of potential.

"Ahola Transport had a clear vision and a successful concept so it was easy to start working with them. Since then, we've grown together."

Ahola Transport's Business Director Åke Nyblom agrees. He has personally co-operated with Mika Ahlqvist since 1995 when he worked at Ahola Transport's workshop.

"Having a company such as Ahlqvist Services taking care of maintenance on our trucks has given me peace of mind. They have always been there for us," he says.

Nyblom also emphasises that Ahlqvist Ser-



Ahola Transport's trailers and trucks are a common sight at Ahlqvist Services in Rusko.

vices is quick to react to new needs at Ahola Transport.

"When something new has come up in our fleet and when our needs and the fleet have grown, they have offered us new services and involved themselves in development," Nyblom explains.

Throughout the years, the two companies have developed a lot together and when Ahola Transport has come up with new ideas, Ahlqvist Services has often responded with investments. Today, the two companies even have shared digital tools that Ahola Transport has developed.

Inspiration and challenges

These days, Ahola Transport is one of Ahlqvist Services' larger customers, and important in a number of ways.

"Customers are everything to us and customers like Ahola Transport are easy to work with," says Mika Ahlqvist.

Ahlqvist Services was inspired by Ahola Transport's persistence early on and its unique, goal-oriented way of working. According to Mika and Tony Ahlqvist, Ahlqvist Services has adopted this mindset. That is why the two companies have strengthened their relationship over the years, learned from one another and grown hand-in-hand.

"We have gained a lot. We have a personal, open and uncomplicated relationship and communicate almost daily. We keep tabs on each other and understand one another. And I hope that's how it will continue," says Tony Ahlqvist.

Since Ahola Transport has always been a pioneer, both in terms of vehicles and technology, they have also challenged Ahlqvist Services to develop.

"This has improved and increased the efficiency of our operations, for instance our reporting and working methods," Ahlqvist says.

One-stop shop

Nowadays, Ahlqvist Services has developed into much more than a workshop. The company takes care of all types of maintenance and repairs for heavy vehicles, such as vehicle inspections, changing tyres, spare parts, decals, maintaining cooling equipment and manufacturing tarps for vehicles.

"Someone who originally came here on their moped to start a summer job might now be a supervisor."

"The company has developed fairly steadily since the 1990s, but we have moved forward a lot more in recent years," says Tony Ahlqvist.

The company employs around 45 people

and handles roughly 12,000 assignments involving heavy vehicles each year. The fact that the company has remained a family company, just like Ahola Transport, is significant.

"It is evident in how the entire staff engages in their work. It creates a team spirit that can somehow be linked to family values. We move forward together."

A large portion of the personnel has also worked there a long time.

"Someone who originally came here on their moped to start a summer job might now be a supervisor," says Tony Ahlqvist.

Ahlqvist is satisfied in every way with how customer relationships and the company's operations work today.

"I hope that's how it will continue. For us, the goal is to make sure the customer doesn't have to worry about anything but their core business. The goal is to be a one-stop shop for their every vehicle maintenance need."



Both maintenance and repairs are carried out flexibly. Drivers always get the help they need.



Mika and Tony Ahlqvist run Ahlqvist Services together.

Clear turnaround already in 2019



Many successes in 2020 can be traced back to efficiency increasing measures carried out back in 2018. During 2019, efficiency measures began to make their mark on the operating profit.

"2019 was already a good year. Especially at the end of the year, we began to see a clear improvement in efficiency. That started the trend that continues and strengthens in 2020," says CFO Niklas Kankkonen, looking back at the figures for 2019. Kankkonen is also satisfied that the Ahola group's good result in 2019 was not based on any accounting adjustments.

"The major positive aspect was that the result improvement was achieved by the core business and operations," he says.

Thanks to efficiency improvements, the turnover and result remained on a par with the previous year. Both the general economic situation and a major credit loss depressed the result.

"We chose to allocate the total write-off to 2019, otherwise the operating profit would have been better," explains Kankkonen.

The turnover for 2019 rose to EUR 100.8 million and the operating profit to EUR 2.2 million. The road transport segment accounted for the largest increase as its operating profit more than tripled compared with 2018. The other segments turned out a loss, on the other hand, due to, for example, rising costs and expansion.

CFO Niklas Kankkonen can look back on a positive 2020, despite all of the uncertainty plaguing the markets and society.

Clearly improved result in 2020

Despite both national and global uncertainty, it appears that the Ahola group will have a highly successful year. Already in June, the company issued a positive profit warning.

The dramatically improved operating profit presented together with the half-year report is a sign that the long-term efficiency-improvement measures have begun to bear fruit. CFO Niklas Kankkonen is extremely pleased.

"It is definitely positive, a clear continuation of development from 2019. The turnaround came in October 2019 when the efficiency-improvement measures started to show results," he says.

When the half-year report for 2020 was released, the Ahola group was able to produce an operating profit of close to EUR 3 million, compared with EUR 1.4 million for the corresponding period in 2019.

"We issued a positive profit warning in June when we got the result for May. We estimated that a lot would have to happen

for the year's result to deteriorate after that," says Kankkonen.

That is why the group re-evaluated the situation and declared that the operating profit for 2020 would improve clearly compared with 2019. Turnover is expected to decline, however.

A complicated outlook

Making forecasts has been complicated in 2020. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, it has been difficult to know what is happening on the markets.

"Economic forecasts have become very short-term. It has been important to continuously keep up with happenings and be prepared. We have to take immediate action if anything happens," Kankkonen points out.

However, despite a higher operating profit the Ahola group's turnover decreased during the first half of the year. The turnover amounted to EUR 50.8 million compared with EUR 53.2 million in 2019.

"The arrival of COVID-19 reduced the turnover, but compared to others, we have performed well," says Kankkonen.

Some of this decline has been compensated with new customers and transport volumes have been good all along. During the spring, volumes fell within basic industry, but instead rose in the consumer market. In addition, the investment in food transports has taken off. The group has also been pleased to see that the dynamic transport solutions of the segments have worked flawlessly during market disturbances, and customers have received first-class service.

Unique responsibility leads to prestigious logistics award

Excellent communication, meticulous delivery times and responsibility throughout the transport chain were the criteria for Ahola Transport's selection as AGCO's Best Logistics Provider 2019.



AGCO's personnel congratulate Ahola Transport for winning AGCO Best Logistics Provider 2019.

The customer relationship between AGCO and Ahola Transport has continued for some time. AGCO is a world-leading group in the design, manufacture and distribution of agricultural equipment. For Ahola Transport, the collaboration involves transports along more than 100 routes from more than 9 countries.

"The award means a lot to Ahola. We see it as recognition for the excellent job we have done and will continue to do for AGCO," says Markus Kälälä, Business Unit Manager for Finland.

The prize was presented at AGCO's virtual supplier event AGCO EME in May 2020. Its selection as the best logistics provider for such a major corporation gives Ahola Transport proof of what it is doing right in terms of the collaboration.

"We have succeeded with the help of our capable personnel. We have always been able to provide solutions for AGCO, even when they have required urgent transports to one of their production units," says Kälälä.

According to AGCO's award criteria, the long-term partnership between the two companies has created a mutual respect and close collaboration. The goal is to become better and better. Throughout the years, Ahola Transport has continuously worked to achieve AGCO's goals for quality, performance, efficiency and transparency.

Continued improvements

Regardless of the number of routes and complex global transport chains, the amount

of loads arriving on time has never been less than 99 per cent. In addition, communication between the two companies and all the partners in the transport chain is perfect. Ahola Transport has also successfully provided flexible and fast solutions, even in critical situations, while taking overall responsibility for all of the transports. Despite the success, the improvement work continues.

"There is always something to improve and we are always making progress. The latest improvement, to be launched this autumn, involves the communication of requests involving special transports and express transports through AGCO's ERP system and will replace emails," says Kälälä.

Renewed success in European competition

Since 2017, Ahola Transport has been very successful in the competition Vehco Eco-Driving Challenge. At the 2020 award ceremony, Ahola Transport took home two awards.

Lower emissions and an encouraging competition for achieving even more eco-friendly transports. Vehco Eco-Driving Challenge annually brings together close to 9,000 drivers and more than 110 transport companies. Ahola Transport has ranked well year after year and has taken home awards in different classes on several occasions.

In March 2020, it was time to give out awards for the results achieved by the participating companies in 2019. Just like the year before, Ahola Transport was named Finland's best transport company. Caj Björkskog, who is responsible for Ahola Transport's driver training, was delighted.

"We have many good drivers whose driving behaviour is economical and proactive. That is why we are successful," he declares.

Also this year Ahola Transport participated

through its subsidiary AT Cargo. The drivers achieved an eco index of 82.2, which meant that the company was the best in Finland.

"Of course it feels encouraging and it's a great indicator that our efforts for the environment can be measured," says Björkskog.

Huge cut in emissions

This year, the main competition took place with separate classes for each country. For the whole of Europe, a winner was selected in two categories: "Best Improvement" and "Best Eco Momentum". In the latter category, Ahola Transport placed second with an index of 930. Eco Momentum is based on the number of drivers multiplied by the index improvements for each company. This is how the total effect of the improvements

achieved through economical driving is measured.

The award ceremony took place online to further reduce the number of trips and carbon dioxide emissions. The competition itself has achieved major decreases in both fuel consumption and emissions over the years. Compared with 2017 when the competition began, the competing companies reduced their total consumption by nearly three million litres of fuel, which means a roughly 7,900-tonne reduction in carbon dioxide emissions. For Ahola Transport, continuing to work for the environment is an obvious choice.

"For instance, we have an in-house competition where all the drivers that meet the goals get a prize. Our work continues," says Björkskog.



2020 was a year of remote work. At Ahola Transport it went off painlessly and efficiently.

Major adjustment makes for good lessons

For many companies, 2020 was a year of remote work, and Ahola Transport was no different. Thanks to a unique team spirit, clear routines and a high degree of digitalisation, work was carried out with the same level of quality as at the office.

"Of course it was a huge adjustment, but we did well. A fantastic team spirit and incredible flexibility, despite being a large company, were key factors," says Markus Corin, Business Unit Manager at Ahola Transport, following four whole months of mostly remote work for Ahola Transport's head office in Kokkola.

"I am 100 per cent certain that we are at the forefront in terms of dealing with the situation, quickly adjusting and making decisions when everything suddenly changed. We got everyone on board, used the technology we had built up and worked systematically."

Corin supervises part of the personnel at the head office and has nothing but good things to say about them and the company's level of preparedness already at the start of the year.

"Without technology it would never have worked of course. Technology combined with our work methods made it possible," he says.

Huge adjustment

The success is clear. The fact that Ahola Transport shifted to remote work had little impact on the company's efficiency or the personnel's well-being.

"Although it was a little difficult to focus the first few days, the change wasn't that hard. After a few days the work started to flow smoothly. I didn't experience any technical problems, not even at my summer cottage," says Marie Ahlö who works in HR.

For Ahlö, not having to commute meant more time for both work and leisure, and family.

"It was a different kind of spring, but remote work was a good experience for me. I felt it was efficient and productive," she says.

Tobias Hagnäs who works in sales at Ahola Transport, agrees but also highlights the huge change involved.

"Instead of having an empty house during the day, the kids did their schoolwork and my wife and I worked from home. It all happened overnight."

Despite this, Hagnäs feels that it was pretty much a painless transition.

"The kids worked hard on their homework and my wife and I at our jobs. I got to work relatively undisturbed in our bedroom where my desk is. My commute to work got a whole lot shorter too, from 42 kilometres to 3 metres," he says.

Normal work routines and hanging out with colleagues were thus easy to keep up, even though the work environment changed.

"I swapped the open office for a kitchen table and my colleagues for my cats, but the work itself didn't change. My colleagues and I talked even more than usual about what was going on in our lives compared to at the office," Puikko says.

Firm foundation

Already in mid-March, Ahola Transport opted for remote work to slow down the spread of the coronavirus.

"We kept a close eye on the situation from the middle of February to the start of March and prepared to take measures if needed. We already purchased equipment needed to work from home. I'm only slightly joking when I say that all we had to do was push a button when it became clear we wouldn't be working at the office anymore," says Markus Corin.

After that, it was just about getting the entire staff to adopt the new routines and, for example, switch to sharing information electronically.

"We already worked in teams and pairs a lot. Now that same communication transferred to digital channels. The personnel could keep video meetings open the entire day and talk to each other just as though they were sitting next to each other at the office," says Corin.

Also, Ahola Transport's long-standing high degree of digitalisation and utilisation of technical solutions in their daily work helped a lot.

"Today, digitalisation has reached a level that makes work just as easy from home. The programs I use at work operate just as well at home as at the office. We held meetings on Teams," says Tobias Hagnäs.

Anne-Maria Puikko could just as easily communicate with Ahola Transport's drivers from home thanks to an internet connection and Ahola Transport's internal digital system.

"It was a huge help," she says.

Support for drivers

The most important task for transport planning during these challenging times was to maintain good communication with the drivers and to assist them in their work.

"The drivers make 150,000 customer visits a year and are extremely important to us. Despite the situation, we have kept to a model where each driver has their own contact person. We are here for them and support them," says Markus Corin.

Corin says that this has also worked well despite the remote work.

"Some of the challenges we now face are not new to us, similar challenges emerge during for example strikes and interruptions in ferry traffic. We know that changes can happen quickly. The answer is to always be prepared."

A lot has developed even further during the year, however.

"We had the technology but we didn't necessarily always work in such a structured way. We now have smoothly functioning routines," Corin points out.

Many lessons

Looking back, Ahola Transport's personnel has both succeeded and learned a lot.

"We have been able to put to the test our ability to work remotely, when needed. It creates security for the entire company to know that things will run smoothly if a similar situation were to crop up in the future," says Tobias Hagnäs.

Working at the office is important for the social aspect, but for shorter periods even that is possible remotely.

"I prefer working at the office with all my lovely co-workers, but now we know the technology works and the work runs smoothly also from home," says Marie Ahlö.

Anne-Maria Puikko enjoys working on her own, so the amount of remote work can increase in the future as far as she is concerned.

"I hope that we can work remotely more often in the future when needed," she says.

During autumn the remote work has again partly continued. Markus Corin is certain that Ahola Transport can manage similar situations in the future; it is all down to the personnel's motivation.

"Even though we come from different cultures, age groups and have different educational backgrounds, we are working towards a shared goal. It has to do with the will to succeed. We had to learn a lot of new things now, but if it happens again we'll be ready," Corin sums up.



Markus Corin praises the personnel's ability to adapt to the new routines.

Higher quality through training in the field

Ahola Transport is focusing more and more on taking its mobile Training Center to customers. Training in the field offers flexibility and increases quality.

Ahola Transport launched its mobile Training Center already in 2018. Since then, the company has visited schools, its own units and the public to train personnel and talk about traffic safety, the transport industry and Ahola Transport as a company.

During 2020, the company has also focused on training its drivers at customer locations, simultaneously giving the customers a chance to participate.

"We have our own training programme and driver's guide, but learning in practice and on site is much more simple," says Peter Sund, Sales Manager at Ahola Transport.

The first event was organised at Ahola Transport's customer Elgiganten last winter.

"It was a success. It was appreciated by drivers and customers alike. Elgiganten's personnel visited the centre after we were featured on their internal TV channel," says Sund.

Safer transports

The visit to Elgiganten came about due to the special requirement placed on their deliveries based on Elgiganten's 'Logistics with a heart' concept.

"Their goods are valuable and can, unfortunately, end up stolen. That is why there are



Onsite training at Elgiganten in Jönköping was managed by Quality Controller Alexandra Herttua and Site Manager Guy Gåddnäs from Ahola Transport.

many regulations that the drivers need to be aware of," says Sund.

That is why Elgiganten and Ahola Transport began discussing alternatives to achieve even safer transports. The result was a visit to Elgiganten's distribution centre outside of Jönköping, Sweden. Ahola Transport's Training Center was driven to the warehouse for a whole week of training.

The multiple drivers who daily drive from the warehouse could thus take part when it suited them. Elgiganten's personnel also visited the centre.

"We have already seen an improvement, so we will definitely organise this again,"

says Sund.

Ahola Transport decided already after the first visit to take the concept to other customers. Unfortunately the coronavirus put the project on hold, but the goal remains the same.

"We have several interested customers. As soon as it's possible we will continue the visits," says Sund.

In order to make visits like the one to Elgiganten effective, Peter Sund would like to make customer visits a regular occurrence, preferably once a year. Ahola Transport is now planning to make its transports even better – together with customers.



Several of Ahola Transport's trucks drive from Elgiganten's warehouse in Jönköping each day. Training in the field was therefore a successful solution.

Segments united under one brand

All segments in the Ahola group are now united under the well-known AT brand. The result is a stronger focus on the company's offering to customers.



Åke Nyblom



Jonas Ahola



Tommi Hollström

In the future, the Ahola group will share a common brand, with the various segments connected through the AT logo. The strategically significant decision was made at the end of 2020, one of the goals being to reinforce the company's customer focus.

The new main segments will now be Ahola Transport, AT Special Transport and AT Digital Solutions. All of the segments have operated within the group before, but partly under different names.

Previously, AT Digital Solutions was the subsidiary Attracs, but will now be elevated to a key segment. Similarly, AT Special Transport has been a subsidiary,

but will now provide a broader range of services, for example with the subsidiary AT Install becoming the Installation & Assembly unit under AT Special Transport.

Ahola Transport represents the group's largest segment in terms of turnover: road transports and logistics.

The road transport segment Ahola Transport will continue to be headed by Åke Nyblom and AT Special Transport by Jonas Ahola, while Tommi Hollström will be in charge of

AT Digital Solutions. Together, the segments make up the Ahola group.



Like us with a happy truck

Happy and sad trucks now allow Ahola Transport's customers and partners to rate the service and treatment they receive.



"Many people think this is fun. And of course we're glad to have a customer call us and tell us they just gave us a green truck," says Peter Sund, Sales Manager at Ahola Transport. This year, Ahola Transport's marketing team created a unique tool for following up customer satisfaction. The system is simple and fun at the same time.

"We were inspired by other companies' methods for measuring customer satisfaction, but we created our own version," Sund explains.

The happy and sad trucks were introduced in April and have been tested during 2020.

"We have introduced them under the signatures in our emails, but we have many ideas for how to develop this further," Sund says.

When customers and other partners click on one of the four trucks they get the chance to comment on how, for example, a salesperson succeeded in their job on that particular day. Ahola Transport is grateful for all of the feedback.

"The system includes everyone associated with a customer or a supplier, from sales to planning and invoicing. Then we measure the results for each department," says Sund.

The next step is for customers to be able to give feedback on drivers. It will become possible thanks to electronic waybills. Follow-up methods will also be developed.

"When we start seeing trends, we will be able to set more concrete goals for improvements," says Sund.

Mini portrait



Name: Laura Ruokoja

Family: Husband Jussi and five-year-old daughter Hilma

Place of work and position: Info Desk, Kokkola, Finland

What is your favourite pastime? Reading, travelling, crafts and photography.

Your favourite food and drink? Salmon and mashed potatoes, Japanese green Sencha tea.

What makes you happy? Small things like a stranger's smile, a letter in the mailbox, a hedgehog in our garden and a beautiful landscape.

What makes you angry? People's selfishness and a lack of manners and thoughtfulness. Racism and all forms of discrimination.

Your dream holiday: A Central or Eastern European city, such as Prague. At least two café visits per day, local food, shopping, and depending on the destination, speaking the local language.

What was your first job? A summer job at the Bonk museum in Uusikaupunki in 1999. The museum presents stories of an imaginary company with the help of humorous machines.

Any special memories from your working life?

When I worked for Finnair's customer service in the spring of 2010 and the cloud of ash from the volcano eruption in Iceland crippled air traffic. Air space and airports were closed for several days in almost every European country. We did our best to divert flights and book new ones and everyone who wanted to get to work overtime.

What is going on right now in your job? Basic things such as directing drivers and customers to the right person through different channels: by phone, email and chat, handling mail and proofreading texts etc.

How do you envision Ahola Transport in 5 to 10 years? Investing even more in eco-friendliness and the quality of customer service.

New possibilities through wind power

During 2020, AT Special Transport has made major investments in increasing its transport capacity for wind turbine parts. Through four specialized business units, AT Special Transport will now offer even better customer service.

AT Special Transport has experienced growth on several fronts in recent years. The segment has started up new collaborations and invested in equipment for even larger and heavier transports. In 2020, AT Special Transport has ordered 29 new axles and three goosenecks that can be combined as needed for heavy transports. In addition, they invested in a new tractor unit for the heaviest transports. AT Special Transport's Managing Director Jonas Ahola sees a bright future ahead.

"We are growing on all fronts. Also our turnover is expected to grow somewhat in addition to the increased number of tractor units and trailers," he says.

During 2020 AT Special Transport has become one of the three segments in the Ahola group. In addition, AT Special Transport has streamlined its own operations into four units: Heavy and Oversized transports, Project Logistics, Installation & Assembly and Wind Power Logistics.

Growing wind power

The biggest investment is in the wind power segment, which involved the hiring of a new contact person.

"During 2020, we have ordered six new trailers for wind turbine blades. The trailers come from the manufacturer Faymonville and are suitable for blades up to 90 m in length," says Ahola.

Transports of parts to wind power stations have already increased at AT Special Transport.

"We have invested heavily in this area. We already have quite a few projects booked for 2021. Transporting wind turbines is a natural step for us since we already carry out all kinds of special transports," says Ahola.

In upcoming years, AT Special Transport will therefore invest even more on the Nordic markets.

No shortage of interesting projects

In 2020, AT Special Transport has also hired new personnel in the project logistics segment. Furthermore, they have carried out several unique projects. During the summer, they took care of the transport of 25 large modules weighing almost 100 tonnes for a

bridge construction project over the Ume River in Sweden. Another major project was the transport of close to 70 modules from Estonia for a housing project in Helsinki.

They have also coordinated some extra-long-distance transports and total solutions. For instance, AT Special Transport has taken care of logistics and installation lifting for a bioenergy power plant where the parts were brought over from Croatia and the Netherlands for installation in eastern Finland. In addition, AT Special Transport continues to make investments within several areas. The vision is clear.

"It involves more project logistics, special transports, wind power logistics and installation," says Jonas Ahola.



Installation combining brains and strength

In just a short time, AT Install has developed from a small company with a vision into an in-demand unit with extensive sectoral expertise and the power to grow.

"Our strength is broad expertise in both the construction industry and industrial projects, as well as a stable company and a group that allows us to make important investments in equipment."

This is how Business Unit Manager Teemu Hietala sums up the factors that have taken AT Install from success to success since the company was first founded in 2018. AT Install is nowadays a unit of AT Special Transport and goes by the name Installation & Assembly. AT Special Transport can thus offer total solutions for a variety of construction projects. Both project management and transport, in addition to installation and crane services, are included in the service offering.

"Construction sites are located all over Finland and there are many kinds of projects. The strategy of Installation & Assembly is to divide our customers into several sectors, so that we can also spread out the projects over the whole year," says Hietala.

The vision is clear and the future is bright. "Demand has grown and we have succeeded in maintaining good profitability even while we have grown," says Hietala.

Gradual development

Installation & Assembly's story began in 2018 when Ahola Transport bought the majority share of Kari and Teemu Hietala's company. At the start of the year, AT Install was founded on the existing company and, at the end of the year, collaboration with AT Special Transport took off in earnest.

"At the end of the year we hired our first permanent employee and began building an installation team," says Teemu Hietala.

During 2018, AT Install mostly worked on project and transport management. At the same time, the unit for installation services was created. Already in 2019, an installation unit for prefabricated concrete elements was purchased, which brought new customers, competence and personnel. The unit grew quickly and began to offer transportation and installation of steel structures, prefabricated houses and concrete elements for offices, industrial buildings and factories together with AT Special Transport. Together, the two companies could offer a total service to customers and this successful strategy continues to work for them to this day.

"Our personnel currently consists of four office employees and around 15 of our own installers. Some work on contracts for individual projects, so on a weekly basis we have between 20 and 25 installers working," says Hietala.

The majority of the projects are in-house projects, but Installation & Assembly also offers installation services to customers at an hourly rate.

Fast growth

Since the beginning of 2018, the unit has grown quickly, exceeding expectations.

"In 2019, we had a turnover of EUR 1.65 million. We had budgeted a turnover of EUR 2.02 million for 2020, but we exceeded that already at the start of September," says Hietala.

The turnover for 2020 will now end up between EUR 2.5 and 3 million. Teemu Hietala is happy.

"The winter is always a guessing game in the construction industry. Now even more so with coronavirus and its impacts, but so far the situation looks good."

During the autumn, Installation & Assembly has had several major projects ranging from a hospital to roadworks and commercial buildings. The construction projects can be found along roads, in smaller towns and in major hubs such as Mikkeli, Kuopio and Oulu. During 2020, the unit has also installed precast elements in around ten civil defence shelters.

"Projects of this kind can take a week per build, while other larger projects can continue for several weeks," says Hietala.

Workdays at Installation & Assembly vary a lot depending on the project. Some require a great deal of planning, while others are more routine. For the time being, the unit is focusing on Finland, but it has its eye on Sweden too.



Ahola Transport turns 65

In a time of significant transport demand, but also inflation, a weak national economy and political unrest, Helge Ahola established a small transport company in 1955. Now, 65 years on, the company is one of the Nordics' leading transport companies and an industry leader in several areas.

The year 1955 was a difficult one, but in the midst of it all, Helge Ahola chose to follow a long-held dream. After driving a truck for another entrepreneur for several years, he took a risk and bought his own truck. Together with his wife Gunn-Britt, they started on a journey that would involve hard work and adversity, but soon, above all, success. The company expanded, they began cross-border transports and the future looked bright.

In 1982, Helge passed away and his son Hans took over the company, at just 27 years of age. At the same time, his brothers Lars,

Nils and Rolf joined the company. The company's path remains the same, but now as a company with operations throughout the Nordic countries, Baltic countries and parts of Eastern Europe. One truck has become close to 500, the turnover has reached EUR 100 million and the future is brighter than ever.

To commemorate the company's 65-year anniversary, we asked Hans Ahola 10 questions about the company's history, its development, challenges and future:



Helge Ahola together with men from the Finnish Road Administration.

1. What is your first memory of the company?

"My first memory is when dad came home with a new truck, a Ford Köln. It was a Saturday morning and he lifted me up so I could sit behind the wheel. I still have that happy memory and it was on that day that I decided to work in transport."

2. What is your strongest memory from Ahola Transport's history?

"When we started transporting fish from northern Norway. That's when I saw the direction we would take, that there are bigger things in store for the company."

3. What were the biggest challenges when you took over the company?

"The economic turmoil. Even though the company had progressed a lot from the start

of the 1980s, a lot of difficulties presented themselves at the same time. For example, our first maintenance facility stood half finished and its financing was unclear."

4. How important is history for Ahola Transport?

"History is important for everyone, it's what we build the future on after all. That is where the values that the company is built on stem from."

5. What has been Ahola Transport's biggest success through the years?

"The biggest turning point was when we signed our first direct contracts with Iskaloten for northern Norway in the 1980s. That allowed the company to stand on its own two feet and opened up new opportunities."

6. What was the most difficult period in Ahola Transport's history?

"There have been many difficulties along the way, but it has never felt hopeless. Financially, the worst period was absolutely when my father passed away and the time following that."

7. When do you think Ahola Transport began to show the strongest development and go its own way?

"At the end of the 1980s, when we focused on industrial transports and Nordic trade. That was when the idea of door-to-door transports occurred to us and the OnLine concept for dynamic logistics was born. The concept was well received by customers as competitors' models were largely based on a terminal network and fixed routes. Thanks to this, the company experienced strong

growth right in the middle of the deepest recession in the early 1990s. The OnLine concept was based 100% on customers' needs. It's often said that if your company's strategy isn't based on the customer, the customer will exit your strategy."

8. When and how did the high degree of digitalisation start off?

"In addition to the strong growth experienced at the start of the 1990s, we had a clear need for an operative management system. That is why we adopted the TransEumu system. The problem with this was that it was based on a concept involving a terminal network and route traffic, which was poorly suited to our way of working based on dynamic logistics. As there were no suitable systems for our concept, we decided to create our own. This was in 1996. What was significant about this was that Tekes (now Business Finland) made an exception and gave us a development grant of 40 per cent of the costs. This was unique as Tekes couldn't normally finance transport and

logistics. The grant was extremely important since software development was unfamiliar to us. The support was also needed since the first version of the system Attracs and roughly 1.5 million Finnish markka ended up in the scrap heap. The current Attracs was rolled out in 1999 and was ready for use in 2003. A lot has developed since then and development continues."

9. When and how did the environmental work, which is unique in the transport industry, start?

"In 1998, the Heavy Eco Driving programme started with the drivers competing against their own record. The company received environmental certification in 2001, followed by more systematic environmental work. Since 2003, we have measured emissions per delivery with the help of Attracs. When we combine the vehicle and operational data, we can measure and report the actual emissions per delivery. This is probably unique in the entire sector, where they usually only calculate the theoretical emissions. With the

help of our Green Wheels index, we measure the performance of each driver. With the help of digital coaching, we can encourage our drivers to improve their driving behaviour and thus reduce their emissions. That is why our drivers have also taken part in competitions for eco-friendly and safe driving. In 2019, our drivers won a competition from among 9,000 other drivers in Europe."

10. What is in store for the Ahola group in the future?

"Today, the Ahola group consists of three segments: Ahola Transport, AT Special Transport and the AT Digital Solutions. All of the segments are steered by our group vision: To be a leader that reinvents traditional logistics. This happens through dynamic resource management and digitalisation. The work continues."

Ahola develops and grows



In 1991, Ahola Transport's Swedish company is established in Umeå.



The company experiences strong growth between 1992 and 1996.



In 1996, a decision is made to develop a data system for planning and optimising transports. Attracs is born.



In 1998, Oy Motor Trans Ab is established and begins chassis transports for Scania.

In the late 1980s, the company decides to focus on its own direct transports for customers, cutting out intermediate storage and reloading. The online concept is born.

In 1982, Hans Ahola takes over the company, together with his brothers Lars, Nils and Rolf.



In 2017, the company's new service centre with an office and transport management is inaugurated in Kokkola.

In 2008, a load optimisation centre is opened in Nykvarn, Sweden.



In 2008, Ahola Transport acquires all of the shares in Sundqvist Transport. This initiates transports to Poland and the rest of Central Europe.



The company is still family-owned but was in 2016 also publicly listed.

Ahola Transport today

Annual turnover of around EUR 100 million.

Employs approximately 700 people.



Main area of operations: the Nordics, Baltics and CEE countries (Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia).

The first years



Tens years later, oil transports start up, operations which will continue for more than 30 years.



Transports outside Finland begin in 1973.



Kb Kuljetus Helge Ahola Transport Ky founded in 1977 and Hans becomes co-owner.

Helge Ahola establishes the business in 1955.

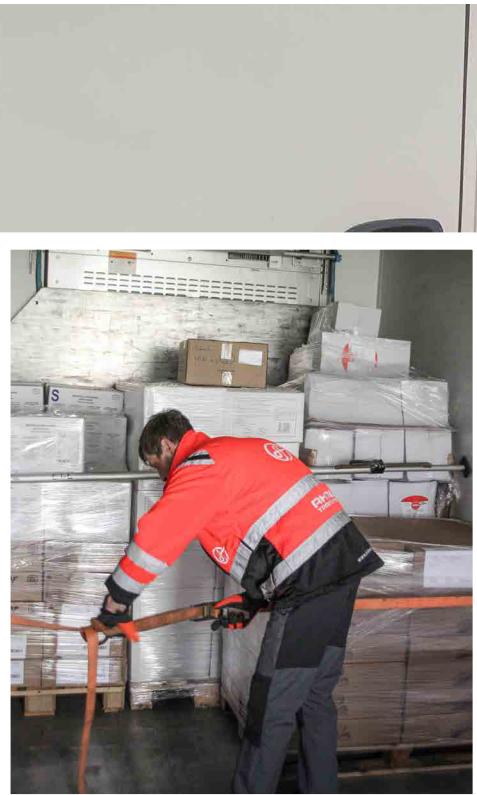


Hans Ahola begins working as a gravel truck driver in 1972.



Frozen goods - new concept in the Baltics

Thanks to its acquisition of Swanline Oü, Ahola Transport has an even more extensive offering of services for its customers. The company's presence in the Baltic countries has been strengthened and its outlook is good.



Maarek Tönnison drives temperature-controlled transports between Finland and Estonia. The best part of the job is the independence and participating in load planning.

Temperature-controlled transports are a new service for Ahola Transport, but complements all of the earlier transports. The expansion has been in the works for a long time.

"Expanding the transport service with temperature-controlled transports has been part of our strategy for quite some time. At the end of 2019, the strategy became reality, and we saw an excellent opportunity to increase our services," says Thomas Ahola, Business Unit Manager for the Baltics and CEE countries.

The decisive factor was the purchase of the Finnish company Swanline's temperature-controlled transport operations, personnel and equipment in the Baltic countries. The acquisition was finalised in January 2020.

"The goal was to offer more comprehensive transport and logistics solutions, but, at the same time, also grow in the existing geographical market areas," says Ahola.

The acquisition strengthens Ahola Transport's position both in Finland and the Baltics. It is a step forward in Ahola Transport's active work to achieve more dynamic operations in a sector that is constantly evolving.

More efficient transports

An increased service offering, together with investments in operational management, digitalisation and more efficient capacity

utilisation, increase sustainability, efficiency and meet customer needs.

"We see huge potential in temperature-controlled transports, along with an opportunity for growth. Our IT system and digital solutions, for example, provide opportunities for customers to monitor their goods flow in real time and see that the products are handled at the correct temperature," says Thomas Ahola.

Swanline's temperature-controlled transports covered the Baltics and Poland. Ahola Transport will continue operations there, but sees potential for expanding the temperature-controlled transports in the future.

"Planning is essential, otherwise you end up doing extra work later on."

"Ahola Transport now covers the entire Baltic countries, Finland and even parts of Eastern Europe with daily temperature-controlled transports. We can offer transports for smaller and larger consignments and storage services in both Estonia and Finland," says Ahola.

Rewarding work

Maarek Tönnison is one of the drivers who now drives for Ahola Transport following the

acquisition of Swanline.

"This is interesting and independent work. It's motivating to get to plan the transports and try to make them as efficient as possible. Planning is essential, otherwise you end up doing extra work later on."

Tönnison worked at Swanline for six years before he transferred to Ahola Transport last winter. In his view, Ahola Transport is a good employer and he values the collaboration with his colleagues.

"The transport planner who takes care of my cargo has driven refrigerated transports before. Ahola trusts its drivers. It's great. We don't get so many phone calls all the time," says Tönnison.

Tönnison drives mostly between Estonia and Finland. The goods include, for example, fish, meat and bread from different factories and terminals. Thanks to the compartments in the trailer, he can load up other goods too. When asked what makes refrigerated transports different to normal loads, he answers briefly with a big grin.

"Well, they're cold. But of course, sometimes I have to hurry too."

On a normal day he collects cargo from around Tallinn in the morning so that he can make the trip over to Finland as fast as possible, unload and take the return cargo back to Estonia in the evening.

"So far, I have never missed the ferry," Tönnison concludes with a smile.

Greener together

Ahola Transport's new concept Green Kilometers is off to a good start. During 2020, an expanded partnership with the company Peikko started up.

A similar view of society, the environment and the future. This is what brought the major Finnish corporation Peikko together with Ahola Transport under a new agreement during 2020. Peikko, which, among other things, supplies different concrete connections and composite beams for the construction industry, is a long-standing customer of Ahola Transport, but 2020 saw them take a step further in their co-operation.

"This co-operation means that we can offer customers a smart environmental solution, but also that we, together with Peikko, can get out the message that there is a sustainable transport method," says Jesper Lönnbäck, Key Account Manager at Ahola Transport.

The factor that now binds the partners closer together than ever is Ahola Transport's new concept Green Kilometers. The add-on service enables customers to reduce the environmental impact of transports significantly and in an easily quantifiable manner. Transports under Green Kilometers use HVO fuel, which involves 90 per cent lower emissions of greenhouse gases.

"Peikko was looking for a greener transport solution, specifically for their product DELTABEAM® Green, after we had already agreed on our regular transports," says Lönnbäck.

Lönnbäck is delighted that the two companies, through their similar values, were able to find a solution that benefits both them and the environment.

Growing demand

Lönnbäck believes that an increasing number of companies will be seeking greener transports in the future. If a company really wants to offer eco-friendly products, the entire chain has to be as green as possible, including transports.

"I believe that this kind of concept will be in demand going forward," Lönnbäck says.

The agreement for Peikko's transports includes an add-on service, which allows for further flexibility to meet the customer's wishes.

"The concept is a hybrid model where the customer's customers can decide whether they want HVO-fueled transports and our customer then places the order with us," says Lönnbäck.

The first in Finland

Many parties are thus involved and they can choose to go with greener transports. For Ahola, this means additional work, but it is worth it for the environment.



Photo: Peikko
The expanded co-operation with Peikko shows the increasing importance of sustainable transports.

"The concept places relatively high demands on planning and reporting, two things we are good at and which we can achieve effortlessly," says Lönnbäck.

For Peikko, the green transports were key as their new product DELTABEAM® Green consists 90 per cent of recycled steel. Through Green Kilometers, Peikko and Ahola Transport can now guarantee that all of the transports of DELTABEAM® Green in the Nordics will be carried out using biodiesel from traceable sources.

The agreement with Ahola Transport also involves environmental compensation if Peikko needs to use other companies for its logistics at some point. This partnership solution is the first of its kind in Finland. The collaboration between the two family-owned companies began as far back as the 1990s, but has now entered an entirely new phase.

Added growth in food transports

During 2020, Ahola Transport's food transports have grown substantially. The goal is to continue expanding.

The growth in food transports is largely the result of a new transport agreement with the Finnish bakery company Vaasan. The new agreement involves several trips between Finland and the Baltics each day and employs roughly ten vehicles.

"We have had food transports before, but this is one of our bigger customers," says

Ville Lindholm.

Lindholm is in charge of the sales department's communication with Vaasan. He sees both continuous and growing potential in food transports.

"The idea is to grow within this segment. We are carrying out marketing and working to gain new customers."

Simultaneously, he points out that the food industry has different requirements than regular cargo. Thanks, however, to high-quality and careful planning, Ahola Transport is able to offer transports also for the food industry.

"We have to be aware of different regulations and requirements. Hygiene is important. The sector's logistics is also interesting. A lot has to go right so that shops and restaurants get their food fresh and on time," says Lindholm.

The co-operation with Vaasan works on many levels, according to Lindholm.

"It is always great to get to work together with a company with such great values and a fantastic personnel. Moreover, it has been easy to start doing business with them," he concludes.

Balance is the key to success

The Finnish company Europak has long led the way in its industry. The company welcomes competition, believes in continuous development and wants to make the plastic industry greener.

Every year, millions of plastic containers head out to customers from a small but successful factory north of Helsinki. Located conveniently north of the Ring Road in Espoo lies the family company Europak, which celebrated its 40-year anniversary in 2020. Over the years, the company has expanded and become successful, with efficiency as its guiding principle.

"Our turnover is around EUR 7 million and we employ 20 people. We are a small organisation where everyone is willing to help one another and not just work in their own little niche."

This is how Peter Sjöblom, Account Manager at Europak, explains the company's success. This is not the whole truth, however. Europak has grown steadily at a rate of 5-10 per cent practically every year. The competent and close-knit personnel is a key piece of the puzzle. Product development carried out even before the customer asks for it is another.

"We have invested a lot to become a leader. We know our customer segment, their

needs and specifications. We even made innovations that we then heard no one else had come up with, but which later became a requirement. Today, we make packaging that meets all demands in all segments," says Peter Sjöblom.

Efficiency is everything

All of the production equipment comes from the same supplier and is of the highest quality. This helps Europak avoid unnecessary maintenance. Time-consuming paperwork has been outsourced so that the personnel can instead focus on the core business.

"The competition is tough, but that's how it should be."

Thanks to the small organisation and family-ownership, decisions are made quickly and nearby. A lot of it is about balance, something they have also aimed for in production.

"We wish to have a balance between au-

tomation and manual work so that we can simultaneously control quality. That is something we believe in," says Sjöblom.

The end result is strong competitiveness in a tough market that is mainly limited to the Nordics and Baltics. It is not, in fact, worth transporting the light but space-consuming products a longer distance than that.

"The competition is tough, but that's how it should be. It keeps us on our toes and makes us keep costs under control while simultaneously developing our products."

At Europak's 10,000-square-metre factory, work is carried out in three shifts, five days a week. Their main product is canisters between three and 30 litres, but their product offering also includes plastic packaging ranging between 0.4 and 220 litres.

"A large portion of them are manufactured and approved for hazardous goods but also for food products. Our customers are mostly in industry," says Sjöblom.

Customers include both large and small companies within the chemical and technochemical industry, as well as the pharma-

ceutical, food and oil industries. Close to 80 per cent of the production is sold in Finland. The rest is exported, mostly to Sweden.

Monitoring makes all the difference

In total, Europak has customers in nine countries and Ahola Transport is a key partner in these transports. Almost every day, trucks roll out from the factory in Espoo.

"Our co-operation has lasted several decades and, in my opinion, it gets better each day," Sjöblom says.

Ahola Transport has been able to meet Europak's need for flexibility both with regard to goods volumes and timetables, especially as the nature of customer deliveries has changed over the years.

"It is a service that very few have to the same extent as Ahola. The combination of costs and service makes all the difference. And that is where Ahola really shines."

"These days it's more often about getting the products there on time as stocks are smaller at both ends. Nobody wants to maintain large stocks."

Europak is especially happy with the personal and flexible service, as well as the various electronic services for monitoring the goods in real time that Ahola Transport offers. Customers are often surprised when they ask about delivery times and Europak can let them know the exact time when the cargo will arrive.

"If production stands still, it obviously costs money. Access to information and the tracking system are therefore very important. It is a service that very few have to the same extent as Ahola. The combination of costs and



Peter Sjöblom believes in an efficient but small-scale organisation to achieve profitability and growth.

service makes all the difference. And that is where Ahola really shines," says Sjöblom.

Changed attitude

Another major reason why Europak went with Ahola Transport is its comprehensive environmental work.

"Today, customers want all kinds of environmental reports and that goes for everything, not just production. That is where we can use Ahola's measurements and reports. They are clearly at the forefront of the industry."

Environmental factors have become increasingly important overall in recent years. Europak has invested heavily in offering eco-friendly products and manufactures a growing share of its products from recycled plastic.

"It's about taking responsibility. At the same time, it's the customers who decide

and the requirements placed on the products make it impossible to make everything from recycled plastic."

The same appearance cannot always be guaranteed with recycled products, but that is something that society and industry are getting used to.

"Attitudes are changing and that is why we are determined to manufacture part of our products from recycled plastic."

Sjöblom hopes that this will in time improve the plastic industry's reputation.

"Plastic hasn't exactly been the most popular material in the environmental debate. But the issue isn't that there is something wrong with plastic in itself. It's more about what you do with it," he points out.

Europak is therefore working in a number of ways to get the word out about plastic recycling, but also about how vital plastic is for our society. There is plastic in almost everything.



Starting up production at Europak takes three hours, then the machines operate in three shifts, five days a week.



Europak has operated for a long time north of Ring Road 3 in Espoo. The location is excellent for customers both in Finland and abroad.

Europak

Established: 1980

Turnover: EUR 7 million

Employees: 20 people

Sales: 79 per cent in Finland, 21 per cent exports to 8 countries

“More respect is needed”

Erkki Santanen began driving a truck already in 1986 and has thus experienced a lot during his time on the road. Although he is more than happy with his job, he sees some challenges in the sector.

Erkki Santanen started as a driver for Ahola Transport back in 1995, but initially drove for another transport company. Despite the recession in Finland, he had heard that the growing company Ahola Transport had work to offer.

“There was nothing else to do but try to find a job. I have always said that this society works as long as people work,” says Santanen.

Ahola Transport saw Santanen’s potential and suggested he become a subcontractor.

“In 1994 I had already discussed buying a truck of my own with Nils Ahola in 1995 or 1996, but I wasn’t interested at the time,” he says.

“If I promise something, I stick to it.”

His interest grew, but for several reasons the decision was postponed until 2006. That is when the company Erkki Santanen was established with one truck in Seinäjoki.

“Today, I have three trucks that drive for Ahola Transport, two domestically in Finland and one to Norway.”

Lessons on both sides

For Erkki Santanen, the co-operation with Ahola Transport has been both rewarding and smooth. Nothing has been too small to call them about, help is always available.

“Everything has gone well, I can’t think of anything that has gone wrong. The fact that I’ve driven for Ahola Transport so long proves it. For me, it has meant stability.”

Similarly, Santanen has done his best to be a good subcontractor.

“If I promise something, I stick to it. I also hope that any advice I’ve given to Ahola Transport over the years has been heard and put to use.”

For Santanen, it is obvious that it isn’t just about driving a load from point A to point B. It has to be done as well as possible and the partners should preferably learn something from one another. Nobody is perfect and everyone can improve.

During his years of driving, Santanen has



Erkki Santanen drives three trucks for Ahola Transport.

also experienced the extensive digitalisation at Ahola Transport.

“It has of course helped and made everything faster. The technology has also developed. When I started driving to Norway in the 1990s I didn’t have GPS. I had to use a paper map,” he recalls.

Co-operation is the way to go

Although there have been many opportunities to start driving for other operators, Santanen has seen no reason to leave Ahola Transport.



“Why would the grass be greener on the other side? I’ve never had anything to complain about at Ahola. Through all these years, I’ve only had trouble with one transport planner.”

According to Santanen this is unusual and proof that both partners work with the same goal in mind. Therefore, he sees no reason to change employers. On the other hand, he

has definite views on the damage that the sometimes jealous competition between different transport companies and their drivers does.

“I’ve always thought that Finnish transport companies, regardless of whether they are large or small, should focus on working together more, and not be so jealous of one another.”

Santanen wishes that they could see that they essentially have the same goal: making sure society runs smoothly.

“We should respect one another more, regardless of which company we come from.”

Challenges and hopes

Santanen also sees that the motivation to work that used to be part of the sector has changed.

“I’ve never complained about how many hours I have to work. But the younger generations may not be used to spending two to three weeks away from home.

That is why it’s difficult finding new competent drivers.” Working together with Ahola Transport makes Santanen optimistic, however, and he hopes that things continue to go well.

“I hope that Ahola Transport continues to develop and be a major player in the sector. Development at Ahola Transport has been huge during my time. In 1994, the company was much smaller, a modest operator with around 40 trucks if I recall. Now they have close to 500. They must have done something right.”

Greater integration boosts efficiency

The IT segment AT Digital Solutions has had a successful year. New agreements were made in passenger logistics, a new office was inaugurated and the products of the business area Road were developed in a number of ways.



Product Manager Patrik Friis and AT Digital Solutions have many development projects underway.

In recent years, AT Digital Solutions’ long-standing development work within the Road business area has taken a few steps forward. For example the Attracs Online system has been developed within the segment, something which Ahola Transport also uses.

“We are developing strongly in this area, we have gained several new customers and are actively seeking more,” says Product Manager Patrik Friis.

New functions have been integrated in 2020, among them customs clearance services. The system has also been developed to include more services that make the drivers’ lives easier, from training apps to electronic waybills. A lot has been done but the goal is set even higher. The next-generation platform has been built up over the years.

“The goal is to improve our customers’ competitiveness and environmental efficiency,” says Friis.

Passenger logistics brings added growth

In recent years, AT Digital Solutions, formerly named Attracs, has also focused on urban logistics and passenger transports. The segment has, among other things, delivered a new total system for the management of passenger transports for the company FCG Smart Transportation, in which Ahola Transport has a minority share.

“Together with FCG Smart Transportation, we have achieved a new and significant market position within the city logistics segment,” says Friis.

Together, the companies have won several new contracts for brokering transportation services and passenger logistics in Finnish cities and regions.

“This means that the number of provided transportation services has grown from approximately 5,000 to roughly 50,000 per month,” says Friis.

Through the new system, passenger traffic and transportation services can be made more effective by as much as over 40 per cent. The goal is for this to continue attracting new municipalities and regions.

Clear strategy

AT Digital Solutions also participates in several external projects and has collaborated with several companies and operators in order to measure efficiency, environmental impacts and to improve transparency in different logistics chains. A Tower-product has been delivered to the steel group SSAB, where the KPI (Key Performance Indicator) is measured in multimodal transports throughout the whole transport chain. With the help of the solution, SSAB’s goods flows can now be monitored at all stages, on Finnish and German state railways, at the shipping company Finnlines, at several Central European transport companies and in the ports of Rostock and Hanko. All parties in the chain, both suppliers and ordering customers, benefit from the solution and are now able to better anticipate and plan their own operations.

AT Digital Solutions will focus on continuing to scale the Road and City business areas in 2021. Growth is sought through new products that help customers improve competitiveness and overall environmental efficiency.

“Within these areas we plan on being a leading player that links, in a natural way, multimodal transport chains and optimize operations throughout the whole transport chain,” says Tommi Hollström, who is responsible for the segment.

AT Digital Solutions also moved into a new office in the spring in Kokkola. According to Tommi Hollström, the facilities are both modern and functional.

“Comfort has been increased and disturbing elements minimised.”

Mini portrait



Name: Jonas Hedström

Family: Wife Karolina, three children: Emma 10, Vilma 7, Otto 5

Place of work and position: Team Leader, Transport Planning, Kokkola, Finland

What is your favourite pastime? It varies quite a bit, right now golf tops the list.

Your favourite food and drink? Pizza baked in a wood-fired oven, sparkling water with grapefruit.

What makes you happy? A well-organised sports event.

What makes you angry? Losing if it depends entirely on me.

Your dream holiday: A couple weeks on a Caribbean island wouldn’t be too bad.

What was your first job? The tool store Työkaluässä in Kokkola

Any special memories from your working life? My first day as a transport planner is one I won’t forget.

What is going on right now in your job? Right now it’s managing the goods balance between Finland and Sweden on a daily basis, but it varies from day to day.

How do you envision Ahola Transport in 5 to 10 years? To be the obvious choice for customers.

Ahola Golf event with festive theme

At the end of August, Ahola Transport organised its traditional golf event in Naantali. This time the event had a retro theme to celebrate the company's 65th anniversary. Customers and partners, including avid golfers and beginners, enjoyed the sunny weather Naantali had to offer. The event was successful and it was great to see a record number of participants this year.

AHOLA MASTERS 2020



Vehicle fleet welcomes new camera technology



During 2020, Ahola Transport has expanded and renewed its fleet of trucks with, for example, weight-optimised trailers and new trucks with camera technology.

Ahola Transport has continued to modernise its vehicle fleet during 2020, in line with its capacity-improvement plan. During the year, the fleet has been expanded with, for example, ten new Mercedes-Benz trucks. The vehicles feature new technological solutions as they use camera technology instead of side mirrors. The cameras are mounted above the side doors and the image is displayed on monitors inside the cabin. The result is significantly improved traffic safety thanks to better visibility and functions such as distance lines

and support lines in the monitor. This also means improved aerodynamics, which leads to lower fuel consumption. The fleet has also been expanded with 10 new Scania vehicles and a couple of DAF trucks. In addition, Ahola Transport has purchased ten new weight-optimised trailers made by the Austrian manufacturer Berger Fahrzeugtechnik. Thanks to a lower weight, the trailers can take on more cargo and thus reduce the transports' environmental impact.



Own Ahola song

A song was written and recorded to celebrate Ahola Transport's 65th anniversary. The country-inspired track was produced on the initiative of the employees and played for the first time at Ahola's Trucker's Evening. The song will also be available on CD and on several streaming services.

Truckers Evening and new outdoor gym

Ahola Transport's traditional event for drivers was held in Naantali in September. The programme for the Truckers Evening consisted of, among other things, various competitions and live music by the Ahola house band. During the event, the drivers' new outdoor gym was inaugurated officially by Finland's strongest man Mika Törrö.



Powerful presence at strongman competitions

For several years now, Ahola Transport has sponsored strongman competitions in Finland. The competitions are based on the strength and endurance of the contestants being put to the test in different events. A popular event is the truck pull where the competitors have to move a truck using nothing but their muscles, while being timed. This year, a new Ahola truck was part of the competitions in Kookola and in Turku during the autumn.



The best thing about 2020



Kim Sundqvist

Transport Planner, AT Special Transport Kokkola, Finland

"My wedding was definitely the high point of the year."



Ville Lindholm

Salesperson Kokkola, Finland

"The best thing this year was definitely staying healthy and having a job despite the challenging state of the world. Buying our own house and our oldest child starting preschool were also exciting events."



Karol Olde

Site Manager, Cargo Center Tallinn, Estonia

"2020 has been a tough year for everyone. COVID-19 has shaken the entire world and impacted businesses, schools and families. But it's great to see and be part of a company like Ahola Transport, that continued on according to plan, based on its vision."



Edyta Slupska

Salesperson Warsaw, Poland

"My answer may seem strange, but I think the pandemic. It has caused people to rethink things. Companies have started focusing on better solutions and think more about their staff. Also, I think the virus has affected the way we think about climate. 2020 has been a horrible experience but people sometimes need a shock to adjust their thinking."



Raido Tammeorg

Transport Resources Tallinn, Estonia

"2020 has been a very interesting and different year for everyone due to the coronavirus. The best thing so far is that we have remained healthy and that the company is also doing well. Hopefully this will continue and we will come through this stronger and better than ever."



Edel Kuronen

Customs Clearance Naantali, Finland

"My daughter graduated as a midwife and my youngest son got into college on the first try to study to become a construction engineer. And now it looks like we will be moving to Turku before Christmas - my commute will be really short and fast! Additionally, Ahola Transport has started customs clearance for Norway."

Boxing and tomatoes

After a hectic day at work, most people need to relax. For Robert Lepp this means going to either the gym or his greenhouse.



Robert Lepp enjoys spending time in his greenhouse and at the gym. On the far left is the rock that inspired him to make changes in his garden.

Gardening and kickboxing are probably not the most common combination of hobbies, but for Robert Lepp this is nothing out of the ordinary.

"I have so many hobbies that there's bound to be some variety. I used to play basketball but now with corona going round I either go to the gym or cycle," he says.

Usually, however, kickboxing, a sport he took up around four years ago, and the family's greenhouse in their garden, take up the most time.

"Of course all of this takes up some of my time, but of course most of my time I spend with my family," he says.

Robert has a wife and three children. He balances family time and his hobbies with his job as Team Leader for transport planning at Ahola Transport's Tallinn office.

Therapy and relaxation

After a busy day at work, he often drives to the gym. Before the coronavirus pandemic, he trained in kickboxing three times a week at a boxing gym and with his own trainer. When life returns to normal he will get back into training.

"I switched gyms just before the pandemic

began. The plan is to practice more and and even compete, maybe in some small tournament."

In addition to relaxation and strength, kickboxing has given Robert new friends.

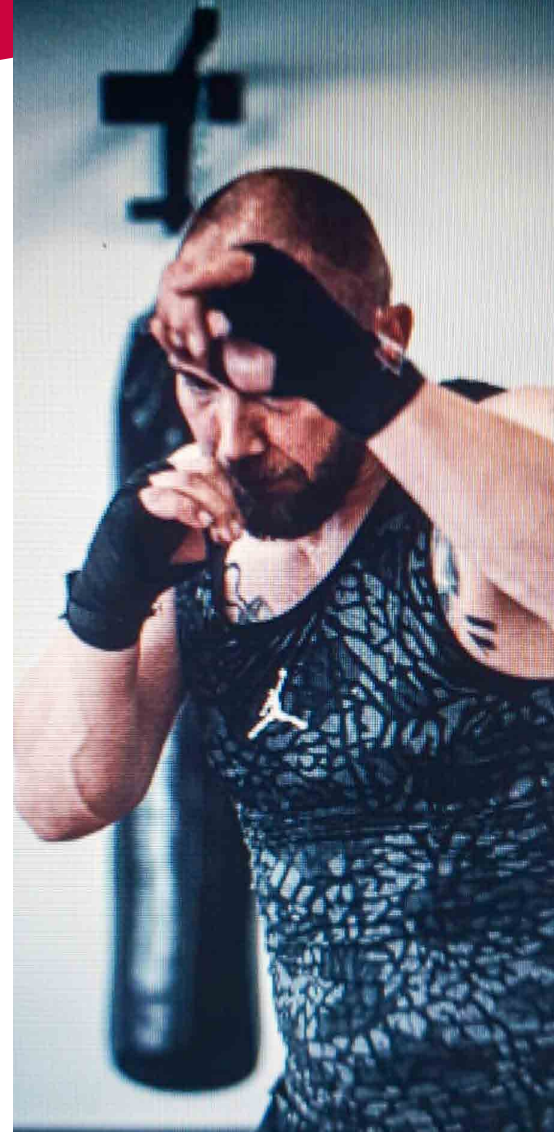
"You meet so many different kinds of people. It's also fun to spar with professionals. The best boxers in Estonia train at my gym," he says.

Kickboxing came into Robert's life through a friend. After a knee injury ended his basketball hobby, he started training at a gym and quickly developed an interest in kickboxing.

"I didn't take it seriously at first but then I started training three days a week. It became a form of therapy after the workday. It's relaxing and helps me to stay calm. You learn how to keep a cool head in hectic situations."

It all started with a rock

For Robert, the same relaxation and calm can be found at home in his own yard in Muuga, just outside of Tallinn. He, and the rest of the family grow tomatoes, bell peppers and cucumber there, and Robert makes omelets and salads for his family from the



produce they grow.

"My gardening interest actually began when a large rock in my neighbour's yard caught my eye. I asked if I could dig it up and then I used ropes to move it over to our side," he recounts.

Robert saw its potential as the center of a garden bed with plants and flowers. In addition to various types of bell peppers in the greenhouse, it is his next project in the yard.

Both the gardening and boxing serve the same purpose in his daily life and Robert sees no reason why his interest would decline in the future.

"As long as it gives me what I'm looking for, I'll keep on going," he concludes.

Tomatoes and cucumbers grow in the the almost 10-square-metre greenhouse.

Robert Lepp

Title: Team Leader, Transport Planning

Born: 1982

Family: Wife and three children

Lives: Muuga, Tallinn

Education: Ongoing