

Ahola and Scania make major investments in platooning

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Long-standing co-operation benefits everyone



The best way to guarantee long-standing co-operation is to take good care of your customers. One example in Ahola Transport's case is the Swedish company Pacwire, which was Ahola Transport's first foreign delivery destination in 1973.

Pacwire is still Ahola Transport's customer; you can read more about it in this issue of AT Info. A long partnership is based on listening to the customer and delivering what you promise. We are grateful for our long and successful collaboration with Pacwire, just as we are grateful for the numerous other long and satisfying relationships we have with our close to 3,000 customers.

I was there for the first trip to Pacwire's plant in Söråker, Sweden. This first delivery abroad for the company is ingrained in my memory, but not just for positive reasons. The oil crisis started right in the middle of our trip. It was predicted that oil reserves would run out after a while. People began hoarding petrol, so on our journey home, all the petrol stations had sold out. The blackout in force in all the towns and villages we passed through added to the doomsday vibe. We finally made it home with just a few drops of petrol to spare.

There is no petrol shortage to deal with today, but we have to keep our sights on the future and continue to develop sustainable operations, which is possible through our Ahola Green Wheels programme. Our strategic co-operation with Scania is an excellent example. It has proceeded according to plan, allowing us to carry out platooning tests with three new specially-equipped Scania trucks.

We carried out a shorter test drive with the Norwegian road administration, Statens Vegvesen. The test began in Skibotn on the border with Finland, running partly into Finland. All of the partners were happy with the experience and further co-operation between

Ahola Transport, Scania and Statens Vegvesen is very possible. Even the short test proved that there are significant savings in fuel and several positive environmental impacts. Only time will tell what will happen, but the strong focus Ahola Transport has on the environment and reducing emissions makes it very likely that the platooning collaboration with Scania and the Norwegian road administration will continue.

For many years, Ahola Transport has invested in modern and weight-optimised transport equipment. One example is the years-long partnership with the Austrian company Berger Fahrzeugtechnik, which will supply a fleet of new light-weight trailers to Ahola Transport.

The trailers will be used for heavy goods, such as steel transports, as we recently renewed contracts with long-standing steel industry customers. With a close to 10% higher payload, the trailers enable a lower environmental impact for each tonne of goods transported.

Ahola Transport is also investing in its personnel, and not least in its drivers. We built our Ahola Training Center on a trailer to enable us to offer training easily and flexibly, bringing it close to our customers and drivers.

The market development has furthermore been positive, with our customers able to increase their exports on all our markets. This gives us faith in the future and the drive to invest in new transport capacity and acquire new customers.

Have a pleasant and successful autumn!


Hans Ahola

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Ahola Transport on tour

Ahola Transport's new mobile training and exhibition vehicle called Training Center, will enhance the company's corporate and employer profile and improve children's traffic safety.

The new centre was built in late winter 2018 and was introduced at Ahola Transport's golf event in Naantali at the beginning of June. The goal of the mobile unit is to reach the company's personnel and partners at their place of operations. That is why Ahola Transport is off on tour in the autumn.

"This is unique. We want to be the first to reach out to both the industry and the general public in this way," says Key Account Manager Tommy Björkskog.

The first tour is headed to southwestern Finland. The idea is to spread the Ahola word and to reach out to current and future subcontractors, drivers, new and existing customers, schools and anyone else who might be interested.

"The tour will feature our company, our history, present and future and our supplier and training concept. This will allow potential suppliers, drivers and customers to take a few steps closer to us, knowing that we provide good induction and training to everyone wanting to work with us," says Caj Björkskog, who is responsible, for example, for training drivers at Ahola Transport.

Numerous benefits

Ahola's Training Center has multiple purposes.

"We will also be able hold kick-off events near customers, for example when we start up new goods flows, or customised training for employees when things need improving out in the field," says Caj Björkskog.

As Ahola Transport constantly needs new drivers, the company is hoping to attract skilled people.

"We want to provide our current drivers with insight into what we want and our future focus. We want to show new drivers that we are building our operations in the long term," says Lucas Snellman, Transport

Resources Manager at Ahola Transport.

So far, Ahola Transport has been to the Uusimaa army brigade and the navy barracks at Tammisaari to show the conscripts what career opportunities are available in the transport industry after military service. Caj Björkskog believes that the novel recruitment method may prove popular.



Ahola's Training Center can be used for training and exhibitions.

"The Training Center will give our recruitment a boost because we can reach potential drivers, wherever they are, in a way that is interesting and stands out."

Fruitful concept

The mobile centre can be used both as a lecture room with a driving simulator and as a meeting room. In Lucas Snellman's view, the concept shows Ahola Transport in a positive light. Also on tour is Ahola Transport's highly equipped concept truck and to show how things have progressed, also a 1975 Scania truck complete with an exhibition on the company's history.

"The concept truck shows that we invest in

quality and cost-effective solutions. Together with the Training Center, this is an indication of our forward-thinking mindset and focus on training drivers," says Snellman.

Tommy Björkskog adds that the training is important for a number of reasons.

"Having competent, motivated drivers who focus on the customer is of course also valuable from the customer's perspective."

Social responsibility matters

Ahola Transport also wishes to train its drivers from an eco-conscious and traffic safety perspective. For Tommy Björkskog it is natural for a company like Ahola Transport to bear responsibility towards society.

"It benefits us all. Companies should be involved and carry some social responsibility."

Ahola Transport is doing its part by touring around schools talking about traffic safety. During 2017, Ahola Transport participated in a successful traffic safety event in Naantali. This is an aspect Ahola wishes to develop.

"It's also in our interest to keep kids safe in heavy traffic. It isn't just the schools' and society's job," says Björkskog.

In the autumn, the tour will take Ahola Transport to schools in the port town of Hanko, in southern Finland. Ahola Transport chose Hanko because of its heavy truck traffic that daily rolls through town and crisscrosses the school routes of most kids living there.

For Ahola Transport, the autumn's tour is a first attempt and a chance to gather constructive feedback. Tommy Björkskog considers future tours very certain.

"Absolutely. We need to present in our entire market area. Demand can dictate where we are and when."

In the future, Ahola Transport wishes to take its mobile centre as far afield as Sweden and the Baltics. ■

Co-operation with Scania reaches new heights

Ahola Transport's and Scania's first platooning test on public roads was a huge leap forward. The new technology is anticipated to achieve better working conditions for drivers, safer and greener traffic on public roads and to provide customers with more effective and time-optimised transports.

Ahola Transport and the truck manufacturer Scania have taken a major new step together in developing the transport industry of the future. In March, the companies signed a co-operation agreement on the introduction of new transport technology to Nordic roads. The agreement was the first customer agreement for semi-autonomous truck convoys, or platooning, on public roads in Europe and tests began in Norway in May. The tests were carried out together with the Norwegian road administration Statens Vegvesen.

"We are working together based on a carefully laid out plan. We have come far in a short time but even though we've achieved some results, I think this is just the start of our collaboration," says Project Manager Christian Bergstrand from Scania.

Working on such a huge advancement within an extensive industry like truck transports takes time. This is why Bergstrand values the long-sightedness of the two partners.

"Co-operation in autonomous transports takes time, obviously. That is why it is essential to get along well in the long run. I see Ahola Transport as a very pragmatic and clear-sighted partner."

Co-operation bears more fruit

The companies' co-operation focusses on technology for connecting several trucks electronically in a convoy and on developing new transport technologies for driver assistance. With its major investments in technology and research, Scania has long led the way in its industry's development, and for 20 years, Ahola Transport has been a pioneer in both environmental issues and the digitalisation of road transports.

"Ahola Transport is an experienced transport company with a firm grasp of digitalisation. This means that Scania receives useful feedback on products we test at Ahola. When two partners are willing to co-operate and are good at what they do, it is easy to come up with good solutions together," says Bergstrand.

According to Bergstrand, Scania has developed a majority of its technology on its own, which has been successful, but things are changing.

"With all the huge changes taking place in digitalisation, electrification and autonomous trucks, we realise we can't do it all ourselves. It is essential to develop our ability to work close to our partners. We are at the forefront of technology with this project, but also in terms of how we see the operational impact of platooning. Ahola Transport and Scania are leaders in Europe when it comes to these issues and what we are doing now will affect the transport system of the future."

Benefitting drivers and customers

Each partner in the collaboration has contributed technology that both enables platooning and utilises all its benefits. Ahola Transport is delighted to be part of the monumental new partnership with Scania.

"Our relationship with Scania began with our first Scania truck in 1959 and we are happy to be expanding our co-operation with new solutions," says Hans Ahola.

Semi-autonomous convoys will bring with them the new driver assistance functions that are now being developed to make deliveries more efficient. Optimised planning of routes, improved flow of goods and optimal speeds increase efficiency and positive environmental impacts. Driving in convoys also reduces air resistance, which in turn reduces fuel consumption and carbon dioxide emissions.

"We wish to improve drivers' working conditions using the new technology. The planned solutions help us to meet customer expectations in terms of faster delivery and the environment," says Hans Ahola.

Platooning will expand the role of drivers. Since the first truck steers the convoy, the drivers in the other trucks can meanwhile sort out their paperwork, for instance. More flexibility in driving times and rest periods can offer long-distance drivers the chance to go home instead of sleeping in their trucks.

Tests in tough conditions

The first tests on public roads began on the newly inaugurated smart E8 European highway in the Skibotn valley in northern Norway in May, 300 kilometres north of the Arctic Circle. The Norwegian transport administration recently upgraded the highway with high-tech equipment for testing smart transport systems.

"When two partners are willing to co-operate and good at what they do, it is easy to come up with good solutions together."

The highway is described as a 40-kilometre-long research station on asphalt.

"The tests in Norway went off without a



Christian Bergstrand is in charge of Scania's platooning project and values the partnership with Ahola Transport.

hitch although the weather challenged our sensors. It was so much fun to demonstrate our achievements with Ahola. I hope we get to do more in the future. It generated a lot of interest and plenty of companies were eager to become involved and impact the future of transport solutions," says Christian Bergstrand.

During the tests in Norway, all three of Ahola Transport's trucks had drivers but the driver in the first truck controlled the speed of the entire convoy and the rest followed automatically. The list of factors being studied was long, including everything from the drivers' feedback to safety and the effect on logistics chains. All of the test data was recorded in a control room onsite.

"The benefits of platooning include so much more than just technology, but to achieve those benefits using the technology, we also need good coordination," says Development Director Mika Sorvisto from Ahola Transport.

Platooning is the future

Much has to be done to implement the new transport technology on a large scale. For example, public and legislative approval must go hand in hand. It is thus important to carry out tests in real traffic situations and varying

weather conditions.

"Together with partners like Ahola Transport, we can test new technology that will be part of the transport system of the future and ensure that it is safe and effective," says Anders Dewoon, Director New Business Solutions, Scania.

According to Christian Bergstrand, the agreement with Ahola Transport is a key step on the path to commercially viable semiautonomous truck convoys.

"I believe we will see a gradual introduction of platooning, with a progressively higher degree of autonomy until drivers will not be required on certain roads. In 2025, platooning will be a normal sight on roads."

The co-operation with Ahola Transport is Scania's second contract for autonomous truck convoys. The first project took place in Singapore where Scania's technology was tested on truck convoys between two harbours. Efficiency, traffic safety and eco-friendlier transports were also the watchwords in Singapore. Scania is thus at the forefront in a number of areas and the co-operation with Ahola Transport shows that development can be pushed even further.

"There is every chance of developing our collaboration if the right conditions arise," says Christian Bergstrand. ■



In May 2018, Ahola Transport and Scania carried out their first tests of platooning equipment on public roads. Ahola Transport's Development Director Mika Sorvisto is looking forward to further co-operation.





Åke Nyblom, Tobias Marian and Ole Nyblom have a good co-operation thanks to mutual trust and shared values. Eco-friendliness is one of the factors uniting Berger Ecotrail and Ahola Transport.

Bigger load, less fuel

Reducing the environmental impact of road transports has been an important goal for Ahola Transport for many years. Buying weight-optimised and energy-efficient trailers from Berger Ecotrail, a world leader, is thus a logical choice.



Berger Fahrzeugtechnik

- Established 1994 in Radfeld, Austria.
- Part of Berger Group, which also owns the logistics company Berger Logistik.
- Employs around 90 people (prior to the completion of the new factory)
- Annual net sales of around EUR 31,5 million (prior to the completion of the new factory)
- Follows a company philosophy based on four E's: Economy, Ecology, Efficiency and Excellence.

A philosophy of keeping the wheels turning but in the eco-friendliest way possible has linked the Austrian Berger Fahrzeugtechnik Ges.m.b.H and the Finnish Ahola Transport since 2005. Since then, the co-operation between the trailer manufacturer Berger and logistics company Ahola Transport has continued to grow stronger.

"I would say we have a long-term partnership, not just relationship between a supplier and buyer. It is collaboration built on trust where both partners present their ideas and then see if we can do business."

So says Tobias Marian, Head of the Sales and Service Department at Berger Ecotrail.

Strategic co-operation

Together with Ahola's Purchasing Director Ole Nyblom, he has built up the companies' co-operation over a long stretch of time.

"Our co-operation has been great since day one," says Nyblom.

Over the years, Ahola Transport has bought

a couple hundred trailers from Berger. The most recent deal was completed this summer.

"We have, in addition, shared various strategic projects over the years, some of which are ongoing right now," says Transport Director Åke Nyblom from Ahola Transport.

Ahola Transport and Berger have, in fact, collaborated on trailer development. Ahola Transport's role has been to test the trailers, which Berger has then developed further.

"By using each other's best knowhow, we hope to continue our collaboration in the future," Nyblom says.

Profitable and eco-friendly

Ahola Transport's keen interest in Berger's products lies in how the trailers are both lighter and more fuel-efficient and have a high level of quality and traffic safety. Their functionality is excellent, in addition to a focus on the environment.

"Ever since our establishment in 1994, we have manufactured weight-optimised trailers. We have also developed them non-stop and we are the benchmark in our field. There is nothing like our product on the markets," says Tobias Marian.

For Berger, it is partly about meeting market demand, partly about a philosophy.

"We increase our efficiency while simultaneously taking the environment into account. Whatever you use our trailers for, you win," Marian says.

The trailers weighing from 4.2 tonnes can fit more freight than competitors' trailers and simultaneously save on fuel and fees on toll roads. In practice, this reduces the number of trips by up to seven per cent and profitability increases while the environmental

impact is minimised.

"We are the lightest on the market and at the same time determined to maintain our technological edge on the competition," says Marian.

According to him, the company's high quality standard spawns at least partly from the current owner Gerhard Berger's background as a Formula 1 driver.

Expansion and a new plant

In recent years, Berger has also experienced annual growth of around 20 per cent, and just now the market is on the brink of reaching higher demand for light and fuel-efficient trailers than ever before.

"Demand is huge right now. This and the fact that we have been manufacturing at full capacity for three years led to the decision to invest in a new plant," explains Marian.

The new plant in Radfeld in Austria was completed in the summer and will manufacture more than twice the number of trailers compared to the old plant.

"It is by far our largest investments ever," reveals Marian.

Berger's intention is to meet demand and shorten delivery times, which have been too long with the plant running constantly at full capacity. In addition, they wish to invest in the latest technology to guarantee customers an even better product and improve working conditions for employees.

"A workplace has to be pleasant. That is how we retain and attract expert personnel. Doing something for the environment isn't just a marketing trick, but an entire philosophy for us. We wish to be greener on all fronts," says Marian.

This is why the new plant also uses geo-

thermal energy and minimises its environmental impact.

Global co-operation

Berger's leading position on the markets is also highlighted by its collaboration with the tyre manufacturer Goodyear, steel company Tata Steel and component manufacturer SAF Holland, with the intention of ensuring that all the components used in Berger's trailers are as light as possible and simultaneously meet the highest safety and quality requirements.

"These are huge companies but all three selected us as their R&D partner to achieve new lighter and more eco-friendly products," says Marian.

"They always do a little bit more and, after a short while, the relationship starts to build up long-term."

Using Goodyear tyres and Tata Steel's steel, Berger has reduced its trailers' weight and improved their fuel-efficiency without compromising the trailers' applicability. The steel enables a thinner frame and guarantees even more stability. A new tyre development enables a maximum load on two axles instead of three, which helps avoid the higher tolls that apply to five-axle combinations in many European countries.

"It had a lot to do with the fact that we are prepared to try new things, but also with our flexibility," says Marian.

He believes that this is the result of something Berger shares with Ahola Transport.

"Firstly, we are family-owned, secondly, we have a very flat decision-making process. The owner is always available to discuss things and we employees have a lot of freedom to make decisions. And if you can make fast decisions, you are automatically flexible."

Benefits of a family business

Tobias Marian is certain that family-owned companies often think differently.

"Without a doubt. To begin with, we think in the medium and long term. This applies to the entire management. We simply don't focus on the low-hanging fruit," he explains. According to Marian, this has to do with the owners having an interest in both the company and their reputation. The relationship with both personnel and customers is valued more.

The impact that this way of thinking has had on the collaboration with Ahola Transport is, undoubtedly, a big deal. At the same time, Marian values the Nordic corporate culture in place at Ahola Transport.

"They don't just follow the rules and regulations laid out in agreements. They always do a little bit more and, after a short while, the relationship starts to build up long-term," he says.

According to Ole Nyblom, that is exactly what their co-operation with Berger has evolved into.

"We understand each other very well. We look forward to continuing our collaboration and are eager to see how the new plant in Austria will develop Berger's operations," he concludes. ■



The new factory of Berger Ecotrail will produce more than twice the amount of trailers compared to the old factory.

Positive first half year for Ahola Transport Group

With a turnover of approximately EUR 52.6 million and an operating profit of close to EUR 1.4 million, Ahola Transport is continuing its positive development.

After a difficult start to the previous year, the rest of 2017 featured a considerable upswing. The positive development continued over the first six months of this year. Compared to H1 of last year, the turnover rose by as much as 6.3 per cent. Operating profit also improved significantly from EUR 0.39 million to EUR 1.37 million. The improved profitability stems from all of the Group's sectors.

"Our work to improve efficiency and cus-

tomers service has begun to bear fruit and supports the positive development in the first half of the year," says CEO Hans Ahola.

The market also continues to be stable and the positive trend is expected to continue during the rest of the year.

Strengthened by acquisition

Ahola Transport has also been strengthened by an acquisition and co-operation

GROUP'S H1 2018

Turnover: EUR 52.6 million (49.6)
Operating profit: EUR 1.4 million (0.4)
Earnings: EUR 0.9 million (0.1)
Earnings per share: EUR 0.060
Equity per share: EUR 0.56

agreements, securing its long-term competitiveness in accordance with the company's vision. The Group has acquired all of the shares in Adminotech Oy and the majority of the share in AT Install and made co-operation agreements on platooning with Scania.

On an annual level, the turnover is expected to go up from last year's EUR 98.4 million. Operating profit is also expected to increase, even considerably from the operating profit for 2017, EUR 1.7 million. ■

New Board members

Ahola Transport's Annual General Meeting in the spring elected two new persons to the company's Board of Directors. The new members are Jukka Karhula and

Mikael Österholm. Its other members are Lars Ahola, Ida Saavalainen and Martti Vähäkangas (chairman). ■



Jukka Karhula



Mikael Österholm

New member in Group management team



HR Manager Birgitta Hatt was elected as a member of Ahola Transport's management team as of 15 August 2018. Birgitta Hatt has worked at Ahola Transport since 2008. She was previously Quality Manager for six years and is now HR Manager for the Group. ■

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Ahola ups its presence at trade fairs

Starting in the autumn, Ahola Transport will be increasing its efforts to reach existing and new customers and partners. Three trade fairs are lined up for this autumn.

"This is one phase in our communications initiative. We are working to increase Ahola Transport's visibility and explain to our customers and partners who and what we are."

So says Key Account Manager Tommy Björkskog and points out Ahola Transport's new focus on long-term work.

"Naturally, we want to be where our customers and partners are and highlight our brand and what it stands for."

Ahola Transport's initiative begins with the Logistiikka logistics fair in Tampere, Fin-

land in early September. Ahola Transport will be featured at an indoor stand and outdoors with its new mobile Training Center.

"The setup enables us to focus on training and traffic safety within the industry," says Björkskog.

These issues are a key component of Ahola Transport's external communications and the new mobile Training Center can be used to make customers, drivers, partners and the general public aware of them.

The next fair, in late September, will be

the Alihankinta subcontractor fair, which is popular with many of Ahola Transport's existing and potential customers, and also takes place in Tampere. After that is the corresponding Elmia Subcontractor fair in Jönköping, Sweden.

Ahola Transport's input will differ depending on the fair, but Björkskog says that Ahola's focus on digitalisation, traffic safety and customer focus will be highlighted at each one. ■

New marketing initiatives



Johan Aspegren coordinates Ahola Transport's improved communications initiative and social media marketing. Marketing Coordinator Juuso Savolainen is part of the marketing team.

Thanks to its experience and a highly developed data system, Ahola Transport has plenty of tools for optimising its cargo. The focus is now on more precise communication and marketing.

2018 has involved a new marketing approach for Ahola Transport. It is now more digital and a marketing team is working continuously to achieve more far-reaching and unified external communications.

"The idea is for communications to support our operations both in the short and long term. We stay up to date on the market situation and create our communications based on it," says Johan Aspegren, Sales Analyst and coordinator of the marketing team.

The focus is on three target groups: existing and potential customers, the company's network and society – all three are important to Ahola Transport.

Better info for customers

Information is now better targeted at existing and new customers and its market penetration is much better than before.

"We have been in the same sector so long that we know the market," says Aspegren.

Ahola Transport's experience in the sector and markets are complimented by its highly developed monitoring of goods flows and transport routes.

"Thanks to all the data we collect, we

know where to target our advertising and sales," says Aspegren, but points out that Ahola Transport cannot fully depend on earlier trends.

"We have an excellent system for discovering trends in goods flows but we also have to be able to react to sudden changes. If capacity shows up in a specific area over a specific period, we target our marketing there."

Significant increase

In addition to information and marketing that can be targeted more precisely at the right region or target group, Ahola Transport has chosen a new approach to marketing.

"We have an excellent system for discovering trends in goods flows but we also have to be able to react to sudden changes."

"Our message is serious but our approach to communications is often laced with humour. We focus on fewer words and attrac-

tive images. It seems to be the right approach for the industry based on the good feedback," says Aspegren.

During 2018, Ahola Transport has created ad campaigns, including one on how "Finland loves Swedish products", to sell its services to Swedish companies exporting to Finland. A summer campaign advertised how "Ahola drives all summer", as the company does not take a summer break.

"Communications follow a specific approach. We create a model that applies to all communications," says Aspegren.

In addition to the regular digital channels Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, Ahola Transport has also invested in Google ads.

"It has significantly boosted the traffic on our website and searches for Ahola Transport have increased even more," says Aspegren.

Ahola Transport also monitors market penetration to further improve its communications. Currently the company is improving its marketing on social media.

"We are working on that area, testing different tools with the intention of becoming even better. It's fun working on new things," says Aspegren. ■

Attracs takes logistics into the future

Increased efficiency, speed, more precise communications and even more connected and automated resource management is the future of the transport industry. This is where Ahola Transport's subsidiary Attracs wishes to remain at the forefront.

Optimising the flow of traffic and using logistic capacity as well as possible through digital solutions and analyses will increase in importance. This development is where Attracs, with its lengthy expertise, wants to maintain its leading position in the industry.



"If you think about the transport industry as a whole, it is far behind today's world of digitalisation and automation. There is no doubt a lot of work to be done and that is our vision," says Patrik Friis, Product Manager at Ahola Transport's IT company Attracs.

With more than 20 years of developing ERP systems for more effective and profitable logistics under its belt, Attracs knows a thing or two. Attracs can offer small and large logistics companies IT solutions that benefit both the companies and their customers, as well as society at large.

"In future, no-one will be able to afford driving empty trucks. Being able to communicate where we have free capacity and loads will become a critical issue," says Friis.

Own software paved the way

Although Attracs is now a company that offers external services, it started out as Ahola Transport's internal IT department.

"It all began in the 1990s when Ahola Transport was looking for logistics management software on the markets, but nothing suitable was available. They decided to develop their own instead," says Friis. The first version of the

Attracs Online software became available in 2003 and has been developed further ever since.

"In 2009, Attracs became its own company and soon after we began selling our expertise and services externally," says Friis.

Attracs Online proved to be a success both at Ahola Transport and according to experts, winning Finland's biggest innovation award, for instance. It gave Ahola Transport's transport chain total transparency and revealed the profitability and efficiency of different transport options.

"It was all based on the dynamic logistics that Ahola founded its operations on," says Friis.

New solutions for new customers

No other software could provide the same data for transport planning, drivers, salespersons and employees at the load optimisation centres so exhaustively in real time.

"The system can easily be adopted by other companies, which is why we sell some of our expertise externally," says Friis.

Ahola Transport remains Attracs' largest customer but a growing number of companies in Sweden and Finland have become customers in recent years. Attracs works together with Adminotech, newly acquired by Ahola Transport at the end of 2017, and together they employ 40 people in Kokkola, Oulu and Helsinki in Finland, and in Macedonia and Serbia.

"Our external customers are naturally important. They provide us with new ideas and we solve their problems," says Friis.

For example, Attracs has automated the logistics of a Swedish customer so that a single person can look after the company's entire Swedish distribution.

"In recent years we have focussed on mobile applications, web services and AI. The next step is making Attracs Online more app based," says Friis.

This is where the newly acquired Adminotech comes in.

"Nobody can afford to drive empty trucks. Efficiency will become more important than ever."

"Adminotech's strengths include maps, 3D, AI and apps. And we've worked together before so we know each other well," says Friis.

Simpler and more secure

Attracs aims to be a pioneer. The company is currently working on digitalising work processes that are traditionally time-consuming and inexact.

"An example could be an app that drivers can use for checking information, handling resources and signing off on cargo. Electronic waybills are one example. Elsewhere in Europe, paper and stamps are still in use but at least in the Nordics electronic versions are set to become popular," says Friis.

Bookings are another example.

"A majority of the work is still done manually. It's time-consuming and there's always a risk of inexact data, but when the systems communicate, we can avoid those errors," says Friis.

AT-Live is a third example. It was launched by Attracs for Ahola Transport's customers in 2017. The software has a notification function that allows the customer to track their goods throughout the transport, instead of receiving only messages upon dispatch and arrival.

Industry collaboration is key

Patrik Friis has a positive view of the future.

"Of course we wish to grow and continue to pioneer the digitalisation of the transport industry."

Friis believes that data in particular will be a resource to be reckoned with.

"Thanks to Attracs, Ahola Transport has a lot of data and can also process and utilise it."

He, though, wonders how smaller companies that today lack the money, time or capability to invest in digitalisation will survive.

"This gives us the opportunity to help many with our accessible services and apps."

Friis believes that in the near future the state will set requirements for transport companies to collaborate more to reduce traffic and emissions and increase efficiency.

"Nobody can afford to drive empty trucks. Efficiency will become more important than ever." ■

Special Transport grows

Ahola Transport's subsidiary has expanded further through both the project management and installation company AT Install and new subcontractors in 2018.



Kuljetusliike Ismo Partanen is one of AT-Special Transport's new subcontractors. Skilled drivers and new vehicles have guaranteed a successful partnership.

Early on in the year, AT Special Transport took on several new subcontractors who acquired new vehicles to start driving long, heavy and oversize loads. Managing Director Jonas Ahola is pleased.

"Our subcontractors are very important to us. Thanks to them we can guarantee modern equipment to suit any job."

One of the new subcontractors is Kuljetusliike Ismo Partanen from Mustio in southern Finland.

"We got in touch and after a couple negotiations we shook hands."

"Our collaboration started when we noticed an ad that said Ahola Transport was looking for new partners. We got in touch and after a couple negotiations we shook hands," says Ismo Partanen.

Natural choice

Partanen established his company in 2008 and now has more than 30 vehicles of different sizes. Two brand new vehicles in his fleet drive for AT Special Transport. Starting to drive for Ahola and AT Special Transport was a natural next step.

"Ahola Transport is a large and well-known company. It was a no-brainer to start working together," says Partanen.

So far, the collaboration has been successful helped by the fact that Partanen found

the perfect drivers.

"We were lucky to get skilled drivers to take care of AT Special Transport's deliveries," says Partanen.

Acquisition to boost installation business

In addition to the new subcontractors, AT Special Transport has grown through an acquisition. Its purchase of the majority of AT Install's shares was finalised in the summer.

Ahola Transport is behind the acquisition but the company will specifically strengthen AT Special Transport's special project management and installation business.

"The deal means that we are able to offer our customers turnkey solutions, including transport, lifting, installation and project planning," says Jonas Ahola.

AT Install's previous owner will remain with the company as a minority shareholder in order to develop AT Special Transport's and AT Install's merged operations. ■



AT Special Transport has grown thanks to the acquisition of AT Install and new subcontractors in 2018.



Product Manager Patrik Friis believes that data in particular will be a resource to be reckoned with.

Room to grow in Tallinn

Ahola Transport's Estonian optimisation centre is the company's smallest hub, but, regardless, the personnel in Tallinn are responsible for all the transports in the Baltics and the rest of Eastern Europe.

Just a few kilometres from the historic Old Town in Tallinn lies Ahola Transport's Estonian optimisation centre. Just as in Naantali in Finland and Nykvarn in Sweden, the operations are all about optimising the cargo that passes through the hub, either southward through the Baltic countries or northward to Finland.

"We use the same system and procedures as the other optimisation centres. We are really not that different," says Karol Olde who heads the Tallinn centre.

Just as in Naantali and Nykvarn, ferry traffic plays a huge role.

"Our busiest time is in the mornings and of course in the evenings. On average, we load around 25 trucks each day. A few more on Fridays," says Olde.

Railway increases opportunities

The central location of the Tallinn centre means that there is a lot more traffic passing the area. Olde still appreciates the location because it offers excellent connections both

southward and to the east, as well as to Tallinn's port.

"Our location is great, but in the long run we will probably move further away from the city. When the new ring road is completed, the municipality will most likely want to move the heavy traffic further out from the city centre," he explains.

Olde expects the traffic to be directed towards Tallinn's modern commercial port Muuga, but this is by no means a bad thing for Ahola Transport. To the contrary, Olde is convinced that this will enable Ahola Transport to achieve the vision he has for the Baltic operations.

"Traffic between the Baltics and continental Europe is likely to continue growing, particularly rail traffic. If the heavy road traffic is steered towards Muuga, it can simultaneously be linked to rail transport to the port," he says.

In Olde's view, Ahola Transport has a role to play in all this. If the volume of cargo moving into and out of the rest of Europe increases, Ahola Transport can take on the forwarding of the cargo to and from the Nordics.

Potential for growth

Right now, the optimisation centre in Tallinn is fully occupied with the cargo that Ahola Transport already takes in.

"Although we're the smallest load optimisation centre at Ahola Transport, we are capable of serving the entire Baltic region. The volume of cargo has risen from one year to the next. I think it's fair to say that we are currently operating close to breaking point," says Erkki Odrest, Key Account Manager for Ahola Transport's Estonian operations.

Karol Olde points out that also the physical space of the optimising centre, which was started up in 2006, is starting to reach full capacity.

"It can get pretty crowded in the yard, particularly on Fridays."

Olde believes, however, that Ahola Transport has potential for growth in the Baltic countries. Both sales and the unit could be expanded.

"Although we're the smallest load optimisation centre at Ahola Transport, we are capable of serving the entire Baltic region."

"We have room to grow on the market and all the required potential. We have everything, but as our Business Unit Manager Thomas Ahola said when I was hired: Change begins with small things. If we can manage to do things correctly and more effectively, we will succeed."

Worrisome shortage of drivers

One of the challenges affecting the entire sector right now is a shortage of skilled drivers.

"Not many young people want to become truck drivers these days. It's a demanding job," says Olde.

That is why Olde hopes that the sector will become more attractive and that semi-autonomous platooning could help out the transport industry in the future. That is something that Ahola Transport is excited about investing in.

"I'm excited to see what the future holds," says Olde.

Young and eager

Another challenge is related to sales in the tough competition on the Baltic markets.

"In this situation, it becomes even more important to have good personal relationships between partners. My motto is that you should build up a partnership, not a relationship between a customer and a supplier," says Erkki Odrest.

Despite the many challenges, the personnel work enthusiastically at the load optimisation centre. Karol Olde points out that the personnel at the centre, including himself, are the newest employees at Ahola Transport.

"I began working here in September 2017 and, as the old shift managers transferred over to transport planning, many of us here are new," he says.

Having so many new employees sometimes means some extra work but, at the same time, the mood and enthusiasm are sky-high.

Every day is different, and, in any case, I enjoy both planning and managing the work," says Martin Rank, who has worked as a shift manager at the Tallinn centre since spring.

Flexible and diverse

Rank is in charge of either the morning shift that starts at eight or the evening shift beginning at three. During both shifts, he communicates with two forklift drivers and the drivers that arrive for load optimisation.

There are two shifts from Monday to Friday



In the 2,400-square-metre facility in Tallinn, vehicles are reloaded on their way north to Finland and south through the Baltic countries to optimise their capacity utilisation rate. Karol Olde sees huge potential in the operations.

and on the weekend the centre is operational five to six hours a day.

"We are pretty flexible here. My problem is that I like working a little too much. I usually come in on the weekend and holidays as well," says Olde with a laugh.

In addition to load optimisation, five people at the centre work in administration and handle the fleet of vehicles. Nele Taimsaar works as Carrier Administration Coordinator.

"I work with transports to and from the Nordics. Each day I receive driving reports and review costs and the number of kilometres driven."

Taimsaar has worked at Ahola Transport for just under two years and really enjoys

it. The same seems to apply to many of the new people.

"My background is in the military and then I worked at the trailer manufacturer Krone. There, almost every day, I saw from my office window one of Ahola Transport's trucks rolling by. Pretty soon I became curious and started googling the company," says Karol Olde.

After a while, Olde felt that he was ready to take the next step in his career and ended up as head of Ahola Transport's optimisation centre.

"I'm so happy that I started working here," he declares. ■

Transport planning reinforces Tallinn

Precise planning and faster adaptation to changes are the key reasons that transport planning for the Baltics has transferred from the head office in Kokkola to Tallinn.

"There's nothing better than for two operative units to meet face to face to discuss how to improve and become more efficient."

So says Erkki Odrest, Key Account Manager for Ahola Transport's Estonian operations. Odrest is extremely pleased with the transfer of transport planning to Tallinn. It serves to link sales and transport planning but also offers the planners a chance to work close to the optimisation centre in Tallinn.

Moving the planning operations closer to the field also allows us to involve operative personnel in our customers' daily work. In order to have good co-operation, we need to, in addition to providing good service and communication, develop our services for customers," says Odrest.

Everyone at the optimisation centre in Tallinn is extremely pleased with the transfer of transport planning to Tallinn.

"This will improve communication, which

is always a challenge in a large company such as Ahola Transport. The planners can now stop by to observe the operations in practice," says Karol Olde, head of the centre's operations.

Better communication and efficiency

Transport planning for the Baltic countries is now located at the address Peterburi tee in central Tallinn, a few kilometres from the load optimisation centre. The sales team for the Baltics was already located there.

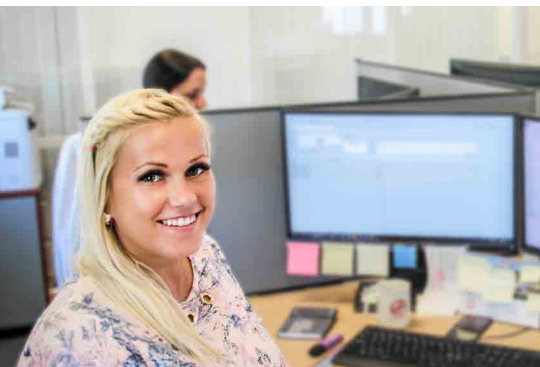
"The key word in our work is 'communication' and it needs to be as fast as possible between the customer and supplier. Proactiveness, quick reaction times and fast adaptation are hugely beneficial in this tough competitive situation," says Erkki Odrest.

Thomas Ahola, Unit Manager for the Baltic countries, is also certain that the transfer of

planning will offer many benefits.

"We will achieve numerous synergies with everyone in the Baltic countries working in one location. In addition, we wish to strengthen our local brand and service in Estonia and the Baltics – both towards our customers and suppliers. These factors, in our view, will result in higher efficiency, improved profitability and better opportunities to expand Ahola Transport's operations in the Baltic countries." ■

Key Account Manager Erkki Odrest sees a lot of benefits in the Baltic transport planning moving closer to the field.



Nele Taimsaar enjoys her varied transportation administration work at the Tallinn hub.

Warm atmosphere and technological edge

Over the past year, Ahola Transport has recruited several new people. The new employees appreciate the welcoming atmosphere and the strong investments in digitalisation and the environment.

"My first observation was the camaraderie between colleagues. Even if a job was stressful and involved problem-solving, people were laughing and open. It felt easy to join in," says Erik Abbor who joined Ahola Transport as a transport planner just before summer 2017.

Working at Ahola Transport gives a feeling of belonging but also offers challenges.

"The best and most interesting thing about my job is daily problem-solving and customer contacts. So much can happen on the road, so no two days are alike. It's satisfying to fix something that at first seemed impossible," says Abbor.

He additionally enjoys communicating with customers. Open dialogue often leads to the best solutions.

Digitalisation benefits everyone

Another new Ahola Transport employee is Riikka Sara-Aho. She works in accounting and finances and, just like Abbor, has felt welcome since she started at the head office in November 2017.

"My first impression was good. My colleagues were supportive and they helped me settle into my new job."

Both Sara-Aho and Abbor agree that Ahola Transport stands out as an employer. They agree that the high degree of digitalisation doesn't just give the company a competitive edge, but also motivates the personnel.

"My desk is entirely free of paper. All the data I need is in digital format," says Sara-Aho.

In transport planning, digitalisation offers an overview of both the planning and the concrete operations at the units and above all on the Nordic and Baltic roads.

"It is absolutely key. It can feel abstract to work blindly in a conventional ERP system, but with our technology and devices, you can achieve an extremely concrete picture

of what actually happens when we click a button," says Abbor.

Helpful team and routines

As a fairly new employee, Erik Abbor has identified other positive aspects at the company. Ahola Transport's focus on teamwork is one such strength.

"I think it needs to be acknowledged. It's a modern way of working and I feel that we trust one another. The results are undoubtedly positive and it's motivating to be able to monitor the process through direct feedback but also on the screens on the walls." When responsibilities and routines are well planned, the end result is good.

"Ahola Transport has smooth routines. They are easy to get into and work with," says Riikka Sara-Aho.

According to Sara-Aho, the routines facilitate daily work but she also appreciates the work methods on a personal level.

"Ahola Transport is a large and reliable employer. I felt I was taking a step upward

in my career when I came here. I used to work in finances in small and medium-sized companies. At Ahola, I can focus on managing larger aspects in the long term."

All set for the future

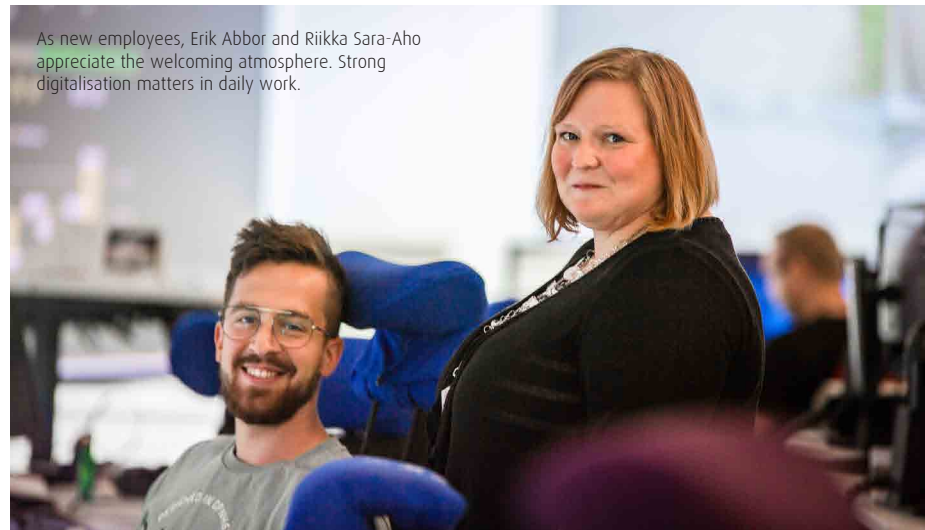
Abbor and Sara-Aho both believe that Ahola Transport has multiple strengths to lean on as it continues to grow and develop.

"Ahola Transport is extremely proactive in both technology and development, a factor that, I believe, will pique companies' interest and encourage them to choose Ahola. And the company's environmental mindset will increase in importance, which will give us an advantage," says Abbor.

By focussing on these aspects, Abbor and Sara-Aho believe that Ahola Transport can stay ahead of other companies and increase its attractiveness on the markets.

"Ahola Transport is a leading company in the transport industry both in terms of the environment and digital steering of transports," says Sara-Aho.

As new employees, Erik Abbor and Riikka Sara-Aho appreciate the welcoming atmosphere. Strong digitalisation matters in daily work.



Cargo Center in both Naantali and Nykvarn

Ahola Transport is expanding its services at its load optimisation centres in both Finland and Sweden. The new concept called Cargo Center combines direct unloading, warehousing and forklift services.

The new concept called Cargo Center provides customers with accessible and flexible load optimisation and warehousing services.

A new warehouse was built at the load optimisation centre in Naantali last winter partly for the new services. Nykvarn already had the capacity for both its own operations and the new services.

"The hub, dubbed Ahola Cargo Center, offers more warehousing, forklift and x-docking services to new and old customers alike," says Nykvarn's Site Manager, Juha Kuronen.

Both units have large warehousing areas both indoors and out. Each of the two load optimisation centres offer 7,000 square metres of outdoor storage space. Naantali also has 1,200 square metres under a canopy and 2,000 square metres indoors. Nykvarn has 1,000 square metres under a canopy and 1,000 square metres indoors.

Close to key routes

The centres are fenced off, have flexible opening hours and roughly ten loaders and forklifts with a lifting capacity of up to 16 tonnes. They also offer cross-docking and warehousing services to suit many needs.

The Naantali centre is located within 30 minutes of Turku and the Nykvarn centre less than an hour's drive from Stockholm. Both units are located in expanding areas with many businesses and near major roads.

"For our customers this means a one stop shop for everything, including warehousing, load optimisation and transport, with both the Stockholm metropolitan area and Euro-

pean routes E20 and E4 nearby," says Juha Kuronen.

The same applies to Naantali. It is located near Turku, close to ferry connections to Sweden and European routes E8 and E18.

Juha Kuronen sees major potential in the new services, both for customers and personnel.

"The goal is to grow the business at Nykvarn and to eventually hire more forklift drivers. It would make holidays and other things easier."

Ahola Transport's two Cargo Centers will thus improve the company's efficiency and customer service. ■



Site Manager Juha Kuronen believes that customers will benefit from the new warehousing and loading concept.



Mini portrait



Name: Tiina Ahola

Family: Married to Hans Ahola, six adult children and 11 grandchildren

Place of work and position: Ahola Transport, Kokkola as HR Systems Development and Data Administration Manager

What is your favourite pastime? Sports and my family.

Your favourite food and drink? Lasagne and water.

What makes you happy? Good company.

What makes you angry? When people don't honour agreements.

Your dream holiday: A perfect combination of hobbies and relaxation.

What was your first job? I was a guide at the Gamlakarleby church in the summer of 1976.

Any special memories from your working life?

As a recently graduated nurse I became the first office worker in the company and I was forced to create and learn the best methods for myself. For example, when we started up transports to northern Norway, I went to customs and asked about all the required custom documentation. Then, I painstakingly calculated the value of the goods at the border. Later it turns out I didn't need to be so careful.

What is going on right now in your job? The new intranet and records management.

How do you envision Ahola Transport in 5 to 10 years? Just like the company's vision.

Long partnership forges strong ties

In 1973, Ahola Transport delivered its first export cargo to a little plant in Söråker in central Sweden. Forty-five years later, the Swedish wire manufacturer Pacwire is still a loyal customer.

Pacwire is located in Timrå, Sweden, north of Sundsvall. The company was established in 1923 but since then has moved, changed owners and chosen to focus on manufacturing galvanised baling wire for the pulp, textile and recycling industries.

"In the beginning, we manufactured nails and wire at this plant but after our new owner took charge in 1986, we have focussed on wire," says the company's President Svante Fielding.

Today, Pacwire manufactures roughly 12,000 tonnes of wire annually and has an extensive industrial clientele.

"We are unique to our customers because we are the only Nordic wire supplier and have a large inventory. That means we can deliver within 48 hours to basically anywhere in the Nordics," explains Fielding.

From Timrå to Uruguay

With 28 employees and a turnover of some 100 million krona (EUR 10 million), Pacwire is not a large plant. Regardless, the small company dominates the Nordic markets and is a global leader with customers as far away as Uruguay, New Zealand and Canada.

Globally speaking, customers are drawn to Pacwire's quality and flexibility. The same applies to the Nordic markets where they are close to many important customers, especially in the paper industry.

"Our closest customer is just across the bay," says Fielding pointing to the large Timrå pulp mill.

Punctual and professional

It is on the Nordic and Baltic markets where the co-operation with Ahola Transport comes in. Ahola is a well-known name at Pacwire, both in the office and on the shop floor. Roughly half of all the transports leaving the plant do so on Ahola Transport's trucks.

"Two to three full loads leave here each week," explains Anette Edström who handles transport contacts at Pacwire.

According to Pacwire, it is Ahola Transport's punctuality that mostly stands out and is the reason why Ahola transports such a large share of the cargo.

"Loading and unloading reliability are also excellent. Ahola's punctuality is usually spot on and communication works perfectly,"



Pacwire's President Svante Fielding sees a bright future for the company and wants to continue its co-operation with Ahola Transport.

says Edström.

This is partly why Pacwire uses Ahola Transport to make deliveries that need to make it to a Nordic destination in under 48 hours.

"Our co-operation is great. You always know who to contact and they are easy to reach," says Edström.

The good co-operation goes both ways. Business Unit Manager Markus Käld at Ahola Transport is also happy.

"Ahola's punctuality is usually spot on and communication works perfectly."

"We've known each other a long time and even though people have come and gone, we have maintained good communications."

Pacwire's wire is thus able to roll out safely and on time in Ahola Transport's trucks to customers in Finland, Norway, the Baltic countries and Sweden. In addition, Ahola Transport handles the initial Nordic portion for long-distance cargo destined for Russia, for example.

Family ownership allows snap decisions

In addition to good co-operation, the companies have something else in common.

Pacwire is partly owned and run like a family company, just like Ahola Transport. Behind Pacwire is the family-owned Berg Group.

"The owner is just a phone call away. They participate in operations and are very involved in the company. It is definitely an advantage," says Svante Fielding.

The small size of Pacwire and Berg Group makes a big difference.

"I've worked in major companies like Rolls Royce and Caterpillar. Large companies have benefits in terms of structure and resources that small companies lack, but small companies make up for it with strong flexibility and fast, straightforward decision-making," says Fielding.

Small is flexible

Ahola Transport also appreciates small companies. They are flexible and communication is easy.

"Pacwire has an uncomplicated and well-functioning setup. They often provide us with full loads and their position in central Sweden is ideal for us," says Markus Käld.

Svante Fielding agrees: Pacwire's location in a small town is no problem.

"I think our operations work well in a small place. Less traffic, but close to the harbour, railway and the E4. We have our own dock where we receive wire from suppliers in Europe. A ship can bring us enough wire for a whole month's production."

Pacwire used to import its wire from Finland and the Dalsbruk rolling mill, but when it went under they were forced to turn to Continental Europe.

Fifty more years

The similarities between Pacwire and Ahola Transport don't end with the ownership structure. Just like Ahola Transport, Pacwire has opted for a strong focus on customers. The final product, complete with delivery and packing, is always the result of close, flexible co-operation.

"That is something many customers value. We can easily adjust our production to other dimensions and other packing methods. A small thing can mean a lot to the customer," says Fielding.

The long history shared by Ahola Transport and Pacwire is another reason for the good partnership. The fact that the first contact between Pacwire and Ahola Transport took place in 1973 when the current CEO Hans Ahola drove Ahola Transport's first-ever export load to Pacwire is undoubtedly significant.



In 2015, Pacwire received an award from Ahola Transport as one of its oldest customers. Anette Edström, who is a contact person for Ahola, is very happy with the partnership.

Ahola appreciates the long-standing relationship with Pacwire so much that Pacwire got an award in 2015, which now hangs on the wall of Pacwire's meeting room.

"It's always great to feel appreciated as a customer," says Edström.

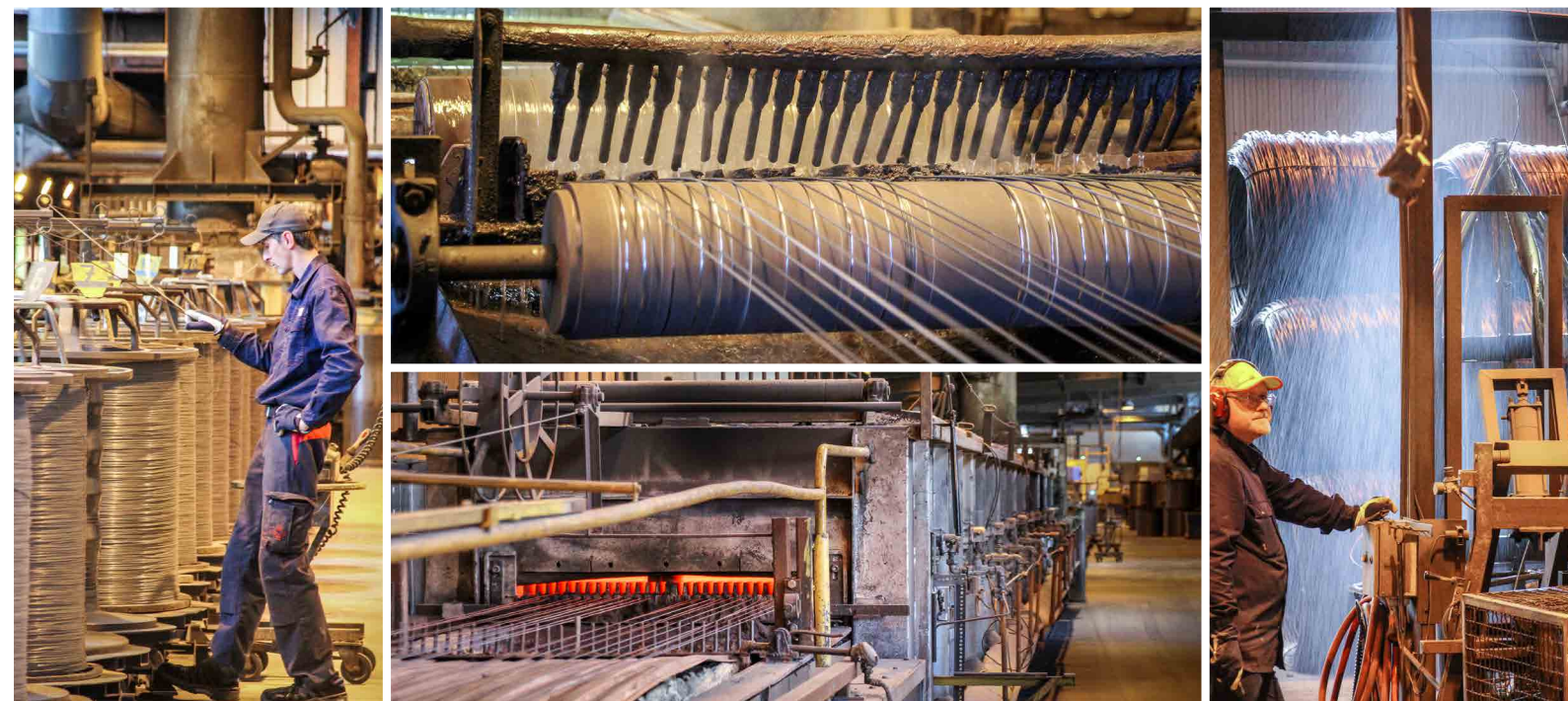
Although Pacwire is now a customer and not a consignee, the relationship between the companies has lasted almost 50 years. Both look forward to 50 more. Currently,

Pacwire is working on increasing its production and efficiency. There is demand and when transports increase in the future, they hope that Ahola Transport will come and deliver that cargo as well.

"The sector is doing well and there is no reason that Ahola Transport shouldn't get a larger share of our deliveries in the future," says Svante Fielding and Anette Edström agrees. ■

Smart methods create unique quality

Two of Pacwire's trump cards in global competition are high quality and delivery performance. These are achieved through a smart production process.



"Essentially, we do the same thing as everyone, but just a little smarter," says Svante Fielding, Pacwire's President about the company's galvanised baling wire manufacturing process.

The wire rod that comes in first passes through brushing to remove the oxide layer that has accumulated during manufacture. Then it is drawn to the desired diameter.

The wire then passes through a long furnace, where the wire achieves the required structure at a temperature of 800 degrees.

"We work in three shifts at the furnace. It's never turned off unless there is a really good reason for it. It takes four to five days to start up again," says Fielding.

The new oxide layer that has formed is then removed and finally the wire is galvan-

ised with zinc.

"Then every single wire is tested. They need to meet strict requirements," says Fielding.

The wire is packed to wait for delivery by Ahola Transport throughout the Nordics, to be used, for example, for baling in the all-important paper industry. ■

"Never alone at Ahola"

Ricky Strömbäck, didn't need to think twice about becoming a subcontractor for Ahola Transport. He gets to experience the freedom of self-employment but is never alone. Help is always near at hand; he can contact the company or his colleagues on the road.



Ricky Strömbäck started out driving for someone else but now has his own company with three trucks and three permanent drivers who also drive for Ahola Transport.

Although still under thirty, Strömbäck has experience galore, both behind the wheel and as an entrepreneur in the transport industry.

"I've always been interested in driving and seeing the world. That was probably how it started."

Strömbäck established his own company back in 2010 and in 2013 he became a subcontractor for Ahola Transport.

"We can talk about anything and we try to constantly improve operations together."

"First, I was a driver at another company that drove for Ahola Transport but I'd thought about striking out on my own for some time."

Since his impression of Ahola Transport was positive, he consulted Fleet Trading Director Nils Ahola about buying his first

truck.

"Everything turned out great. All I need to do now is develop and expand my business."

Help from day one

Growing up, Strömbäck thought he would join his family's construction company but eventually chose to go his own way. He has no regrets and enjoys being an entrepreneur, driver and subcontractor.

"Co-operating with Ahola Transport has been great. We can talk about anything and we try to constantly improve operations together."

From day one, Ahola Transport made things easy for him.

"When I started up, I had barely any capital, so I leased a truck to begin with."

When Strömbäck began to buy his own trucks not long after, Ahola Transport helped him finance them. Strömbäck's company now owns three trucks, and since start-

ing with Ahola Transport in 2013, he has bought a new truck or a replacement for one approximately once a year.

"The most recent one arrived in May," Strömbäck says with pride.

Driving is life

Although the company now has three permanent drivers, Ricky Strömbäck still drives as much as he can.

"Getting behind the wheel is the best thing I know and if I'm on the road but not driving, I take care of the company's accounts and paperwork." Almost everything can be taken care of electronically these days.

As an entrepreneur, Strömbäck has very little free time, but he doesn't complain.

"I still have more freedom because I run the company. I get to work on myself."

His three trucks drive for Swedish chain stores and industry between Sweden and Finland. Previously his fleet even made longer trips, such as up to northern Norway.

"It's one of my favourite routes. Driving on the narrow, challenging roads, especially in winter, is always exciting. Getting to drive is important to me."

Growing with Ahola Transport

While driving is important, Ricky Strömbäck is focussing intently on developing his business, which is registered in Turku.

"Buying more trucks is clearly my vision. I might also like to get into special transports. They've always been interesting to me."

He is also certain that he will remain loyal to Ahola, as he has been since he started out in western Finland. Ahola Transport is the reason that he and the company moved to Turku: to be near international traffic. He intends to stay in Turku and with Ahola.

"We sometimes meet on the road and sit and barbeque, we band together and talk on the ferries and we call each other whenever we need help. We are more friends than colleagues here."

"It is the only way I can think of to develop my company. It is the perfect solution for me."

The only bump in the road is finding skilled drivers, a common challenge.

"I think the problem is that people want to work less but for the same pay as before, and driving a truck is not an easy job."

It is especially difficult to find willing and skilled drivers for international deliveries.

"It's of course understandable that people with families don't want to stay away for long periods. Then again, they can take time off for two weeks straight. That's something I enjoy."

Sense of community on the road

In addition to running his own company, Ricky Strömbäck talks to young people about joining the industry. If a challenging job, close ties with colleagues and work that allows you to travel to different places sounds interesting, becoming a driver, especially with Ahola Transport, can seem very attractive.

"You get to see new things and, especially at Ahola Transport, the drivers are all very close. We sometimes meet on the road and sit and barbeque, we band together and talk on the ferries and we call each other whenever we need help. We are more friends than colleagues here."

With Finnish drivers becoming less common in cross-Nordic traffic, Ahola Transport's Finnish and Swedish speaking drivers stick together.

"You never need to feel alone," says Strömbäck. ■

Ahola Transport ready for longer vehicles

The Finnish Ministry of Transport and Communications has proposed a longer maximum length for heavy-duty trucks, to open up new opportunities in the sector. Ahola Transport has been monitoring this development and welcomes the amendment.

Ahola Transport sees opportunities to provide more efficient transports for customers and more sustainable transports for society. Longer combined vehicles move larger volumes of goods with less mileage.

"We have been monitoring the developments and discussion for a while now and we are very interested in the new regulatory framework," says Transport Director Åke Nyblom.

In recent years, the Ministry of Transport and Communications has issued special permits for the testing of longer vehicle combinations on Finnish roads. The goal is to raise the limit in the future so that transport companies would be able to drive with extra long vehicle combinations without a separate permit. Ahola Transport has chosen not to apply for a special permit for several reasons.

"We are looking further into the future and we haven't really benefitted much from longer trucks as we have so many cross-border transports," says Nyblom.

In Sweden, the maximum length is still 25.25 metres and in Estonia 18.75 metres, while in Finland the new proposed length would be 34.50 metres. According to Nyblom, despite the differences, the increase in Finland could benefit Ahola Transport.

"It is something we encourage in terms of efficiency and the environment," says Nyblom.

The Finnish Ministry of Transport and Communications is also planning to increase the maximum weight of vehicle combinations. The intention is to be able to approve heavy-

er loads along select routes already in 2019.

"This project will benefit transport companies and the entire society widely," says the Minister of Transport and Communications Anne Berner in a press release.

Ahola Transport has been lobbying for the increasing of weight and length limits since the early 2000s and is looking forward to the approval of the new weight limit. ■



Transport Director Åke Nyblom sees a number of benefits in increasing both the maximum length and weight of road transports.



Ahola Transport already uses the longest possible vehicle combination in most of its transports in the Nordics, where limits are higher than in the Baltics, for example.

New delivery guarantee benefits the customer

In the summer, Ahola Transport introduced a new transport concept and new delivery guarantees. This is good news for the customer.

Ahola Transport's latest transport concept provides security for customers and simultaneously solves a problem that often interferes with traffic between Sweden and Finland.

"The idea came about from the need to solve challenges involving ferry traffic between Finland and Sweden. Regardless of the ferry situation, we now offer alternative routes," says Peter Sund, Key Account Manager for Ahola Transport's Swedish operations.

The new concept is called Non-vessel and is tailored to situations in which for instance the weather, an accident or undercapacity on the ferries disrupts the normal flow of goods across the Baltic Sea.

Prepared for disruptions

Situations such as this used to require coming up with emergency solutions at short notice. Ahola Transport now offers a time guarantee and a ready alternative plan for transports if the ferries are not running or the cargo does not fit on board.

"We offer safe, high-quality transports regardless of the route and guarantee that the goods will reach their destination within a set time whether the ferries are running or not," says Sund.

If the Vasa-Umeå ferry is suitable for transports, Ahola Transport has a ready alternative for that route, otherwise the goods will be taken all the way by truck, via Haparanda.

"The Non-vessel service obviously costs more but is designed more for goods that have critical timetables. We can be prepared with a ready concept for the situation and quickly offer an alternative to the customer," says Sund.

Peace of mind with time guarantee

Time guarantees are something that Ahola Transport is marketing even more visibly, also for regular transports.

"It's been a source of pride for us and we

have always worked hard to sort everything out for our customers. We are now finally putting into words what we have already been doing," Sund explains.

Another new transport concept now goes by the name Express.

"It's been a source of pride for us and we have always worked hard to sort everything out for our customers."

"It could involve a spare part that is needed for a broken down machine holding up production, or if a raw material has suddenly run out. We try to find fast solutions in cases like that," says Sund.

Ahola Transport solves transports quickly and guarantees that deliveries will happen

within a specific time.

"We also offer the tracking service AT-Live. It is especially important to customers in situations like this," says Sund.

Promoting customs services

In addition to the Express and Non-vessel concepts, Ahola Transport has chosen to focus on a third service in its marketing. It involves Ahola Transport's comprehensive forwarding and customs clearance services. Its direct communications with customers officials and its extensive expertise in the area enable Ahola Transport to handle any kind of customs matter related to imports and exports and the related reporting.

In the Nordic countries, the majority of cases concern trade with Norway, but Ahola Transport is ready to provide assistance in other customs issues as well. ■

Ahola invests in Poland

As part of its business strategy, Ahola Transport has had transports to and from Poland since 2008. In recent years, the Polish economy has grown dramatically and Ahola is now investing further in the growing market.

U.T. Bogusława Filipkowska is one of the Polish subcontractors driving for Ahola Transport. The company is now experiencing a clear upswing and they are extremely pleased with their co-operation with Ahola Transport.

"We want to continue our partnership with Ahola Transport and we are ready to invest in new trucks."

"Our trucks do lots of driving. The Central and Eastern European markets have grown since we started up eight years ago," says Bogusława Filipkowska.

Filipkowska's company is a small but expanding family business from the small community of Kolno near Białystok in eastern Poland. The company is one of Ahola

Transport's oldest subcontractors in the Central and Eastern European markets.

"We began driving for Ahola Transport in 2010. I saw Ahola's trucks driving through Poland and quickly started to think about employment opportunities in the company," says Filipkowska.

Ready for growth

Today, the company has three trucks and three drivers for Ahola Transport. The experienced and capable drivers have been there from the beginning. Co-operation with Ahola Transport runs smoothly and both Filipkowska and Ahola Transport describe their daily work as a team effort.

For Bogusława Filipkowska, the future looks bright due to the continuing economic boom in both the Polish and other Central and Eastern European markets.

"We want to continue our partnership with Ahola Transport and we are ready to invest in new trucks," says Filipkowska. ■

Significant increase in capacity

In the summer, Ahola Transport signed a new contract with the Polish transport company Poltransped. The co-operation involves a significant increase in transport capacity to and from Poland.

Ahola Transport's strategic investment in growth in eastern Europe took a considerable step forwards in the summer. The contract with the Warsaw-based transport company Poltransped creates new growth opportunities in Central Europe.

Poltransped drove for a major logistics group prior to selecting Ahola Transport as its partner. Ahola Transport's philosophy involving modern and tailor-made transport solutions is valued and followed by Poltransped. ■



The new contract with the Polish transport company Poltransped will significantly increase Ahola Transport's transport capacity to and from Poland.

Mini portrait



Name: Juha Kuronen

Family: Partner, two children: 15 and 19

Place of work and position: Site Manager, Ahola Transport, Nykvarn

What is your favourite pastime? Golf, fishing and working out at the gym.

Your favourite food and drink? Fish in every conceivable shape or form. A cold beer on a hot summer's day is always a good idea.

What makes you happy? Kind people.

What makes you angry? Not much, but injustices.

Your dream holiday: Golfing in South Africa, eating good sushi in Tokyo, beautiful nature in New Zealand.

What was your first job? Scania in Södertälje where I deburred connecting rods and pistons.

Any special memories from your working life?

I taught at a vocational secondary school and it was great watching young people grow during the two to three years I taught them.

What is going on right now in your job? In the autumn, we are going to launch the new Nykvarn hub under the name Ahola Cargo Center. It involves more warehousing and forklift work and x-docking.

How do you envision Ahola Transport in 5 to 10 years? I see a company moving forward faster and a larger turnover at the Nykvarn hub. Domestic transports would be an interesting area to work in, also in Sweden. I am sure we would have plenty of work in that area.

Ahola Transport’s trucks in miniature



Ahola Transport’s new 1:25 scale miniature models were designed and manufactured by the family-owned company Emek during the spring and summer. The 1:25 scale model is a novelty for Ahola Transport. Earlier models have been smaller.
The new miniatures will be used as busi-

ness gifts but will also be sold online to personnel and others. They will also be available to the public in major chain stores in Finland and Sweden. The model was also launched at the largest Nordic truck fair Lastbil 18 at Elmia in Jönköping, Sweden. ■

Ahola stands out in recruitment

During 2018, Ahola Transport has invested in more visibility in its recruitment. Ahola took part in a recruitment fair in Naantali and the Edu + Job fair in Kokkola. In Kokkola, Ahola Transport participated with around 50 other companies and organisations and reached out to people looking for a summer job and people interested in a career in logistics. Before the trade fairs, Ahola renewed its recruitment material, including new texts for the recruitment app Teamtailor. ■



Annual golf event in Naantali in May



Ahola Transport’s annual golf event for customers was once again blessed with beautiful weather.

Ahola visible in Euro Truck Simulator

Since summer 2017, Ahola Transport’s new logo has been featured in the world of gaming. The popular Euro Truck Simulator 2 game allows players and fans to create modifications to the game. You can, for example, create your own truck and trailer with logos from the real transport industry.

One fan took the bull by the horns and contacted Ahola Transport for permission and instructions for using the logo. Ahola Transport liked the idea and now, Ahola’s tractor unit, trailers and logo are available for downloading as a game modification. Ahola Transport’s vehicles can be down-

loaded as part of a collection of the most significant transport company logos and equipment. The collection has been downloaded by more than 150,000 players. Ahola Transport’s old logo is also available in an older version of the game. ■

Ahola Transport invests in leadership diploma

During the autumn of 2017, around fifteen people in Ahola Transport’s and its subsidiaries’ management, different foremen, managers and other persons in key positions, received leadership training. The training was intended to increase competence in strategic leadership, planning of finances and operations, personnel management and coordination of customer work. The training organised in co-operation with Kpedu in Kokkola took place over the spring. The participants chose to continue with the training in the autumn to complete a comprehensive leadership diploma. To earn their diploma, the participants will have to review and study the decisions that come up during one year of operations, by autumn 2019. ■



Harry Intonen designed Ahola Transport’s trucks for Euro Truck Simulator 2.

Tip:



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What is your favourite holiday memory?



Eigo Tambik
Customer Care
Tallinn, Estonia

My favourite holiday memory is from the start of 2018 when I travelled to the Val d’Isère ski resort in France. Nothing beats snowboarding in the mountains with the great atmosphere, friends, sunny days, a lot of snow and off-piste trails.



Liza Johansson
Forklift driver
Nykvarn, Sweden

I have a lot of good memories from the summer. I met some wonderful people in many different places. I ate good food, went to festivals, spent a lot of time in the sun and swam and met a lot of new friends to go on adventures with.



Marie Ahlö
HR and Data Administrator
Kokkola, Finland

My favourite holiday memory is the boat trip I took with my family out in the archipelago this year. We visited several islands, swam in the sea and hiked along the trails on Tankar and Mäskär. On Tankar we climbed up into the lighthouse where a guide told us about island life in the past. It was a very warm day and the sea was mirror-smooth.

What is your favourite holiday memory?



Jonas Furubacka
Operations Director, AT Special Transport
Kokkola, Finland

By best holiday memory is from when the whole family travelled to Bad Gastain in Austria, hiking for a week. It was a holiday combined with being together, exercising and enjoying beautiful nature.



Kent Långström
Driver, AT Cargo
Naantali, Finland

The annual roasting of an entire pig. It starts in the morning and ends with a huge party in the evening. Just barbequing the pig takes five to eight hours. It forms part of the festivities.



Fredrik Vikman
Shift leader
Naantali, Finland

Hard to say, but if I must choose one memory it is the trip to the Caribbean and the island Dominica we did a few years ago. It is a unique island with beautiful nature and friendly locals. We experienced two very warm weeks with interesting trips around the island, and the possibility to take a swim in both the Caribbean and the Atlantic.

My hobby...

"The roar is music to my ears"

Building race cars was a dream of Marcus Ahola's ever since he was a child. Twenty years later, he is already building his second full car from the ground up and he hopes to take it for a spin around a racecourse one day.

Like many people, Magnus Ahola as a child had a dream that seemed unlikely to come true. When he grew up he wanted to own a racecar.

"I think the ride with my dad in a Ford Escort rally car on the winter ice is what awoke my interest. I wished I could have a car like that someday."

For Magnus Ahola, the dream became a reality.

"Nowadays I build cars from the ground up. When you can't afford to buy a ready-made one, you have to build it yourself."

It all starts with a dream

Building a car from scratch is not really simple or cheap.

"There's a lot to consider and it takes a lot of time. I have no idea how many hours I've spent doing this. But it's a hobby, so it can take however long it takes."

For now, Magnus is working at Ahola Transport's office in Kokkola and studying to be a Bachelor of Business Administration in the evenings. He also has a wife and two children.

"That is why I don't really have much time to spare for my current project."

The project began in 2012.

"I bought the car from one of my workma-

tes. It stood on four wheels, that's about it."

Today, it is a finished race car, both inside and out. After some fine-tuning and a new drive shaft, it will have a top speed of close to 290 kilometres per hour.

"It all starts with a dream, then you need to plan a bit and you need to know what it will be used for, whether you will drive it on sand or asphalt, and so on."

To create a race car that can compete, everything has to be planned from the very start to achieve the right gearing, road holding and much more.

Future race car driver

With his training as a car mechanic, inspiration from races and car shows and a little help from friends, Magnus has practically built the Nissan 200 sx S13 he is currently working on from scratch.

"I'm doing most of it myself. I've renovated the engine, updated the brakes, installed the electrical system, fixed the wheel suspension and built rollbars from scratch. If you're going to drive 200 kilometres per hour you need to have something around you that you can trust."

Magnus's dream is to be allowed to race. Just now, he lacks the time needed to do it properly, but he can always dream. Rebuild-

ing cars is enough for him at the moment.

"Just sitting behind the steering wheel and turning the key feels great. The roar is music to my ears and knowing that you built the whole thing yourself is incredible."

For Magnus, building cars is also a kind of therapy.

"I like building things and when you have a job with a lot of responsibility but you don't get to work with your hands, this is a great way to relax in the evenings."

And of course his job in the family company and his hobby are connected.

"I grew up around trucks and cars."

Surprising Honda

In addition to building the soon-to-be-completed Nissan for the race tracks, Magnus has helped out his friends and at races and previously built a Honda Civic.

"It was my first. It was more on a shoe-string budget. This second car has definitely been more expensive but I buy second-hand parts to save money."

Magnus rebuilt the Honda around a decade ago but sold it to a race driver.

"It's still used for racing. When I see it I do miss it a little. It's actually a really good car. Nobody thought an old Honda Civic could be so fast." ■



Magnus Ahola

Title: Business Unit Manager
Mainline

Born: 1989

Family: Wife Alexandra and two children Molly-Frances and Minou

Lives in: Kokkola

Education: Car mechanic, truck driver, Bachelor of Business Administration



Magazine for customers, personnel
and other stakeholders

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