



# Focus *ON*

## Creating consols in niche markets

AIR and Ocean consolidations play a major role in all of the world's primary tradelines with huge volumes of LCL shipments finding their way to the consignee in a cost-effective manner thanks to the abundance of consolidation options.

However, in niche markets the options can be limited or even non-existent – but that does not mean there is not an opportunity to create a service that can grow to notable levels.

Trinidad-based Cargo Consolidators Agency Ltd (CCA) is just one of many successful independent forwarders that have carved out a successful consol business in their specific region and now offer valuable services to fellow forwarders and shippers.

Sean Patience, Managing Director of CCA, has seen the companies consolidations grow over a long period and is confident the trend can continue.

"CCA celebrates its 40th anniversary next year and is firmly established with a solid reputation in Trinidad and surrounding islands. We began as a small family-based company, but now have over 60 staff."

The company began with simple import and customs work, but this grew into other areas of expertise such as project work, consolidations, marine and insurance. "We have a lot of history in the Trinidad market and our business has evolved in parallel with the island."

Patience says that 15 years ago there were carriers calling, such as ZIM and Maersk and there was reasonable volumes of FCL, yet no one including the lines, were offering LCL services. "We saw the opportunity and dived into the market. We developed teu services to surrounding islands and territories such as Barbados, St Lucia, Guyana and Surinam. The consolidations have grown and we offer a weekly service."

It is not only consolidation services to and from other islands that CCA now offer as Patience explains: "We also offer Miami for

import LCL services and this can then connect us to other markets such as Rotterdam. This has been working well and a number of other

forwarders use this service to co-load with us. We found that for instance in the Netherlands there was not enough volume for Trinidad alone, but we sold all of the neighbouring CARICOM islands to the Dutch agents, the volumes increased and the consolidations worked.

"Another client we have in South Africa had enough volume of plumbing hardware to Trinidad to fill half a container. We helped find other LCL business from South Africa to other islands, so a full box now

comes to Trinidad and we deconsolidate it and move the goods on."

CCA offers this transshipment service for many of the other islands. "For example if someone needs to send LCL loads from St Lucia to Guyana we can consolidate here and use our regular services to Guyana. We have also had a request from panama to provide export solutions to other islands in the Caribbean and thanks to our established network and services we can do that."

CCA has a mix of direct business with shippers and co-load volumes with other forwarders. "We have built a good client base through offering import services and then help these clients develop services by also offering LCL export services to the islands. Trinidad is also a big oil & gas and

petrochemical market and, alongside the major project moves in which we are involved, there are regular imports that use our services.

From the relationships we have built with these companies we can help them find the best and most efficient solutions, not only for Trinidad but over the CARICOM region."

Patience says that 8-10 years ago there were a number of other forwarders on the scene offering container services. "But the volumes generally were not enough for even one box. As there was not enough volume we supported each other and that's how the cooperation on consols started. We now keep that weekly service alive by doing consols and many customers now rely on this continuing. There is also a small but vibrant manufacturing sector in Trinidad that need to reach neighbouring islands but rarely have volumes for FCL loads."

Patience says that the hardest part in attracting new customers is opening their eyes to the possibility of using LCL services through Trinidad, rather than the traditional routes from Miami or Dominican Republic. "On price we can compete and our proximity to the other islands is a major advantage and our business although going through peaks and troughs, is still growing. We are now dedicating more sales resources to capture more outbound traffic".

There is also competition from the carriers themselves who sell in the local market. "Some shippers are still not aware that there are LCL options and we now have a dedicated staff to better inform them that they have options."

Patience says that joining the Lognet Global network has also been beneficial in building more co-loading volumes with



**SEAN PATIENCE**  
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forwarders from around the world. "For example Chinese agents have been very helpful and local buyers are more aware of the global reach for LCL services we can offer. Also in Europe we have built good relationships and volumes with member agents."

CCA's strategy going forward is to build on its current services and establish itself not only for LCL imports and consolidations, but also as the market-leading company for air and ocean exports from Trinidad. "We are also looking to get into the 3PL market in Trinidad and to help with that goal we have leased a second warehouse and offer a range of services such as pick and pack."

A final goal for Patience is to tap into the growing cross-border e-Commerce trade. "This is growing fast in Trinidad and there are 50-70 small e-Commerce companies already established. However, the lack of governance and regulations is currently a problem. Before, most of this was sent by air, but some of these volumes are now transferring to ocean. It is certainly an area of opportunity that we are keen to become involved in."



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