



International Cargo Express Pty Ltd.

SHIP AND DELIVER



By focusing on keeping staff happy and overheads low, Ronald Spahr has set a thirty-year old company on a healthy growth path.

Founded during the recession of the late 1980's, International Cargo Express was created on the principles of keeping customer service high, overheads low and paying bills on time. Which was a good place to be when a market slowdown hit suddenly in 2009, in the midst of a management buyout. Recently appointed managing director Ronald Spahr was forced to throw the collective experience of the long-serving management team at successfully overcoming the crisis.

"We had a record month in January, and then by March it stopped dead, just like someone turned off a tap," Spahr says. "But we don't really pay attention to the negativity of the environment; if I can see a street full of freight forwarders then I can see business we should be able to win."

Founded in 1988 by Peter Timmerman and team of highly experienced freight forwarders who'd held senior positions with large global companies, International Cargo Express had always operated on the basis of holding onto excellent staff and keeping customers happy. In 2009 this meant finding a way to encourage wary customers back into business.

"We went back to our customers and pointed out that if they waited until later in the year to order their Christmas stock they would have to pay a premium for shipping,

because everyone was doing the same thing, selling down excess stock, and they would need to order again at some stage," Spahr says. "Our business slowed, but even then we never lost money, because our overheads are controlled, we are not big spenders, we operate with just the right number of staff, and we do everything ourselves. I don't have a secretary, I type my own letters."

Having come from a global freight forwarding company where he managed five sales reps, three support staff and a secretary, Spahr says he was in shock when he first started at International Cargo Express in 1989 but was motivated by the company's commitment to customer service. Using temperamental software, manual processing and a lot of international phone calls, the company offered services like track and trace in the very early days, using a highly labor intensive process of directly phoning shipping agents around the globe.

Frustrated by the process of attempting to keep watch over international cargo movements using fairly generic office software from Microsoft, International Cargo Express became an early adopter of the Deliverance system released in 1995, a precursor to CargoWise ediEnterprise.

This was a decision which prepared the company for what was to be a period of rapid and unprecedented growth.

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Ronald Spahr Managing Director
International Cargo Express Pty Ltd.

INTERNATIONAL CARGO EXPRESS OFFERS CUSTOMERS:

- Transparency – enquiries and queries are dealt with clearly and unambiguously.
- Excellent Communications – clients are kept abreast of every detail.
- Fast decisions – unforeseen problems are quickly identified and overcome
- Low Staff Turnover and Motivated Personnel – high service levels built on the knowledge and experience of engaged long-serving staff.
- Independence—dedicated to offering the most cost effective solution.

“From 1996 we went through this humungous growth spurt, we opened up offices in Melbourne, Brisbane and Fremantle. We were already well known in the business as a company that paid our bills on time but now we could track our accounts more closely,” Spahr says. “Using Deliverance was our first step to actually consolidate our business, create statistics and ensure no more double entries; this all gave us the capacity to increase our job numbers without doing more office time or hiring more staff.”

International Cargo Express continued to adopt new CargoWise software upgrades as they were released, and leveraged the increasingly integrated nature of the software to improve customer service and keep overheads low, the very principles on which the business was founded.

“Once CargoWise ediEnterprise was released we had sales, marketing and operational data under one roof so to speak, and this is the most important feature in my view,” Spahr says. “We always get complimented on our professionalism and speed of service, and that’s thanks to CargoWise templates and the ediEnterprise system.”

Once again recording record growth, Spahr has set his sights on turning International Cargo Express into a company with over \$50 million in turnover by 2015, by hitting growth targets of 10 per cent year on year. He knows it’s his staff and low-cost, high-service approach that will make growth possible.

“We don’t own the ships we don’t load the ships we don’t fly the plane, we are the architects of the transport chain,” Spahr says. “This is all we do and we do it well.”