



# FROM SHIP TO ENSURE

Tim Oltmann, CEO, Transport Overseas Group talks navigating the Middle East logistics market

**T**ransport Overseas (TO) Group, a young dynamic and fast-growing logistics company based in Bremen, Germany, has made significant strides in the Middle East market. Tim Oltmann, CEO of TO Group, sheds light on the company's journey, strategies, and future aspirations in a comprehensive interview.

Starting as a cargo broker, liner agency, and general agent for Bahri Line (one of the business units of the Saudi Arabian National Shipping Company) in Northern Europe and Scandinavia, TO Group has evolved into a major player in the logistics sector. It now offers a wide range of services worldwide, particularly in Ro/Ro, Project Logistics, High&Heavy, Supercargo services, and Breakbulk sectors. With a branch in Dubai, TO Group has established itself in the commercial vehicle sector in the Arabic region, Asia Pacific, and

Africa. The company collaborates closely with major ports across the Middle East, including Aqaba, Jeddah, Sohar, Jebel Ali, Abu Dhabi, Hamad, Bahrain, Dammam, and Kuwait.

"Quality is our top priority. Our team consists of experienced specialists who are characterised by a high level of professionalism, creativity and customer orientation. As part of our quality management system, we attach great importance to continuous process optimisation and employee development," says Oltmann.

"Our corporate philosophy is based on three pillars: excellence, flexibility and sustainability. We believe that this holistic approach is the only way to guarantee the high quality of our services. Our mission is to maximise customer satisfaction through our performance, to inspire and connect our customers and employees. As TO Group, we see ourselves not only as a service provider, but also as a partner to our customers. With this claim, we can ensure our

**TO Group is young, independent, dynamic and fast-growing"**

own success and that of our customers."

Oltmann tells **T&FME** that TO Group prioritises understanding customer needs and requirements, a key factor in opening their Middle East headquarters in Dubai nearly three years ago. This strategic move has helped the company overachieve its goal of providing high-quality service and maintaining strong client relationships.

He adds: "Based on our experiences and expertise we are one of the go-to shipping and logistics suppliers for a power list of Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEMs). With our branch in Dubai and the experience of Richard Hall as Director Middle East/Asia Pacific, we are also familiar in the sector of commercial vehicles in the Arabic region, Asia Pacific and Africa."

Oltmann highlights the gradual introduction of alternative drive technologies and reduced carbon emissions as the next major shift in the shipping industry. TO

Group is adapting to this change by identifying such vessels into their shipping operations, responding to increasing customer demand for environmentally-friendly solutions.

"The gradual introduction of alternative drive and therefore reduced carbon emissions is the next major shift in the shipping industry. We are now starting to see the introduction of such vessels and our customers are also demanding this as well."

TO Group maintains a family-type atmosphere, fostering a culture where employees love what they do. This approach has been integral to the company's organic growth strategy contributes to its ability to ensure high-quality service and maintain strong relationships with clients.

"We have placed a lot of emphasis on this – and that's why we opened our Middle East HQ in Dubai almost 3 years ago. We had foreseen the growth potential, but we needed to be closer to our customers to fully understand their needs and requirements," he remarks. "We are happy to say that we have overachieved this goal so far."

The UAE's central location for business in the Middle East markets and the presence of many of TO Group's clients in the area make it an important base for the company's operations: "We felt that the UAE offered us the best and most central location for doing business in the Middle East markets and many of our clients also have their base in the area."

The neighbouring Saudi market, a significant and active territory for TO Group, has seen a surge in recent times. The company's link with Bahri Shipping Line, underscore the importance of this market in their regional success.

"Clearly, in recent times the Saudi market has risen to become a very active although it was already a very big and important market for us," he says. "With our close ties with Bahri Shipping Line, we always have plenty of focus on our business dealings in the Kingdom."

Despite challenges such as access to vehicles and equipment, and price increases due to high demand for shipping space, TO Group helps clients navigate these issues through its supply chain expertise and strong relationships with manufacturers.

Oltmann explains: "The supply chain for vehicles and equipment has generally been through a tough time in the last two years although this has eased in the second half of 2023 from most manufacturers. This has led to an increase of demand for shipping space which has of course caused pressure on pricing in some cases."



**"THERE'S ALWAYS GROWTH TO BE DONE"**  
Tim Oltmann (pictured) says that TO Group's partnership with Bahri Line has solidified its status in Saudi Arabia. The firm is now eyeing growth in South East Asia.

**We are focused on our team and our people"**

Geopolitical issues, including recent disruptions in the Red Sea and elsewhere, can pose challenges for the shipping industry. Leveraging the Dubai team's proximity to market developments, TO Group manages these situations by closely working with clients and shipping partners ensure we manage expectations and on time deliveries wherever possible.

"One of the reasons we have our team in Dubai exactly for this purpose: being close to market developments and our end customers so that we can react immediately to changes in business climate and our customers demands," he comments. "Geopolitical matters are always a challenge for the industry since most of what happens is outside our direct control of course."

It seems that there will be some disruption in the short term although TO Group has years of experience in dealing with these situations.

"Globally there are always some disruptions in service or politically linked matters that affect the whole shipping market. Specifically in the Middle East markets we always find ourselves in a strong position to react because of our team in Dubai giving us clear communication and also our robust relationship with Bahri Line in Saudi Arabia who are always able to find new solutions and deliver on time."

Looking towards future growth, TO Group is eyeing expansion into South East Asia. The company maintains its competitive edge in a rapidly changing global market by focusing on its skilled and knowledgeable team, setting it apart in the industry: "Whilst we are satisfied so far with our growth in Middle East Markets – more can always be done! Having said that we are looking more and more into South East Asia and the growth of that area so watch this space."

Tim Oltmann's insights reveal TO Group's strategic approach to navigating the complex logistics landscape in the Middle East. Through a blend of technological adaptability, customer-centric service, and robust risk management, TO Group continues to solidify its position as a key player in the global shipping and logistics sector.

"We are focused on our team and our people since this is where the real skills and knowledge lie. We have carefully selected our specialists from all industries where we are active and this has meant we have lager network and more in depth knowledge of the business. This is what sets us apart and keeps us ahead of the game."



**A MAJOR PLAYER**  
TO Group has evolved into a major player in the logistics sector having started as a cargo broker, liner agency, and general agent for Bahri Line (one of the business units of the Saudi Arabian national shipping company) in Northern Europe and Scandinavia.