



Argo Shipping Doubles Capacity with One Sidelifter

The use of sidelifters can address several issues, as demonstrated by Argo Shipping, which has recently taken delivery of their very first sidelifter, a Steelbro SB450.



A fairly young company, Argo Shipping Sdn Bhd has only been operating in Johor Baru for seven years now. However, being young means also that the company's management will look at things with a fresh pair of eyes. When meeting with Ivy Tan, Director, Argo Shipping Sdn Bhd and Teh Fai Yen, it becomes clear that the two have staked their claim and that they have a clear vision of where they want to take the business. Drawing on the experience gained from their past jobs, they grow by leaps and bounds through the use of smart tools, with the latest addition being a Steelbro sidelifter.

Loosing their jobs in freight forwarding has slowed Tan and Teh down only for a fraction of time. In 2013 they roused up four other former colleagues and started Argo Shipping. Given their background, the name chosen may not

surprise. As a vehicle, the company was meant to carry their ambition and "ultimately lead us to the golden fleece, our reward for our dare and hard work, as it was described in the Greek mythology," Tan explains. Argo, the name of the fabled ship of Odysseus, signifies and reflects their goal and spirit despite their humble beginnings with little to no capital.

Their ambition was rewarded when the duo received their permit for a haulage operation in 2015. Tan remarks that, "During that time, sidelifters were not as widely used as they are today. We would subcontract such units when we saw a need and would supplement our operation with a third party sidelifter." Today, the company has a fleet of 13 trucks and almost 100 trailers to move 10 and 40 foot containers. Over the years, Tan and Teh learned how to value sidelifters, but were not happy with the drawbacks that came with hiring outsiders. "Being dependent on the schedule of the sidelifter was stifling our own ambitions." To elevate their own service, Argo Shipping ordered a Steelbro sidelifter in the last quarter of 2019.



in terms of volume “We move as much as our colleagues in Port Klang, but many would only think of Klang as the main port in Malaysia.” Such volumes need to be moved in order to keep Johor’s economy growing. “Imagine, the Steelbro sidelifter has doubled our capacity!” said Teh.

With the new tool, Argo Transport addresses the lack of loading bays in many places where they are to drop off cargo. Instead of parking a trailer until the container is emptied, the container is placed in the ground, allowing the truck to move on to the next location, thus neither trailer, not truck ever sit idle. Trailers can also be somewhat inflexible as a trailer made for 20 foot containers can only carry that. The SB450 can take 20, 40 or 2 x 20 foot containers. Beyond the obvious use of the sidelifter to deliver containers, operators can also use it to transfer containers to other trailers. “We make use of this function in order to counter jams in ports. Imagine, we can go in with the sidelifter, pick up two 20 foot containers and transfer the boxes onto trailers waiting just outside the port. This will speed up things tremendously!”



Argo Shipping, while rooted in past experience and a traditional name has been always looking ahead. According to Teh, the company has always deployed the latest technology. “Thanks to that, we could easily continue operations throughout MCO as we had all the right tools in place for some time,” he said. On the operations side, the drivers were also prepared to welcome the sidelifter as many had prior experience with them. “We have two categories of drivers: the ones that already know how to use sidelifters and those that are keen to learn how to operate them.”

The Steelbro Model SB450 has a capacity of 45 tonnes and has been put to work at Argo Transport just before the Movement Control Order (MCO) was enforced. As the team has prior experience in scheduling and managing multi-modal transportation, the integration of the unit posed no problem. According to Tan, the purchase of the sidelifter challenged mindsets. “Older operators would apply a paradigm, whereby they would want to have trailers only and a lot of them. The cost of a sidelifter is something that stops many from using them.” However, the investment has paid off Asian Trucker was told.

The mainstay of Argo Transport’s business are commodities, goods that are bulky and heavy. What many don’t realise is that the ports in Johor, Pasir Gudang and Port of Tanjung Pelepas are almost on par with the other ports in Malaysia

It may not come as a surprise that the company is still set to grow and the target number for prime movers stands at 20. Tan said that the plan is to add another sidelifter to cope with increased order volumes and to have a second unit on standby to deal with any spikes in orders that need to be fulfilled. She summed up the current situation by saying that there has been a higher acceptance of sidelifters and that the use of them is now much more widespread. **F**