



9th June 2020

## Swiss WorldCargo's Belly Charter Team

**A look behind the scenes – from crisis mode into the future**

On a cloudy spring day in May, twelve Swiss WorldCargo employees gathered in front of the SWISS headquarters in Kloten. Despite the cloudy weather and social distancing measures requiring everyone to stand apart at a distance of two meters, the team members managed to put on a smile and pose for their picture. These men and women certainly do have something to smile about – in less than two months, they helped to initiate a game-changing project at SWISS and Swiss WorldCargo: In order to combat the shocks caused by the COVID-19 crisis, this “Belly Charter” team developed a new product offering in very fast time. Currently, they have entered a transition phase, evolving their offer from Charter-only flights towards the setup of a series of cargo-only flights and new cargo network of flights operating around the world.



Belly Charter Taskforce at SWISS Headquarter, Kloten - From right to left: Omar Bragatto, Marco Poltera, Anita Kindhauser, Lidija Ciuccio, Milo Gerisch, Colin McInnes, Manol Marjakaj, Massimiliano Ferro, Matthias Grünewald, Reto Hürlimann, Tamara Schneider, Jennifer Bittl

Historically, Swiss WorldCargo has been responsible for transporting freight shipments on-board SWISS and Edelweiss flights only in the bellies. In the past, this has allowed for healthy revenues and a way to augment routes operated. If a passenger aircraft was already flying to Hong Kong, the logic went, why not transport cargo to the destination as well? However, this structure changed in early 2020, when airlines around the world began reducing their network services offered as a result of the Coronavirus crisis. As borders began to shut down due to travel restrictions as well, the situation became even more dire, and by mid-March, SWISS was operating flights to **less than 20% of its usual network**.

To minimize the shock of this, several different teams at Swiss WorldCargo immediately jumped into full force. Though there were myriad restrictions on passenger travel, the demand for cargo remained consistent. If anything, it had increased, due to the growing necessity for the shipment of important medical goods that could provide crucial support in the entire crisis, such as masks, gloves, protective goggles and gowns. For doctors and nurses at the frontlines of the crisis in Switzerland and around the world, having access to such goods is critical. Further global supply chains are impacted and the connection to and from Switzerland is important to continuously enable the access to global supply chains.

Therefore, the team quickly devised the **Belly Charter** product, a way to ensure that goods could continue to flow. This would entail SWISS operating former passenger flights solely with cargo. They began coordinating with different customers, and on March 27, launched the first flights.

Following initial individual flights from Hong Kong and Shanghai, the offering rapidly continued to pick up speed. In the month of April alone, over eighty charter flights were conducted. In the meantime, the concept has expanded rapidly and destinations within and without our network have been sold. As of the beginning of June, over 375 cargo-only flights have been carried out, transporting thousands of tonnes of cargo. As a next step, the team has set up an **entire new network of regularly operating flights**, spanning the globe from Asia to America, and encompassing a large amount of the SWISS long-haul fleet. To take it even further, SWISS has modified some of its Boeing 777-300ER to remove the seats in the cabin, a step which allows for even more cargo to be transported. Every day, aircraft are taking off from Zurich, destined for one of the ten-plus (and growing) destinations within **the newfound cargo network**



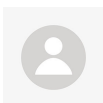
Swiss WorldCargo Intercontinental Flight Network

The team, despite the fundamental change in their focus, quickly adapted and helped to stabilize the demand for new business. Of course, they can be proud of their work, because in addition to supporting the fight against Coronavirus here in Switzerland, these charter flights are also helping to keep Switzerland connected to the global markets. Our customers, both old and new ones, meanwhile confirm our quality promise in this segment.

Who is behind all this in Kloten? As the team expanded to take on more responsibility, it also grew in scope, and is now divided into several components. A **Commercial taskforce** team has the de-facto lead, taking over for direct management with our customers and serving as an interface to the organization. A **Cargo Network management** team is responsible for scheduling, focusing on slots, and informing stakeholders. Meanwhile, a **Competence Center** team handles diverse medical, business support and sales steering questions. A **Station and flight support** team coordinates with global stations and helps to oversee individual flights. Finally, an **Operations support** team handles specifics including equipment specification details and other details for individual flights.

The team is broad and wide-ranging. As the project scope has expanded, the team has also benefited from a diverse array of support from the broader SWISS organization. This is truly a large project, one requiring a broad array of backgrounds and skillsets, and successful teamwork and global coordination.

With the restart of a large portion of the Swiss WorldCargo network we will slowly build up our global network again and together with the entire organisation seek opportunities to positively contribute to the developments of SWISS. "This is of course, not how any of us expected this year to go," said Omar Bragatto, one of the first team members to initiate the project in March. "It has been an extremely challenging situation for the entire aviation industry, so we had to spring in quickly. But with our great teams here and around the world, we have been able to at least somewhat mitigate this terrible situation and meet the ongoing demands for cargo shipments to/from/transiting in Switzerland, and continue to keep supply chains up and running."



Author: Swiss WorldCargo Marketing & Communications