

SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION  
**TIME CRITICAL**

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# Expedited Freight Goes to New Heights

**Today's time-critical transportation providers are elevating their services with a number of innovative offerings. From small packages and freight with the most unique needs or the mundane, if it has a deadline, there's a solution for that.**

**Panther Expedited Services, Inc.** helps customers better manage their supply chains with a full range of time-critical shipping solutions. Five years ago, the Cleveland, Ohio-based provider diversified from 100 percent ground expedited. "Today, about two thirds of our business is ground expedited and one third is global forwarding. Many of our customers require our Elite Services, which includes special handling for hazardous, temperature controlled

and high-value goods," says Andrew Clarke, CEO of Panther.

Whether ground, air or ocean, Panther provides an array of logistics solutions including transportation, inventory and warehouse management. "Customers are looking for premium solutions to optimize their supply chains so that everything doesn't have to go NFO or expedited," Clarke says.

Panther relies on a network of exclusive owner-operators with

over 1,100 tractor trailers, straight trucks and cargo vans for expedited ground, as well as an outside global network of more than 1,500 carriers which allow it to provide multi-modal services. Panther makes it all look effortless to its many shipper and forwarder customers with a proprietary optimization engine that provides the best buy-up, buy-down shipping options in seconds. "If a customer has a shipment, we have the capability and flexibility to make

it happen. We truly provide an on-line integrated forwarding solution," Clarke says.

Services provided by Panther are a sure thing in a tough market. Clarke notes the entire transportation industry faces considerable challenges. In ground, in addition to the high cost of entry and fuel costs, many over the road truckers are squeezed by new mandates under the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration's (FMCSA) Compliance, Safety, Accountability (CSA) program. "CSA is already here. Individual driver scoring will take some drivers off the road. In addition, hours of service regulations are also tightening capacity, so more shippers are turning to Panther for creative solutions to their most complex problems," Clarke says.

**Sterling Transportation Inc.** of Los Angeles is one of many expedited providers reporting solid gains in business over last year. "The economy is really turning around with transportation now. It's going to be a strong year," says Keith Davis, founder and CEO of Sterling.

"We remain committed to our primary market between the west coast and Florida for three-day LTL and TL service between Los Angeles and Miami on a nightly basis and believe we'll see significant growth in that market this year. Last year, the buildup in the Brazilian economy really helped us," Davis says.

"We are also excited

about leveraging the Sterling brand to explore ways we can work with new and existing clients, offering complementary services to our core market," adds Bruce Roberts, president of Sterling.



As an express landbridge between Asia and Central and South America, Sterling aids the logistics strategies of customers including those in high tech, textiles and manufacturing industries. That segment of the

U.S. landbridge includes being part of complex intermodal moves in sea-land-air and air-land-air, among many intermodal combinations.

To complement its Los Angeles operations at LAX, Sterling plans to open a downtown facility in third quarter of this year to receive cargo destined to MIA for export into Latin America and the Caribbean. "We've also secured transload business to help shippers at our warehouses at LAX and MIA by unload-

ing inbound ocean containers and transferring the cargo into over the road on 53-foot trailers for domestic distribution anywhere in the U.S. or across the border to Mexico," Davis says.

Davis adds Sterling's Container Freight Station (CFS) at LAX saw significant growth last year. "We're seeing more new customers from the forwarding community using the facility for our late hours," Davis says, noting many facilities close by 5 p.m. which forces forwarders to miss a day if Customs has not cleared the cargo to be released or moved in transit.

Handling time-critical, small packages and shipments for same-day delivery is the niche of Philadelphia-based **American Expediting Company, Inc.** "With 35 company-owned U.S. locations, we work on a daily basis across the country," says Victor Finnegan, president and CEO of American Expediting. As companies of all sizes seek to consolidate their vendors and demand quality service, the courier has grown its national business.

American Expediting's national call center operates 24/7 and Finnegan says the company has in-



creased staffing. “We have a group of people in our national call center that specialize in handling work all over the country who decide the best option to service the customer,” Finnegan says.

Whether four skids have to be de-

livered across state lines or a cake across town, American Expediting can fulfill the need. The courier customizes its services to fit customer requirements anytime of the day or night and will even take on tasks such as purchasing goods and delivering them desk to desk. It may mean a 2 a.m. pickup and holding the shipment until it can be delivered promptly at 7 a.m., all specified by the customer.

Shippers in other industries as well as forwarders, LTL and TL carriers call on the courier for seamless, rush service. “We know what questions to ask, what information we need, what realistic expectations to set

and what communications need to occur to satisfy our many clients,” Finnegan says. American Expediting taps into a large national equipment network that includes mini and full-sized vans as well as 24-foot straight trucks.

Finnegan says good people make all the difference. The company vets its staff and service partners, which includes 300 Transportation & Security Administration (TSA) approved agents. “In addition, our own staff undergoes background checks and drug testing,” he says.

Serving a range of industries from financial and entertainment to life sciences and hazmat, **AirNet Systems, Inc.** handles it all. Insiders know AirNet is only rivaled by FedEx and UPS. The Columbus,



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Ohio-based all-cargo carrier owns and operates 185 aircraft, including Caravan Super Cargomasters and 35 Learjets, with payloads of 3,500 pounds. "From our key gateways of LA, Chicago and New York, we serve 80 U.S. cities with our own aircraft, reaching over 2,550 markets with over 400 flights each night," says Mark Watson, business development manager at AirNet.

AirNet offers industry-leading tender and recovery times for Next Flight Out service. "Our late night departures allow us to offer quick tender-recovery at 30 minutes or less," Watson says. A package can be dropped off at New York's Teterboro airport at 11 p.m. or later and arrive at Burbank airport in California for an 8 a.m. or earlier delivery.

Or an inbound international shipment, arriving into JFK airport in the evening, can clear customs and transit out of New York on an AirNet flight to its destination.

For door-to-door service, AirNet partners with 1,000 couriers nationwide. "Our couriers are carefully screened according to TSA requirements and vetted to meet the tight deadlines that clients require," Watson says.

This summer, AirNet launches a proprietary technology for real-time identification, location and condition (ILC) package tracking. "ISpy is a device that can be inserted into packages that measures location via GPS, and package conditions such as temperature, exposure to light and shock. It's fully customizable

and will allow customers to receive email alerts about their shipment," Watson says. ISpy should prove invaluable for precious cargo such as medical specimens or high-value, fragile items.

**Southwest Airlines** recently announced its acquisition of AirTran Airways which provides the carrier with the opportunity to serve several new destinations as it integrates AirTran markets into its existing network of over 70 destinations and 3,400 flights per day. In addition, the carrier announced plans to add 20 new Boeing 737-800 series aircraft to its existing fleet of 545 Boeing 737-700s, 300s, and 500s in early 2012. "These two exciting developments should provide our valued air cargo



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customers with many new shipping destinations in the near future,” says Wally Devereaux, director of cargo sales and marketing for Dallas-based Southwest

Southwest Airlines is renowned for great customer service and has received several prestigious awards in excellence including recognition from Air Cargo World magazine’s Air Cargo Excellence (ACE) survey. With some of the shortest drop-off and recovery windows in the industry, Southwest allows forwarders to offer stellar service to time-critical shippers. “In most cases, our cut-off and recovery times are shorter than our competitors at 30 minutes before or after the flight,” Devereaux says.

Out of the markets served by

Southwest, the majority of cargo facilities are staffed by Southwest employees. “Our employees have a great reputation and work hard to provide great service to our customers” Devereaux says. Cargo service is determined by the time-critical nature of the shipment: Next Flight Guaranteed (NFG) service provides customers with a 100 percent guarantee to ship on the next available departure. RUSH Priority Freight is a time-definite service providing a 24-hour guarantee from the time of tender, and FREIGHT service is for customers who have a

little additional time available.

These guarantees are just one way Southwest Airlines Cargo exemplifies a customer-first priority. As these service providers show, serving the demands of today’s time-critical customers is no sweat. **ACW**



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