

# Stena Line Freight

## Industry Sector | Transport



### Stena Line Freight puts trust in Swiss Post Solutions for e-invoicing

#### Client

Stena Line Freight is the sales and marketing organisation for Stena Line, an international transport and travel service company and one of the world's largest ferry operators. Operating 18 routes across Europe, using 34 modern and well-equipped vessels, the company has a route network that spans eight countries and 29 harbours delivering freight to just under 6,000 customers.

In order to maintain its leading position within the industry, Stena Line Freight recognises how important it is to maintain and invest in customer support and develop simple and convenient systems that will make the entire freight booking and management process as simple as possible. Stena Line Freight offers all freight customers access to online booking, Electronic Data Interchange, online track and trace

and the ability to receive electronic invoices and statements, as part of the company's commitment to adding real and practical customer value, irrespective of how large or small the client.

#### Background

Stena Line Freight first approached Swiss Post Solutions in 1994 to provide a Multi-Channel Billing Solution for the company's invoicing, printing and mailing function. In 2002 Stena Line reaffirmed its commitment to Swiss Post Solutions through the issuing of electronic statements, followed by electronic invoicing in 2006.

As a result of growing customer shipment orders and associated paperwork, Stena Line Freight had become increasingly aware of the significant time, cost and environmental benefits that could be realised through the introduction of electronic billing. Using Swiss Post Solutions' e-Billing service meant that Swiss Post Solutions would take responsibility for the issuing of invoices on time and to the right customers while Stena Line Freight would be able to significantly reduce printing, stationery and postage costs.

#### Solution Highlights

- Issuing tens of thousands of invoices per month
- A 20% take up within three months increasing to 46% within 12 months
- Considerable cost and environmental benefits

#### Solution

Having already enjoyed a lengthy relationship with Swiss Post Solutions and with previous experience of the company's billing solutions in operation, Stena Line Freight decided to put their trust in the company for the electronic issuing of literally tens of thousands of their invoices per month.



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Initially Swiss Post Solutions and Stena Line Freight introduced a pilot system, prior to roll-out, to address potential glitches and ensure that the transition to the new system was as smooth and error free as possible – vital if customers were to accept and embrace the new process.

Rather than trying to force all customers into accepting the e-Billing route, Stena Line Freight trialed the method over a two week period. All customers were given the opportunity to revert back to the old method if desired and yet after the two week period not one customer made the switch back. Within three months of launching the e-Billing system to customers, Stena Line Freight were enjoying an unprecedented 20% take up, increasing to 46% within 12 months and now they have achieved 70% penetration.

The success of Swiss Post Solutions' e-Billing system has enabled Stena Line Freight to choose it as its preferred method and the company now operates an 'opt-out' model, with all new customer accounts having to specifically request to 'opt-out' of receiving e-invoices. Stena Line Freight Area Sales Manager David Byrne, responsible for the rollout and promotion of the e-Billing concept, believes the key to success was not only choosing a system from a credible provider, but a system that was easy to use, and one that would offer significant benefits to customers. Prior to launching e-Billing, David and his colleagues undertook a series of presentations with customers to highlight benefits and give reassurance on potential issues.

David said: "Not only had Stena Line Freight's customers already enjoyed a tried and tested relationship with Swiss Post Solutions, but the company was able to provide an intuitive system that was easy to navigate. In fact, since its inception, e-Billing has enabled some of our customers to win more contracts, as they are now able to take on more work without having to invest in additional resources for processing payment."

Frank Nieuwenhuys, Freight Commercial Manager for the UK & Republic of Ireland added: "At Stena Line Freight we believe it is important to invest money into providing value added IT services for our customers. As well as the e-Billing we also offer online booking and an online track and trace service, all of which we believe is contributing to the growth of our business. We couldn't have achieved this growth without the support of Swiss Post Solutions. In order for us to take our billing services to the next level it was important that we chose a provider who could cater for our needs, by listening and developing a solution that was right for us – and that's exactly what Swiss Post Solutions have done."

### **Benefits**

Stena Line Freight found that there was no need to incentivise the transition from the old system to the new system; in fact most customers were more than happy to move over to e-Billing as they immediately recognised the time benefits as well as ease of use and faster, more accurate processing that would follow. During customer testing, one client realised that



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the eight hours per week that was spent manually inputting invoices as they arrived, could be reduced through the receipt of e-invoices and the ability to automatically download them in seconds.

Not only are there the time benefits, but customers also recognise the immediate storage benefits. As with many financial documents, invoices must for legal reasons be kept for a minimum of seven years, and rather than having to store boxes and boxes of paper documents, everything can now be saved and stored locally on PCs or on CD.

Saving time also equates to saving money and is just one of the many cost saving aspects of switching to electronic billing. Not only are you delivering the documents to customers same day, but you are saving the direct cost of the paper, envelope and postage stamp as well as gaining the intangible benefits of full auditing, reducing manual intervention and opening up new channels for target marketing. Moreover, customers receiving invoices in this way also have the opportunity to quickly pass invoices between colleagues and other departments or sites where multi-authority levels are required or different sections are involved.

There are also the considerable environmental benefits associated with the issuing of electronic invoices and statements. By moving over to e-Billing Stena Line Freight has already reduced paper usage and saved 30 trees per year. There are also the concerns associated with postal delivery and delays that can be avoided as a result of potential strikes.

A leading European market analyst and head of Swiss-based e-Billing Consultants, Billentis, Bruno Koch praised the company for its environmental

awareness and competitiveness, commenting: "Congratulations! Stena Line Freight's performance puts them amongst the European leaders and probably at the very front, based on the company's 'opt-out' model which applies to existing clients. The tremendous success you have witnessed not only speaks volumes for the efficiency of your system and its ease of use, but it is also testament to the transport industry in the UK & Republic of Ireland, who has taken to it so convincingly" he concluded.



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