

Interview with Himani Rawat, Integrated Logistics expert

Intro: At Kuehne+Nagel we believe our people, their passion, their resourcefulness are what sets us apart and make the difference in the lives of colleagues, customers and the society where we live and work.
In this podcast we share some of the stories that move us and invite you to discover the world of logistics through the voices of the people and customers of Kuehne+Nagel. Find us in our stories and help us write new ones.

Jan: 00:00:31 On March 23rd, 2021, Himani Rawat, the logistics process owner for Kuehne+Nagel Integrated Logistics in India, was working from home due to COVID restrictions when she was alerted to a problem. A 400 metre-long problem. The Ever Given one of the world's biggest container ships had got stuck in the Suez Canal, completely blocking one of the main trade arteries connecting east and west. Traffic was backing up and there was no indication of when the ship might be freed. One of her key clients was a global pharmaceutical company. Having handled shipments for this client in a previous role, Himani understood the vital connection between the supply chain and patient outcomes. Over the next six days, Himani and her team would work around the clock to ensure alternative solutions were found and implemented and the crisis avoided. We talk to Himani about the journey she and her team went on. Hi Himani. Great to meet you. Could you briefly explain your role and what your team does?

Himani: 00:01:38 It's nice to meet you too. Hi, I'm Himani. I'm working as a logistics process owner for Asia Pacific International. I have been with Kuehne+Nagel for more than eight years and worked in different positions in Integrated Logistics. I work closely with the customers, the internal teams and other stakeholders involved throughout the supply chain. We are managing the end-to-end international movement of goods for our clients. One of our key responsibilities is to deliver as promised.

Jan: 00:02:12 That's great. Himani, tell us about when you first heard that the Ever Given had got stuck in the Suez Canal. Where were you? What was the first thing that went through your head? How did it make you feel?

Himani: 00:02:25 Actually, the number of COVID cases in India were increasing at that time, so I was working from home. It was a Tuesday evening and I was just wrapping up my final meeting for the day with the team. I was taken by surprise. I asked the team to stay in the meeting room while I checked the authenticity of that news. I kept my fingers crossed and thought to myself, this news better be fake, otherwise we are going to have a long day.

Jan: 00:02:57 One time you actually want to hear fake news, right? So, once you had an initial understanding of the situation, what were your first steps? What did you say to the team? How did they react?

Himani: 00:03:09 To be honest, for a couple of minutes I was trying to absorb this news and it had a direct impact on the customers and people's lives. I broke the news to the team and said, This is what has happened and we need to pull up our socks. It was an alarming situation and we needed to know if any of the shipments was medically critical or out of stock, which meant that somebody's life would be at stake. We had to dig out more details and plan the actions accordingly. On a smooth operations day, it came as a shock.

Jan: 00:03:51 Wow. So you said you were working from home at the time. Did you work from home throughout the entire incident? If so, what was that like? Was it maybe an advantage in any way? What were the challenges you faced? Was it difficult to sort of balance family life with working long hours?

- Himani:**
00:04:13 Yes, I was working from home throughout. It gave a bit of leverage because we could spend more time on focusing and resolving the problem and save some time in traveling to office. Another aspect of this was that we were spending long hours on the screen and definitely losing some personal time, but we balanced the pressure together as a team so that we could also attend to urgent personal matters when required. I would say our families also understood the seriousness of the situation and supported us to do our jobs effectively.
- Jan:**
00:04:54 So you just talked about your team. How did you motivate them? What was what did you think was important for them?
- Himani:**
00:05:01 Honestly, I did not need to motivate them much, but this is a behavioral quality and mindset of my team that they were ready to support already. The most important thing for them was timely delivery of my shipments to save lives. But we did promise to ourselves that once we are through the situation, we will definitely have a team get together in right time.
- Jan:**
00:05:28 Fantastic. So what was the communication with the client like? What was their state of mind? How did you handle their anxieties or concerns?
- Himani:**
00:05:39 When the client got to know about the situation they were nervous and anxious. There was a long queue of questions, all things considered. They wanted to know how badly they were impacted. It was a situation out of anybody's control. And our client did understand that. But what they did expect from us was how we could minimize the impact of that crisis. By then, we already had the action plan at hand and we presented the same to them. They were somehow relieved and could sense that their shipments were in the right hands. We could totally empathize with them, so we made sure to connect them with it all at all levels. We became very proactive to work on the mitigation plans and kept them informed via phone calls, meetings and system information, etc.. One thing for sure, we were always by their side.
- Jan:**
00:06:41 Great. So you and your team managed to find various solutions, right? Including sending critical shipments through airfreight and rerouting other shipments via the Cape of Good Hope. How did you feel once you realized that the crisis had been avoided?
- Himani:**
00:06:57 We kept our fingers crossed throughout the entire event. After days of confusion and hard work, it felt liberating. It definitely gave a lot of satisfaction to see that none of the urgent shipments were delivered late or with a compromised quality. I felt very proud of my team and that they had handled the situation so effectively. It made us believe more in our capabilities.
- Jan:**
00:07:26 And so what was the customer's feedback? What were they most grateful for?
- Himani:**
00:07:30 They greatly appreciated the way we had counteracted the situation and averted any possible impact on patients' lives and inventories. Talks about flexibility, protectiveness and transparency received a high recognition from them.
- Jan:**
00:07:48 That must have been really gratifying right? So, in wrapping up, what was the main lesson that you were able to draw from this experience?
- Himani:**
00:07:57 We have seen more varieties and number of disruptions, especially in the past few years. It's important to embrace resilience in order to maintain high levels of customer service. The combination of the right people with the right mindset and up to date technology makes the difference. The future is unforeseen, and the most we can do is to face it better.
- Jan:**
00:08:22 That's amazing. Thank you so much for talking with us, Himani, and sharing your experience. It's been a really fascinating insight.
- Himani:**
00:08:29 Thank you. You're welcome.



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