



## [GSSA ATC joins in as online air freight booking trend gathers speed](#)

By [Ian Putzger](#) 10/09/2021

As airlines build online booking capabilities and embrace third-party portals, one airline general sales & service agent (GSSA) is preparing its own portal for bookings.

ATC Aviation is set to unveil functionality that will allow forwarders to book shipments online.

The portal will debut in Germany in a few weeks, starting with one or two of the bigger airlines in ATC's portfolio, revealed CEO Ingo Zimmer, and subsequently it will be rolled out across the GSSA's global network.

ATC has a presence in 32 countries and its airline clientele includes Saudia, Ethiopian, Nippon Cargo, ANA, Qatar Airways and Sichuan Airlines.

"Our goal is that each and every customer's shipments can be booked via the e-booking channel. That means if we represent a certain airline in Germany, the German agents can book their shipments with this airline via the e-booking platform," Mr Zimmer said.

The roll-out will take some time, he added. "It's not so easy. You have to customise the rates, you have to customise the trucking, you have to double-check the schedules. We want to make sure it's correct."

The channel is already in use in test markets and has found lively interest, he reported.

"A lot of agents are using it to book to China already, because they know they can get the confirmation and the booking done very fast," he said.

Meanwhile, Southwest Airlines Cargo yesterday announced it was now taking bookings online via its swacargo.com portal. In partnership with Hangar A, the platform allows customers to search for capacity and book next-flight guarantee shipments up to 10 days in advance.

“Shippers can now secure space on thousands of daily domestic flights in advance, providing peace of mind and an improved and expedited experience in our cargo facilities,” said Wally Devereaux, MD of Southwest Cargo and Charters.

Online bookings of airfreight are increasing. According to WebCargo’s latest monthly update, released on 2 September, e-booking adoption has continued to rise. The portal provider noted that Qatar Airways had expanded its operational coverage on the platform to “nearly worldwide”, and e-booking in Germany had reached record heights, while forwarders in the Middle East were coming online.

Rival cargo.one, which first opened in Europe, recently started service in North America and is preparing to launch in Asia, according to CEO and founder Moritz Claussen.

Some forwarders are also pushing online sales and booking channels. The likes of DB Schenker and DHL Global Forwarding have been offering online booking for air and ocean cargo, and last month Saloodo!, the road freight digital sales and service offshoot of DHL GF, expanded into South America with a launch in Argentina.

“The successful implementation of Saloodo! in Europe, the Middle East and Africa allows us to offer the service now also in South America. This helps to improve the connectedness and efficiency of the road freight system in this region” said CEO Antje Huber.

This week the platform announced a new feature that allows users to create their own ecosystem. They can pre-select transport providers for a closed user group that will be the only recipients of their orders, while shielding them from other providers on the platform.

In addition to the individual partner selection of users, the platform also produces closed groups around certain parameters, such as showing only truckers with special equipment serving certain verticals.

“This feature was the wish of many shipping companies on the Saloodo! platform, but also of the specialised forwarding companies,” said Ms Huber. For all the evolving sophistication, online platforms do have limitations. While ATC plans to offer its new online booking functionality throughout its network, ideally with all airline customers, Mr Zimmer does not expect this to trigger a mass migration of bookings to the new channel.

Most shipments require service beyond the pure booking element, he explained. By his estimate, booking makes up “about 5% of our job”. Hence, he is not worried about the spread of third-party pricing and booking platforms, as they do not pose a threat, in his eyes.

“My feeling is that the platforms are for smaller and standard shipments up to a certain size,” he said.