

STRAIGHT to the POINT

At BASF, VTC Means Special Handling for Specialty Chemicals.

BASF is an acknowledged star in an industry void of standout performers. This multinational specialty chemical company's name is synonymous with such qualities as innovation, product superiority and customer service.



SITUATION

Specialty chemicals differ from commodity chemical products in that they comprise the value-added segment of the business—products sold based on their performance-in-use characteristics. Specialty chemicals are typically premium ingredients, often requiring special handling.

In the making of specialty chemicals, competitiveness has traditionally been defined by innovation, not by price.

In recent years, though, the demands of the global marketplace have exerted pressure on manufacturers to lower prices on all products, specialty chemicals included.

SPECIAL SERVICE for Special Requirements

The times and the market increasingly demanded more of BASF—a company world known for its extraordinary products. They turned to a company that has been taming transport/transloading challenges for more than a century—VTC.

See Special Service inside>

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A PLAN TO CUT COSTS GULF COAST TO WEST COAST

As price pressure lowered profit margins, BASF needed a new strategy for moving its specialty product, urethane polyols, from plants on the Gulf Coast to customers on the West Coast.

According to Michael Labadie, Materials Management-Urethanes of BASF, “We looked at several options, but found the one that made most sense at Ventura Transfer Company—if they could satisfy one critical condition, ensuring the high product quality controls that our customers demanded.”

Tim Dodds, Customer Service and Transloading Manager of VTC, remembers that the BASF review process was an extensive and thorough one. “They carefully audited our facility, making sure that both nitrogen and steam were available at the rail siding. Our trucks also had to have all the fittings necessary for their needs, which they did.” Beyond its abilities to meet BASF’s needs

on these points, Dodds called attention to VTC’s business vision, an ongoing commitment to do whatever is necessary to get the job done right. “If an assignment means we have to put in a new procedure, or add a process, we do that—we’re open to change.”

Beyond the basics, Labadie discovered of VTC that, “Their driver training was on par with, if not above, the other carriers, and, most important, we were able to take advantage of VTC’s proximity to many of our California and West Coast-based customers, thus saving a significant amount on our freight budget.”

VTC could provide the right material handling, regardless what form the liquid took.

SPECIAL STRATEGIES
for Special Requirements



SPECIALIZED CAPABILITIES

BASF needed nitrogen capabilities available full time at the rail. With some transloaders, nitrogen on demand might have been just an option, but with VTC, it is always standard equipment.

SPECIAL HANDLING MEANS ATTENTION TO DETAILS

Because the applications of BASF customers were unique and proprietary, there could be no one-size-fits-all solutions. According to Tim Dodds, meeting the company's special needs was just business as usual for VTC. "We've been solving problems for our customers for more than 130 years. Now, some of BASF's challenges were one of a kind, that's for sure, but all that meant to us was we had to work harder at solving them."

BASF's urethane polyols was shipped in various liquid forms—sometimes clear, sometimes milky white, and sometimes viscous. Dodds knew that VTC could provide the right material handling, regardless what form the liquid took. "We've come up against all kinds of liquid transfer challenges before, and have devised proprietary technologies for handling them." Among those innovations are a VTC-developed method for lifting and tilting tanks, plus methodologies for

heating tank contents to facilitate content transfer and reducing heel.

At times, the BASF assignments required meeting demanding weight tolerance specs that mandated deliveries in small single lots. At other times, job specs required creating an efficient method of removing heel from BASF tank cars, so they could be returned quickly to the plant. In one instance, it became necessary to coalesce heel from five tank cars into a single trailer, and then sampling and running an analysis of the lot to make sure the batch conformed to customer specs.

BASF recently advised VTC that they were its "best" transloader.

On another occasion, VTC used its proprietary ISO tank and tilt chassis combination to more



SPECIALIZED SERVICE

In addition to nitrogen, BASF also needed steam. VTC had no problem providing both. Product heating is handled by stationary boilers at their ISO depot, while railcar capabilities include both traditional stationary boilers and innovative portable boilers—coming right to the railcar instead of the other way around.



SPECIAL VALUE

A pleasant surprise for BASF was VTC's custom-designed and proprietary ISO tank/tilt chassis, which literally tips an ISO to make emptying quicker and more thorough. As an added benefit, it helped BASF reduce heel.



efficiently empty tanks at a customer's yard. VTC's work on this assignment produced a fringe benefit for the customer—the limiting of latex waste and the reduction of tank cleaning costs, while actually helping to realize better yield of the product they ordered. For that reason, and others, BASF recently advised VTC that they were its "best" transloader, and would like to see them consulting in other areas. "They have the least amount of issues with our terminal," smiles Tim Dodds.

It's clear that in the demanding and competitive specialty chemicals business, BASF has discovered the value of a transloading partner that is very demanding of itself.



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