



"I manage with a human, personal touch, but I can also make tough decisions when needed", says Peter Mons, CEO of Swagemakers Intermodaal Transport.

Meet Mr Mons

Swagemakers Intermodaal Transport was recently taken over by the Vlaeynatie Group. The company's new CEO, Peter Mons, started in April this year. In this interview we get to know Mr Mons a little better.

Q: Can you please tell us something about yourself?

A: I have been married for over thirty years. My wife and I have two daughters and three grandchildren. My eldest daughter works in education. My youngest daughter is a certified psychologist, but has recently started working with me as the new HR manager at Swagemakers. She has a lot of drive and ambition, she takes after her father."

Q: How did you get started in the transport business?

A: I was raised in a family of entrepreneurs. We have a family butchery and with my brother at the helm, we now count four generations of butchers. I decided on a classical education and graduated in Latin and mathematics. I then continued to study nursing. But when I got my degree, there was hardly any work to be had as a nurse. Even if you managed to get a nursing job, the work hours were variable and the salary was not the best. I decided to look around for something else. There was an administration vacancy at De Dijcker, a transport company in Vlierzele, Belgium. The company was located close to where I lived, so I applied. A total of 200 people applied at the time, and I was selected. I was a dedicated and motivated employee and worked my way up to the top. Ten years later, I was the company's logistical manager.

Q: Why did you change jobs?

A: When I was working at De Dijcker, I was called by a headhunter. The firm Eagle Expedition in Ghent, part of Manuport, was headed by one man who wanted to retire. They wanted someone to take over his position and asked if I was interested. It was a small transport division, purely focused on freighting. Six months later, I decided to take them up on their offer.

Q: How did this job influence your career?

A: Throughout the years, 40 employees joined the office and we had agencies in Gent and Kallo, close to Antwerp, as well as in Rouen and La Rochelle in France. The company was finally sold to Euroports, and I was working full time in Rouen in France. They decided to let go of our right-hand supply chain manager in Belgium and organise the logistics differently. They brought in a road transport manager with his own personnel and

moved all activities to Antwerp, leaving just a little group of employees behind in Gent. I was then responsible for both the Rouen and Gent offices.

Q: How did you end up at Swagemakers?

A: At the end of 2017, I was diagnosed with cancer. I had to start chemotherapy in December and that meant that I needed to take necessary measures, so I handed over my French portfolio. However, against all odds, I was back at work by September 1, 2018, as the commercial manager for big Euroports accounts. It wasn't really what I wanted or liked though, so when Vlaeynatie asked me to take up the position as CEO of Swagemakers, I immediately accepted.

Q: What is it you'd like to achieve at Swagemakers?

A: My ambition at Swagemakers is to keep the company in its current great shape and expand the freighting section. The Vlaeynatie Group and Swagemakers have already been working together closely for years. It is a fine business, and I will never change a winning team. Together, Vlaeynatie, Swagemakers and 3MCT create a fabulous intermodal one-stop-shop. We can pick up and deliver freight wherever the customer wants it.

Q: What are you like as a CEO?

A: I manage with a human, personal touch, but I can also make tough decisions when needed. A former staff member paid me a great compliment by calling me the most humane boss he has ever had. I enjoy being in good contact with my employees and often ask them how they are doing or how things are at home. We're all just people.

Q: Has having been diagnosed with cancer changed your outlook on work and life in general?

A: I've been in the transport business for 33 years. My personal goal, now I am in remission, is to show that I'm still at the top of my game. These past years have brought me more perspective and I am not the crazy workaholic I once was. I enjoy life. I adore being with my grandchildren and I love cooking for the whole family on a Sunday!

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