

companies



Part of the Commercial Furniture Transport truck fleet. Photography courtesy of CFT.

The Pandemic Pivot: Commercial Furniture Transport (CFT)

by Bob Beck

For all intents and purposes, the strange new world of COVID-19 has halted the economy, and in the process drastically altered the way companies operate – if they operate at all. Perhaps no sector has been affected more than the commercial transportation sector.

This is the story of a transportation company well known in our industry in the NY-NJ-CT tri-state area, **Commercial Furniture Transport (CFT)**. Since the onset of the pandemic, it has made a pivot that not only kept its doors open, but has contributed to the battle against COVID-19.

CFT is a family-owned business that is a fixture of the office furniture industry in New York City. It has earned its excellent reputation and become a favorite of many NYC design firms and the go-to delivery and installation

company for many of our industry's manufacturers and dealers by knowing how to navigate the streets of Manhattan to deliver large loads of office furniture despite the normal congested circumstances involved – and doing so reliably, while meeting demanding New York schedules.

Founded by **Marty Goor** in 1986, CFT has played an active role in the commercial furniture business for almost 35 years. In that time, Mr. Goor built the business by responding to the changing needs of his clients in the tri-state area. With warehouses located in nearby Secaucus, NJ, the company offers warehousing, delivery and installation services and all that goes with it...including restacking or complete relocation of facilities.

In 2009 I got a call from Marty Goor telling me he had decided to step

aside and hand over the running of the business to his son **Ryan Goor**, who is now the president of CFT.



Ryan Goor, President of CFT

Meeting the demands of the New York market has often meant making significant investments – in warehouses (they have three) and in a large number of trucks and equipment of various types, sizes and configurations, from forklifts to bobtails with lift gates to semi-tractor trailers. And one of the

things that sets CFT apart for New York is that they even have trucks and trailers in custom sizes to fit New York City tunnels, bridges and loading docks.

Those investments in response to project requirements have paid off. And the fact that CFT is a “third party” allows it to avoid conflicts of brand loy-

alty on large and complex installations involving furniture, furnishings and equipment from many manufacturers. In a word, *flexibility* has placed CFT in a unique position in the New York commercial furniture market.

“We have worked hard to insulate our business from some of the usual ups and downs by maintaining independence from any one manufacturer and by offering more than just delivery and installation.” Ryan Goor said in a telephone interview. “We provide warehousing when needed, and we provide long haul transportation for many of our manufacturers.

“But when I took over the business, one of the things I discovered is that a major value-add we can offer dealers and manufacturers from outside our region is our knowledge of navigating New York City and providing a level of comfort.

“I’ve found that the complexity of delivery and installation in Manhattan scares some people who aren’t used to working here. I often tell people, ‘You don’t just show up in New York City and hope you’ll get lucky.’ We’ve developed a level of trust that we can get the job done in New York that has helped us build a nation-wide network of manufacturers and dealers who use us when they’re doing a project in New York.”

According to the Port Authority, before COVID-19 more than 600,000 trucks traveled into and out of Manhattan in the average month. Since the shelter-in-place order there are almost none. It would have been easy for Ryan Goor to just say, ‘Our business is dead until this blows over,’ layoff his employees, shutter the warehouses and hunker down with everybody else.

But the kind of psyche that builds a robust and flexible business in New York is not the hunker down with everybody else kind of psyche, and it certainly is not the type that animates Ryan Goor.



Delivering a job in Manhattan pre-pandemic

companies

“When I saw that many of the manufacturers we normally work on office projects for had shut-down, I knew we’d have to pivot in order to keep our people employed and keep the company going,” Ryan said. “I saw that things were still moving on the medical side, so I reached out to some of my contacts at companies we’ve worked for in the medical industry.”

One of those contacts turned out to be **Stryker**, one of the world’s leading medical technology companies and a leading manufacturer of emergency relief beds and hospital beds in general. And not coincidentally (in fact, unfortunately) Stryker has been one of the companies that has had to deal with a huge uptick in business during the pandemic, due to the shortage of

hospital beds across the country, but especially in the hardest-hit areas.

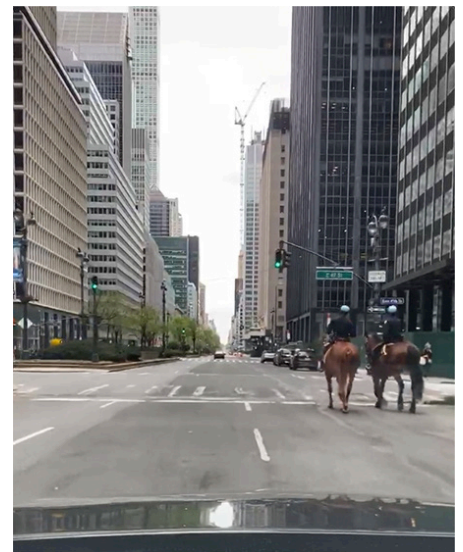
Ryan said, “When I reached Stryker on the phone they said, ‘Oh my god, I’m so happy you called! How many trucks can you get me, how many tractors and how many trailers can you get me!’ It was almost like the perfect storm for us. Unfortunately, we had the availability, but thankfully we did!



CFT tractor pulling a Stryker trailer



Pre-pandemic traffic in Manhattan



Traffic in Manhattan during the shut-down.
Photo: Carl Magnusson

“As a result, over the last three or four weeks we have delivered thousands of hospital beds all up and down the East Coast, from Virginia to Boston. One of the interesting jobs was several truckloads of emergency relief beds

delivered to Walter Reed Medical Center in Bethesda, MD. We had on-duty soldiers helping us unload.”

“You know, some of the manufacturers have stayed open and a few have sent shipments through us. A

few jobsites have been able to receive stuff, and we’ve had some warehousing. So, we’ve been able to stay open. In slower periods we’ve used the time to get better organized, looking at all our processes and planning to come out of this stronger than ever.

“Personally, I have had and recovered from COVID-19. I was in Seattle, San Francisco and L.A. in the middle of February, right when it first hit the U.S., and I did not escape. I was not in a life-threatening situation but it really kicked my ass. I had all the symptoms – terrible headache, high fever, bouts of shivering and the chills. I was really sick.

“Now we are slowly seeing some of our more typical type of business return, but in a slightly different way. We’re being asked to remove furniture and bring it back to our warehouse for storage. We’ve started doing reconfigurations in essential businesses that have stayed open but need more ‘social distance’ between workers. And we’ve even started an office decontamination service where our people will go in and decontaminate the space. It’s all about staying flexible and providing needed service.” ■



Unloading emergency relief beds at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Bethesda, MD