

Seven Ways IT Efficiencies Can Maximize the Global Freight Forwarding Process

Enhanced And Integrated IT Systems Can Greatly Maximize A Company's Freight Forwarding Process

We operate in a global freight and logistics environment that is considerably more dynamic and complex than it has been in the past. This is especially true in the current worldwide economic situation where new business paradigms are increasingly necessary to meet existing and future business challenges. The entire freight forwarding process is evolving as global economic changes occur, and today requires more advanced and efficient IT tools to support these market dynamics.

There are a number of IT solutions available that can be applied across a wide scope of business functions that can automate and integrate various company processes and cohesively manage them throughout the entire freight forwarding process. The optimal solution involves installing an integrated ERP-like software system that marries the various disciplines both horizontally and vertically throughout a company's global operations. This is especially important in the freight forwarding industry, where accurate and timely data capture is such an integral part of the supply chain process as it relates to running the entire company – from sales prospecting, to quotes, to operations, to finance, to customer notification -- a cohesive, optimized logistics process.



Gene Gander, Vice President Business Development - Americas

Listed below are seven ways that IT optimization helps ensure increased supply chain functionality and increases efficiency for global freight forwarders:

- **Provide a Consistent SOP Process:** In too many cases today there are fragmented communications solutions in a disparate global operating system that may serve one business segment more so than another. This requires multiple data entries and is redundant in nature. A single SOP system for supply chain visibility can access necessary shipment data and integrate information across business functions, saving time and creating companywide efficiencies. With integrated information, sales reps can enter critical data that is used to facilitate increased sales and customer service by monitoring project status and meeting customer deadlines, while operations management can utilize the same, uniform information for reporting and oversight without requiring additional data entry. IT optimization provides cross-functional management visibility as a by-product of the sales effort, but is also an invaluable communications tool for ongoing operations.
- **Increase Ease of Training:** Ongoing training of changing IT system methods is critical to effective global forwarding operations. The establishment of a single integrated IT system through one provider permits a more effective and freight-specific systems training process across departments, business functions and company branches. This can provide efficiencies for both company employees and customers that utilize your training manuals on-site, or on a remote or on-demand Web-based basis.
- **Create Deeper Customer Profiles:** The sales and marketing process is the first contact with the customer/prospect your company has and a single, customer-specific operational profile of the customer and shipment parameters and variables can be an invaluable operating tool. Changing customer organization details, contacts, and procedures once a logistics process is underway can be an administrative nightmare with multiple data systems within a company. A single and comprehensive data system with a common point of customer input ensures continuity for the entire team, which has access to the same updated information to ensure a seamless flow of quality information. A properly integrated customer

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profile does not require sales to send multiple memos, but rather enables the system to automatically inform operations of how to most efficiently manage that account regardless of organizational changes.

- **Consolidate Reporting:** An effective, consolidated IT system for your organization can create a valuable reporting tool that offers superior, electronic data mining, funnels important shipment data and documents throughout your company's business functions without redundancies, improves the workflow and enhances the decision-making process for management while ensuring data quality through a single and consistent electronic reporting system. Utilizing accurate and timely information that flows in all directions helps to create efficiencies by avoiding miscommunications and creates a 'greener' electronic, paperless work environment in the process.
- **Improve the Customer Service Process:** A properly integrated IT system can significantly improve your customer service by providing accurate shipment data for both the company and customer. IT efficiencies enable a more precise customer record to be entered into a CRM tool that is both accurate and cross-functional. IT solutions with an integrated CRM process enables sales, operations and finance to work from the same records, maximizing companywide operating efficiencies and greatly enhances the customer experience through improved reporting of shipment status.
- **Create Centralized Data Efficiencies:** A robust single system and transparent IT solution can also enhance the nature of the data quality and efficiencies throughout your organization. By creating a centralized database that is accurate and accessible to all parties in the pipeline, maximum efficiencies are created by centralizing information regardless of skill level or geographic location. Entering data only once reduces possible errors caused by multiple touches, and saves money and resources by not having to re-key it multiple times. The cross-functional visibility created by one integrated IT system enables it to be viewed and managed efficiently from both ends of the supply chain.
- **Enable Greater Supply Chain Visibility:** The electronic entry of shipment information, as opposed to manual entry, allows the data capture to be pushed out through the extended supply chain more accurately and timely. For instance, an export data entry does not just start with the arrival of information with an IT-efficient system; but rather when the foreign export is initiated for shipment management. This provides more immediate end-to-end supply chain visibility for all trading partners.

Ultimately implementing a robust, single-source IT infrastructure can greatly lower hardware and software costs, while streamlining all business functions and improving workflow productivity. Installing a single integrated ERP-like software system can maximize virtually all supply chain business functions without incurring additional expenses. This ultimately enables forwarders to more efficiently manage global operations electronically through a single software provider, allowing the forwarding operation to provide consistency, improved and timely shipment status communications and vastly improved global supply chain visibility. With globalization, the freight forwarding industry can be well-served with an efficient IT solution that benefits all trading partners.

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CargoWise edi provides solutions for forwarders, customs brokers and logistics service providers focused on supply chain execution capability in an integrated ERP-like globally capable system. It is a world-leading provider of low-cost, high-value software solutions and services for the freight forwarding, NVOCC, express courier, customs brokerage, contract warehouse, container freight station, ships agency, local cartage and other supply chain services.

Every day, 1,300 logistics service providers, consisting of 33,000 users in 45 countries, move goods through the global supply chain using CargoWise edi's flagship product ediEnterprise. CargoWise edi offers supply chain logistics management systems that provide full integration across all departments and functionality for domestic, regional and global customers. Headquartered in the U.S., Australia and the UK, the Company operates from 12 worldwide offices across the U.S., Europe and Asia. More information on CargoWise edi can be found at: www.cargowise.com.