

REAPing Benefits Through Customer Requirements Analysis

- Process Evaluations Reduce Customer Risk, Detail Software Deliverables -



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While many logistics service providers may consider their processes and systems to be adequate, in reality most are not employing fully optimized business processes to meet customer deliverables. The fact is that many of these companies are neglecting the immediate benefits to be gained through regular customer Requirements Analysis Process (REAP) updates.

A thoroughly executed Requirements Analysis Process can greatly enhance the understanding of a customer's current expectations and goals for any given business system or application and help define the parameters of exactly how a software system should deliver the functions it is designed for. A good REAP analysis by a qualified business consultant can help identify a customer's current and future business requirements and dramatically reduce risks associated with specific customer processes, requirements and business issues. It will also help define the exact results the user system is expected to achieve and provide a more confident total cost of ownership.

In order to remain competitive in today's business environment, it is essential for logistics service providers to continually identify new customer business requirements and deploy optimized software solutions that can meet those requirements. While some companies do an adequate job of identifying new requirements and staying current with technological developments, too many companies do not have the internal resources to conduct these analyses, and often fail to see the need for advanced technology and process changes. Consequently, these companies fall behind market competitors that are providing more comprehensive services to end customers, enabling them to gain new and profitable business while retaining current customers. A customer Requirements Analysis Process can be conducted pre- or post-sale as a means of mapping out strategic business requirements and special issues necessary for maintaining this competitive edge.

A REAP can dramatically reduce the risk of a company's processes becoming dysfunctional, while improving the start-up and acceptance process of a new software application by staff. It reduces the total cost of project implementation and avoids system confusion, while mitigating inter-office and partner friction and variance from the project. A REAP assessment can provide a proper cost analysis of project needs, resulting in a more detailed and comprehensible set of deliverables. This kind of business assessment delivers a strong set of documented strategic needs that are cost effective and ready for project management and delivery. It also assists in finalizing the strategies for overall business needs, sales process and the total cost of ownership.

VIEWPOINT

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Furthermore, a software Requirements Analysis Process cuts across multiple levels of business functions and interactions between users, business processes and systems. There are often multi-faceted internal and external requirements that must be considered when evaluating the best way to configure a software system to optimize business processes.

A good REAP evaluation should cover the complex task of eliciting and documenting the requirements of all users, while modeling and analyzing requirements of each business function and documenting them as a basis for a system designed to achieve identified customer strategies. For most logistics service providers, the best solution is outsourcing this process to a specialized consultant from a software vendor that has extensive experience in international freight forwarding and logistics. In-house IT departments often do not have the resources to stay ahead of advances in technology, and effectively identify inconsistencies within a single process handled by multiple users. Additionally, insufficient or conflicting input from stakeholders can cause further analytical obstacles.

In summary, a qualified requirements analyst has the ability to interact closely with multiple work groups, with different requirements, to arrive at a single true requirements list. Strong communication and people skills along with sound programming knowledge are prerequisites for an expert requirements analyst. A consultant, who understands the benefits of a solid REAP assessment also has the ability to more clearly identify changes in strategies once a project has begun and adjust process requirements accordingly – providing a clear understanding of the customer's needs and enabling both the logistics service provider and its customers to reap the benefits of optimized business processes.

ABOUT CARGOWISE® EDI

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.