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How To Choose An Online Solution For Your Global Supply Chain

10 Questions to Ask Your Potential Global Visibility Software Provider

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You've been considering an online solution to your global supply chain management needs. But how do you know what kind of solutions will work for you? What do you need to do in order to prepare your company to make its shipping processes more efficient before putting an online solution in place?

Keep it simple. Streamlining your global shipping processes may seem complicated, but by asking the right questions of your potential global visibility software provider, you can ensure that your company will keep up with the advances in technology and the Internet while achieving significant savings when it comes to its overall shipping expenses.

First, ask yourself whether or not your current technology is keeping up with today's marketplace. Do you believe it will be able to adapt to a changing marketplace in the future?

Then, consider your company's unique global shipping practices. Pay special attention to your company's inbound shipments, and how your inbound practices may or may not be affecting your total shipping expense. A typical company operating on a global scale is likely to find its most significant savings within its inbound materials.

Next, ask yourself what kind of online solution is going to: A) allow you to change in a changing marketplace, B) analyze and assess your company's global transportation costs and service requirements, and C) empower you to optimize your global supply chain by providing you with both detailed and comprehensive views that allow for further analysis and forecasting.

Here are 10 questions (and sub-questions/examples) that you can ask your potential global visibility software provider in order to determine if their online solution is right for you:

1. Can your global transportation management software provide a comprehensive, multi-modal view of our company's shipments, beginning from inception to delivery?

For example: Will I be able to track a shipment from my manufacturer in Asia to my distribution center in US throughout all modes of transport?

2. How are you going to give me control over the cost of each shipment within my company's supply chain?

For example: Am I going to have visibility of each and every shipment within my supply chain?

3. Is your online solution going to provide me with accurate, real-time data?

For example: Is there going to be a delay between the time a shipment leaves the distribution center and the time I am able to view that the parcel is in transit?

4. Does your solution allow me to hold the appropriate departments accountable for our company's freight expenses?

For example: How will I be able to hold my Procurement Manager accountable for all of his or her procurement activities, including purchasing, expediting, inspection, transport and logistics?

5. In what ways will I be able to calculate the optimal network configuration for different service costs and objectives?

For example: Will I be able to create tables, graphs, dashboards, etc., that allow me to query past events and compare them to actual data?

6. Will I be able to view my company's supply chain from anywhere in the world?

For example: Will I have a global view of my parcel shipments, whether they originate from international or domestic locations?

7. Will I receive an automatic alert when shipments deviate from our company's logistics guidelines?

For example: If a particular department in my company is continually using a carrier that is not in accordance with our company's logistics guidelines, will I be notified via an alert?

8. If your global transportation management software is web-based, where, exactly, is the information stored? How will I know that my data is secure?

For example: Do you offer a multi-level security application that enables management to monitor the information?

9. In what ways will your online solution help me to determine my final selection for a global (versus national) carrier, and how will I know which of those carriers would benefit my company the most?

For example: How will I know that the amount of my controllable inbound freight has been determined, and that I should consider partnering with another global/national carrier?

10. Will your solution allow for scalability when shipping volumes increase?

For example: Will you be able to handle high-capacity software installations, whether they are necessary now or in the future?

After you've asked these questions, you should have a good idea of how well your potential global visibility software provider will handle your company's complex high-volume shipping environments worldwide.

Of course, ultimately, you're looking for savings, so be sure to keep in mind that any software provider you choose should be able to provide you with a detailed assessment of your company's current shipping practices even *before* you begin implementing the software. After your current shipping practices are compared to best-in-industry practices, you'll be able to better determine which aspects of any online solution are going to work best for your bottom line.

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