The Future of Global Trade: True Supply Chain Visibility

Q&A with **Ty Bordner**, Senior Vice President, Marketing and Business Development, Amber Road

Q: From your unique perspective, what are the key trends that are shaping the practice of logistics management?

A: From a global supply chain perspective, the key challenges for logistics managers is the lack of visibility. They struggle to collaborate well with overseas factories and suppliers, which results in a lack of visibility to both the order/shipment status as well as to information that is critical to allow the goods to flow through customs. This lack of visibility to information like third party testing and inspection results, or inventory on hand, often results in late surprises which affect ship dates and/or quantities. Lack of visibility to the importing government agency requirements, will not necessarily affect the ship date, but will cause a delay in the supply chain at the port of arrival. To put it another way, the lack of visibility causes surprises – and these are not good surprises!

Q: Based on these trends, what are the biggest challenges facing logistics managers today?

A: This lack of visibility creates a high degree of unpredictability, making it difficult for logistics managers to do their job. Ultimately, this puts pressure on achieving the company goals. It hurts the ability for a company to meet their customer commitments or get goods to the store shelves. This affects revenue goals as well as customer retention and satisfaction metrics.

Q: How is the application of technology helping logistics professionals overcome these challenges?

A: Global Trade Management (GTM) software provides instant visibility to all the information needed for logistics managers to execute their mission. This includes information for sourcing, logistics, and trade. In addition, it provides the ability to better collaborate as well as automate many of the core cross border functions. Perhaps most importantly, it gives the logistics managers a dashboard of metrics that are used to continuously improve the operation. In your view, what are the biggest benefits to a logistics management operation that's putting technology to work to streamline processes? There are three key benefits to the organization. First, GTM technology can provide great efficiency. Collaboration between internal and external parties is improved, which results in the reuse of data (key once, use many), which in turn requires less time and effort and reduces human errors. Automation of key tasks results in improved productivity and greater quality. Second, a GTM solution reduces supply chain and brand risk.

A GTM that provides integrated export and import compliance regulations facilitates a better process for managing regulatory risks. Visibility to the status of a global order, including sourcing and logistics, removes the "surprise factor." Standard process definitions and visibility to third party inspection and supplier audit data reduces the risk of social and ethical sourcing mistakes, which can damage the brand. Third, and perhaps the most important, a digital platform for the global supply chain, provides control and agility for an organization. GTM solutions give a company the ability to see and react to the future! It seems the future of global trade is ever increasingly in a state of high dynamic change.