

Customer Success Story

Encore Forwarding

Descartes Global Logistics Network Delivers an Encore Performance

Encore Forwarding, Inc. (EFI) is an international and domestic freight forwarder and U.S. customs broker. The company, which was founded in 1985 and is wholly female owned, specializes in organizing the safe and efficient movement of goods for more than 600 global customers in the retail, apparel, food products, publishing, electronics, office supply and manufacturing sectors. EFI has a domestic and international network of partners and agents, and was the first to open a U.S. customs approved container freight station in Jacksonville, Florida.

The Impact Of Loose Connections

EFI was using a proprietary track and trace system, Encore Track and Trace (ETT), yet only a few of its 20 global carriers were connected to it. And those that were connected were submitting data in various formats, leaving EFI with the time-consuming job of reformatting the data.

To check the status of shipments, two personnel (one full-time, one half-time) were responsible for going onto each carrier's Web site and entering a carrier number and bill of lading. They then had to manually update the ETT with the latest information. "This was an extremely tedious and time consuming job that had to be done daily, and was at risk for typographical errors," said Teresa Wickham, President of EFI. Adding to the challenge was the fact that people in different locations could simultaneously be checking and updating the customer information, leading to further confusion and duplicated effort.

"We needed access to real-time data on shipments, and also had to find a way to improve the quality and integrity of the information coming into our internal system," explains Wickham. "Also, more of our customers were demanding real-time updates as part of the supply chain service we offer so they could immediately know about delays and respond accordingly."

This rapid response capability was especially crucial in cases where EFI was dealing with time sensitive products – such as live animals that had to reach their destination within 72 hours or published materials. In addition, as some EFI customers have dozens of offices around the world, they required visibility into goods moving from location to location at a moment's notice.

“Once we talked to Descartes and saw what they had to offer, we realized we didn't need to search any further.”

Teresa Wickham,
President of Encore Forwarding, Inc. (EFI)

Moving To Real-time Updates

EFI decided it was time to find a way to integrate real-time visibility with its existing, proprietary technology investments. “We spoke to a logistics solutions provider we had worked with previously and they immediately recommended the Descartes’ Global Logistics Network,” said Wickham. “Once we talked to Descartes and saw what they had to offer, we realized we didn’t need to search any further.”

The Descartes Global Logistics Network™ (GLN) is a multi-modal network of transportation providers and their customers that facilitates the electronic interchange of logistics information. Through the GLN, global transportation providers can connect to their trading partners and seamlessly and reliably exchange information to help drive delivery performance and high levels of customer satisfaction. The Descartes GLN connects thousands of shippers with 90+ air, 30+ ocean and 1600+ truck carriers, along with regulatory agencies that include the Federal Maritime Commission and U.S., Canadian, Dutch and Indian customs agencies. Designed specifically for logistics processes and their users, the GLN handles all standards and message specifications for manufacturers, retailers and distributors.

Just 60 days after an initial information gathering session, EFI had received customer and carrier authorizations and the implementation began. “The major ocean carriers were already doing business with Descartes, but we still had to isolate the specific data we wanted to pull on each shipment and provide it to Descartes. The relevant data could then be extracted and sent to our own system for automatic updating,” explains Wickham.

The Descartes Value

Wickham reports that Descartes has done an outstanding job of meeting timelines and delivering first-rate service. “They have been incredible to work with and very clearly understand our needs.”

Since implementing the solution, staff who previously handled manual updates can now focus their efforts on more value added tasks to improve cargo movement. Updates now come in four times a day to the ETT, and delay notifications are automatically sent to carriers via email. Approximately 200 people across EFI’s extensive network now have access to this data through this system. As a result, EFI has realized greater efficiency and improved customer service.

Wickham agrees that connecting with carriers and partners on a global scale is essential for any transportation operation. “While we were using our proprietary ETT application, for it to be effective, we had to connect to our carriers,” she explains. “Descartes enables us to interact electronically with our entire multi-modal community so we know what is happening with cargo in real time. Exchanging messages through Descartes makes everything much more efficient and predictable. Now we’re doing what we always did, but in a much better way.”

Summary

Challenge:

New York-based Encore Forwarding, Inc. was finding that the job of checking and processing data on global carrier shipments was becoming increasingly challenging. Staff members had to manually check the status of a large number of global shipments and convert data for entry into the company’s track and trace system. This was not only time consuming, but also led to clerical errors and duplication.

Solution:

Encore implemented the Descartes Global Logistics Network to facilitate the electronic exchange of data and enable real-time visibility into shipping status and automated notifications.

Benefits:

- 1.5 staff reallocated to handle value added functions
- Global connectivity to an entire multi-modal community
- Real-time visibility into cargo status
- Improved customer response times
- Automatic delay notification