

Technology's Exceptional Filters

Hallmark says visibility tool across its network shows logistics is in the cards

Visibility is a buzz word that gets thrown around a lot in logistics today, but Hallmark Cards argues that its practical definition is, "Clearing away distractions so people can get the important work done."

Catherine Burrow, international transportation and customs manager at Hallmark, said her company's recent adoption of Management Dynamics Supply Chain Visibility and Event Management system lets her filter through the mass of routine transportation information so she can focus on the exceptions that pose real challenges.

"That way people in my group are being more proactive on problem solving," Burrow said.

Technology gives shippers a leverage that is orders of magnitude more powerful than processes and techniques to see where freight is and how it is — or is not — moving toward the consumer.

Web-based systems allow information to be filtered and communicated quickly across organizations so that problem areas get the prompt attention they require. Visibility in itself isn't worth much

without the ability to itemize and manipulate data and the cargo to which it is attached.

Burrow said Hallmark wanted a one-stop shop for freight transportation data that was coming from a variety of directions. Its five ocean carriers and its third-party logistics provider and broker offered fairly comprehensive information on their Web sites, she said, but generating reports separately and then merging them for comparison and analyses proved inefficient. "The port problems on the West Coast a few years ago highlighted how cumbersome it was to locate all this information," she said.

Jim Preuninger, CEO at Management Dynamics, said his service allows a diverse range of shippers to standardize information from carriers and logistics providers on many different platforms, including electronic data interchange, XML, barcodes, radio frequency identification technology — even manual entry.

"There isn't any one approach to this thing that's going to satisfy all those different participants," said Preuninger. "You need to be able to solve (for) the lowest

common denominator as well as the most advanced players in the industry."

Hallmark's logistics managers needed to assure their greetings cards, gift items and Keepsake Ornaments arrived on time, an especially demanding task in their highly seasonal and market segments.

"Our peak is extreme," Burrow said. "You never know when a stock number is going to get hot and start selling really well."

Before, Burrow said, Hallmark could track containers but not their contents. Now, she can track items by department area and promotion code, allowing her to check the delivery status of items for Valentine's Day. Hallmark can request e-mailed alerts for specific containers as they move past transportation milestones at ports, yards and en route, as well as exception alerts for freight that is not moving or moving too slow.

The system also lets Hallmark's internal procurement, inventory and other non-transportation managers access information, freeing Burrow's team to concentrate on troublesome exceptions that visibility technology identifies.

"I think what we've got is really one-stop shopping, improved visibility (and) we've got reporting capability that's easy to use and very dynamic," Burrow said. "It's very self-service."

BY WILLIAM HOFFMAN

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CATHERINE BURROW
INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORTATION
AND CUSTOMS MANAGER



Management Dynamics Inc.
POWERING GLOBAL TRADE

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JIM PREUNINGER
CEO

Management Dynamics is a leading provider of global trade management solutions that transform the performance of global supply chains for importers, exporters and logistics service providers. With over 17 years' experience working with some of the world's largest and best-known companies, our solutions synchronize the flow of information among trading partners, optimize supply chain execution decisions, and streamline import and export processes to ensure regulatory compliance and minimize cost and risk involved in cross-border transactions. Management Dynamics' time-proven solutions are used by more than 13,000 global users at some of the most successful 3PLs, carriers, manufacturers, retailers, and high-tech companies.

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