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TPM IS OVER, NOW WHAT? PREDICTING THE FUTURE OF THE SUPPLY CHAIN

The current complexities of the supply chain and the need to successfully navigate it prompted many shippers at this year's Trans-Pacific Maritime conference (TPM) to seek out our advice about how to plan their logistics strategies for 2024.

One of the main reasons we were so popular was due to the fact that shippers continue to struggle with how to work around the two of the critical issues affecting the supply chain before TPM, the drought at the Panama Canal and Houthi rebels attacking container ships at the Suez Canal.

According to a recent article in the Wall Street Journal, the drought at the Panama Canal has created a line of more than 50 vessels looking to traverse the canal, while the attacks near the Suez Canal have forced carriers to sail around the African continent, adding more than ten days to their normal travel times.

Both problems have forced many shippers to adjust their timelines and budgets. But the greatest concern among shippers is that no carrier company has been able to adequately adjust to these problems, causing rates to be inconsistent, prompting them to seek out guidance for alternative strategies.

“There is nothing wrong with asking for help, especially in an environment that is proving to be very challenging, especially for shippers who collaborate directly with carriers,” said Anthony Fullbrook, president of OEC Group North America. “Right now, the only way to succeed in this environment is to work with an experienced and connected logistics expert. Going it alone is not a prudent approach as the only solution is more options not less.”

Even carriers remain uncertain about the current environment, causing many shippers to rethink who they can trust. There are also well-grounded fears throughout the industry that workplace related issues, specifically the ILA contract negotiation, could shut down ports all along the U.S. East and Gulf Coast. Many experts believe that the potential for a work-stoppage during peak and holiday seasons is very real.

“With all the geopolitical, environmental, economic, and workplace related issues affecting the industry, I think it is safe to say that the supply chain is as complicated as it has ever been,” said Nick Klein, Vice President and Head of OEC Group’s Chicago branch. “Shippers need to be looking at the entire picture to understand the potential impact all these issues will have on their business and plan accordingly. Unfortunately, with limited options their best bet at success is to work with a seasoned pro and diversify their deliveries. This is the only strategy that has been proven to work to avoid any potential supply chain snags.”



INTERVIEW WITH AN EXPERT

Steve Myers, COO of OEC Group USA, discusses the role operations play in the supply chain and how this part of the company is so essential in serving our customers' needs.

Q: What is operations and why should shippers care?

A: Operations is the part of the company that makes sure everything runs smoothly and efficiently, not just for those who work in the organization, but for clients too. Here, customers can see how well a company is run, its values and priorities. While operations appears to be “behind the scenes,” it is highly visible as our efforts affect the processes and systems clients use every day. Our role is not necessarily to make money for clients, but to help them keep more of it.

Q: What is one of the most valuable things the operations division handles?

A: Customer service. It is a key area of operations because it demonstrates to clients how much a company prioritizes their needs and success. A company with a strong customer service division with a high-touch approach and that quickly responds to a client's need, which is exactly what a customer should want. With that quick response, the customer can quickly get the answers they need to move forward. As the old saying goes, “Time is Money.” A good customer service team respects the client's time, and respecting their time is respecting their money. After more than 40 years in business, I've come to realize that the fastest and most respectful way to respond to our client's needs is through a quick customer service conversation.

Effective customer service also gives the client the opportunity to educate themselves on other areas of their supply chain where they may be potentially vulnerable, while

establishing a real connection between that client and a knowledgeable professional who wants to help them succeed. That kind of dedication, to both the person and operating margin, is priceless.

Q: In an increasingly digital world, what role does technology play in operations? Do operations divisions still need a human customer service team for clients to reach out to with questions, or can that kind of service be handled digitally?

A: I'll answer your question with a question: Have you ever tried to text somebody to meet up and grab lunch? You spend 20 minutes figuring out every little detail, waiting for them to draft out their response, meanwhile you could've figured this out in five minutes on the phone. That is how I approach technology in operations. There are incredible things happening with technology every day, but having a person for customers to reach is still critical. Talking to somebody is the most efficient, cost-effective way to help a client solve a problem.

That being said, technology is still a critical part of how we solve customers' problems. We have systems in place designed to be more efficient and helpful in accounting, tracking shipments, and placing orders. What all those systems share is ease of use and efficiency. Any system you use through OEC Group is going to be easy to use and save you some time. Once customers have saved that time, they have more time to do what they do best: grow their business.

The common denominator here is really saving time through a high-touch approach. Solving a problem in five minutes instead of twenty is invaluable; every minute our customers spend messaging a customer service bot is a minute they're not focusing on their business. And if you're providing effective customer service, you're giving your customers some of those minutes back. So, we maintain a full toolkit, digital and personal, to give that time back to our customers.

Q: What advice would you give clients when researching a company's operations department?

A: Don't be afraid to ask for a demonstration of how to use their technology. Go out of your way to confirm that it's both easy to use and beneficial to use. I would also advise companies to interview customer service departments; evaluate their knowledge, see firsthand if they are helpful. Make operations part of the process — it is not always about saving money on rates, it is about saving time and being more efficient with your money everywhere. Being proactive and understanding the strength of a company's operations department will help you be more efficient and avoid any unnecessary and hidden costs.



BROTHER! I CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT YOU'VE DONE TO THE PLACE. LOOKS A LOT BETTER THAN WHEN I WAS HERE THREE-THOUSAND YEARS AGO.

THANKS, PO PO! WHAT BRINGS YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS HERE??



YOU KNOW I HATE IT WHEN YOU CALL ME THAT!

PO PO! THAT'S ONE I WILL HAVE TO REMEMBER!



SANTA AND I HEARD THAT BILL BELCHICK MAY BE IN THE AREA. NOT SURE WHAT THESE TWO ARE DOING.

OH MY GOD, IS THAT BILL BELCHICK? LOOK SANTA, IT'S THE EVIL GENIUS HIMSELF!

HI BILL, CAN WE GET AN AUTOGRAPH? WE'RE BIG FANS.

I WISH I WAS SIGNING MY NAME TO A HEAD COACHING CONTRACT

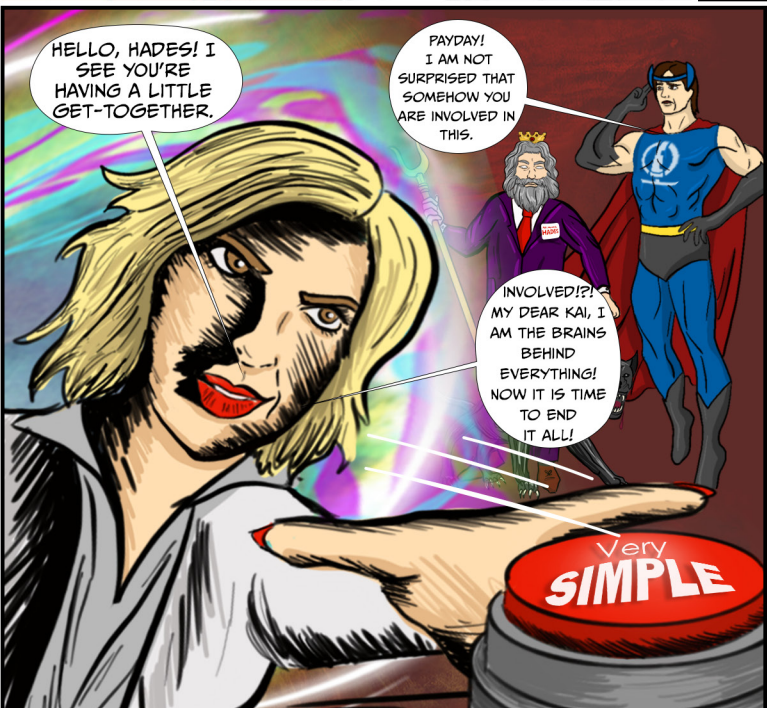


LOOK, I AM GLAD EVERYONE IS HAVING A GOOD TIME, BUT WE NEED TO FIGURE OUT HOW TOM BRADY GOT HIS POWER TO READ MINDS! I THINK IT MAY GIVE US SOME INSIGHT INTO ALL THE RECENT SUPPLY CHAIN COMPLICATIONS.

HE CAN DO THAT?! THAT EXPLAINS A LOT ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIP!



OH THAT'S AN EASY ONE THE REASON WHY TOM BRADY CAN READ MINDS IS ... HEY WHAT'S THAT!



HELLO, HADES! I SEE YOU'RE HAVING A LITTLE GET-TOGETHER.

PAYDAY! I AM NOT SURPRISED THAT SOMEHOW YOU ARE INVOLVED IN THIS.

INVOLVED!?! MY DEAR KAI, I AM THE BRAINS BEHIND EVERYTHING! NOW IT IS TIME TO END IT ALL!



THAT'S SOMETHING YOU DON'T SEE EVERY DAY!

WE SHOULD GO AND INVESTIGATE

GOOD IDEA! IT'S LIKE YOU READ MY MIND

THAT'S BECAUSE I DID!

BOOM!

Fun Facts About Four Leaf Clovers



1 in every 10,000 three leaf clover plants produce four leaves



The leaves stand for faith, hope, love, and luck



The Irish believe four leaf clovers are magical and can ward off bad luck



Four leaf clovers give people the power to see fairies



The most leaves ever found on a clover stem was 56



Ireland is home to more four-leaf clovers than any other place, giving meaning to the phrase “the luck of the Irish”



It is believed that giving your four-leaf clover to someone else will double your good luck



If a clover plant produces a four-leaf clover, it's more likely to produce another one

ABOUT OEC GROUP

As an industry pioneer, OEC Group has become one of the world's leading logistics companies. We leverage in-house expertise, carrier partnerships, connections with ports and transportation hubs, and our network of offices in North America, Europe, Asia, India, South America, Australia, and the Middle East, to provide freight transportation, logistics, information, customs and brokerage, insurance, and technical services to over 50,000 customers of various sizes and industries.

We are also highly sought after for the advice we give shippers on how to optimally manage their supply chains. The guidance we provide is based on data analytics, best practices, and decades of industry knowledge.

We believe that relationships matter and treat your cargo as our own. Our experts are always investing in efficient, cost-effective, and cutting-edge services to evolve with the ever-changing market, address the complexities of any client's supply chain, and consistently perform at the highest level for our customers.

Our business is making our logistics expertise, your competitive advantage.

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