

Systems for success in cross-border trade

By Keeli Jernigan
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With U.S. corporations dramatically expanding their manufacturing facilities in Mexico to save on labor and transportation costs, smart CEOs are increasingly focused on keeping their reputations intact with quality controls in staffing, warehousing and distribution.

Not only can the cost advantages of near-shoring be eroded with inefficient routing and delays, but companies from auto makers to telecom who are shipping raw materials to Mexico and finished goods back to the U.S. also need to think proactively about how their assets remain secure throughout the process.

Keeli Jernigan, CEO and President of Trans-Expedite Inc., a global freight and logistics company for Fortune 500 corporations, shares key strategies to use in end-to-end transportation and logistics solutions. “Cross-border business is very specific and regulated. It’s crucial to have experts on the ground who can inform senior management of the risks and solutions available to them,” she says. Headquartered in El Paso, where \$90-billion or roughly one-fifth of the U.S.-Mexico cross border trade takes place annually, Trans-Expedite offers this guidance:

- Enlist local experts in global best practices. The efficiency and quality corporations pride themselves on in the manufacturing process can be lost if staffers in the warehousing and logistics management are not trained or managed to specification. “It pays to include expert staffing as part of the supply chain,” Jernigan says. In building

warehouse facilities and transportation functions, she partners with U.S.-based bi-lingual staffing companies with a presence in Mexico to ensure accountability and maintain strong employee relations in the area.

Likewise, include local employment attorneys and CPAs on the team, she says. “Multi-national corporations can’t afford a misstep and regulations can be complicated and are constantly changing.”

- Create a seamless strategy. Map out a transportation and logistics plan that ensures efficiencies in shipping but also tax considerations when crossing the border. “Operating on the border is completely different from operating solely in the U.S.,” she points out. “Be sure to hire a transportation expert who knows the dynamics of logistics and customs on both sides of the border. Additionally, exporters can lower or eliminate U.S. Federal taxes or duties if they go through a Foreign Trade Zone,” she adds.

Trans-Expedite partners with Mexican carriers who specialize in seamless, quality delivery. “Some offer price competitive full truckload service and others are ‘hot shots,’ but together they provide a strong carrier base to meet clients’ deadlines.”

Insist also on key certifications like the ISO 28000 for the highest standard available for supply chain security, and Custom Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (CTPAT) to ensure security at the border.

- Leverage a high-tech, high-touch approach to oversight. Today’s technology allows companies to track a delivery or inventory in real time and make that information available on a client’s SmartPhone. “Companies need to know where their shipments are and what’s in their inventories in advance of a meeting or to meet a deadline. They should be able to get all that information from a single source,” she says.

At the same time, executives like the reassurance to know that there is a person available to them on the phone anytime day or night who can address any service interruptions or shipping delays and implement Plan B, Jernigan says.

Founded in 2001 to expedite freight anywhere in the world with personal service, available 24/7/365, Trans-Expedite is a full-service global logistics company that has grown to exceed \$60-million in annual revenues. It provides the scale to take on the entire freight transportation and logistics program, the agility to customize any part of that process to their needs, and the security to protect its assets throughout the entire process.

Trans-Expedite represents a single-source logistics solution that helps companies of every description protect their assets, reduce operational costs and solve strategic supply-chain problems with a comprehensive range of customized services. This includes warehousing, inventory management, domestic and international distribution, customs brokerage, white glove services, reverse logistics, trade show services and more.

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