

eBook

A Logistics Manager's Guide to Modern Freight Forwarding

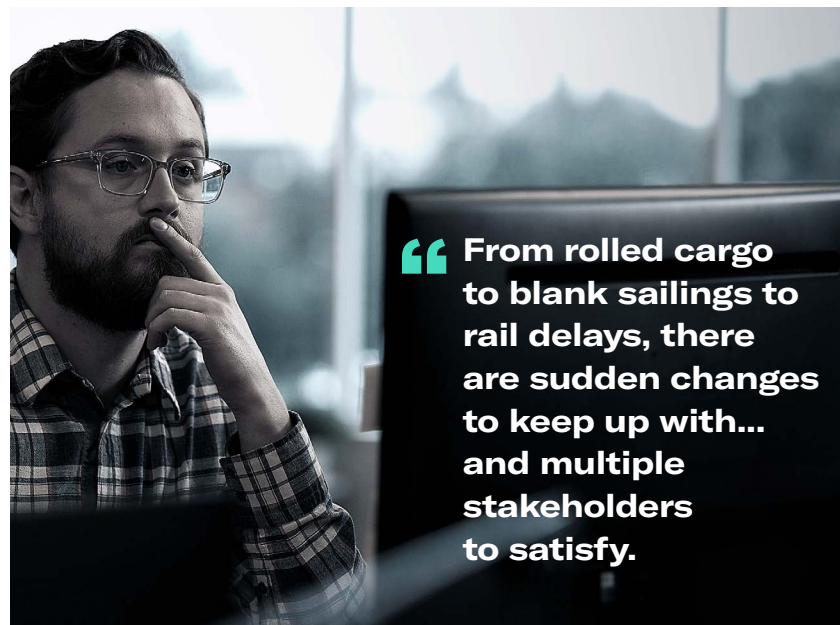
flexport.



The irony of the logistics manager role is that when it's performed beautifully, it's rarely noticed. But one mistake, and suddenly that person is at the long end of a pointing finger. It's a tough job that comes with all kinds of chaos. From rolled cargo to blank sailings to rail delays, there are sudden changes to keep up with, plan for, and accommodate. Complexity, risk, and cross-functional communication come with the territory. So do stacks of paperwork, deadlines, and multiple stakeholders to satisfy. As a result, valuable time and effort is wasted trying to track down critical updates and problem-solve. But the role, like the industry, is shifting.

Freight forwarding is transforming, fueled by data and technology. [One recent study](#) estimates that new logistics technologies could cut shipping and customs processing times by 16 to 28 percent. Businesses are hungry for data to help inform their planning and operations. But more importantly, logistics managers are seeking new ways of working that can help them lengthen their stride — without hurdles to slow them down.

If you're looking to break out from behind the legacy challenges you've inherited, read on. You'll learn how four straightforward approaches can modernize your workflows — and make your job easier in the process.



The Legacy Problem: Chaotic Challenges

Several challenges come into play for those of you on the front line of supply chain management.

■ Scattered information

Planning, setting up, and tracking shipments requires time-consuming gathering of lots of information from multiple sources. That's made even more difficult when the information is not centralized, causing delays with back and forth emails, phone calls, and other communications in the search for required information. All of that adds up to time wasted that could be spent on more urgent matters.

■ Different parties, competing interests

As the go-to person for multiple parties at different times, you need to be able to pinpoint details of shipments at any given moment. That's along with knowing which SKUs are in transit, when and where they'll arrive, and whether contractual terms are being met. Without

a single source of truth to rely on, relaying the right information to the right people at the right time can feel like a tightrope walk — especially when there's limited time.

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■ Expectations, metrics, and costs

When it comes to supply chain management and freight forwarding, requests for metrics and cost reports are inevitable. Finding the data to respond to those requests can be tricky, especially when it is buried or obscured.

■ Supplier/partner management and performance

In the midst of making sure the shipping process is going to plan, it is painfully obvious that supply chain management does not operate on autopilot. Lack of transparency and real-time connectivity with partners make it harder to confirm expectations and track purchase orders. These factors can also tie up valuable time.

■ Complexity and risk

Logistics managers shoulder a heavy amount of complexity and risk. The potential for legal violations, physical injury or danger, loss of revenue, steep fines, or other threats are all on the line. Whether reviewing quotes from suppliers and invoices from vendors, or vetting details regarding deadlines or customs and compliance regulations, the information is complicated and overwhelming — especially when trying to manage the process singlehandedly.

The Modern Solution: Control and Visibility

Working with the right tools — and the right freight forwarder — can be a game changer in terms of transforming the entire process. Here are four ways you can gain control and visibility for more efficient supply chain management.

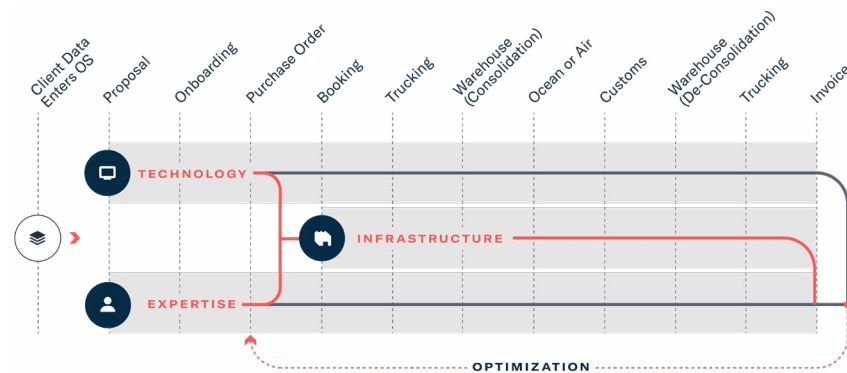
1. Meet Your New Wingman: Technology

Look for digital dashboards that you can integrate with the freight forwarding process. A good platform should remove barriers and create transparency to:

- Unite all stakeholders in the process
- Centralize details and present clear snapshots of shipment details, stakeholder communications, quotes, invoices, customs forms, and other information
- Allow for real-time updates

Not only will this free up your time, it will create opportunities for you to add more value to the business and help you resolve issues more quickly.

How a unifying platform can simplify the process for everyone



2. Don't Forget the Real-Life Wingmen

With so much ground to cover — complete with all kinds of obstacles — trying to go it alone can be frustrating and counterproductive. Seek out expertise from people who understand not just the industry, but the entire process of freight forwarding. Find advisors who understand routes, rates, and the other essential aspects so they can advise you on which options make sense for your needs. The freight forwarding process is not one-size-fits-all.

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A big part of success in this industry relies on establishing and nurturing relationships with:

- Experts in customs, compliance, and other trade-related issues to help navigate the many regulations, forms, and tariffs that vary from country to country
- Suppliers and partners to help understand shifting market conditions and options that can best match your organization's business goals

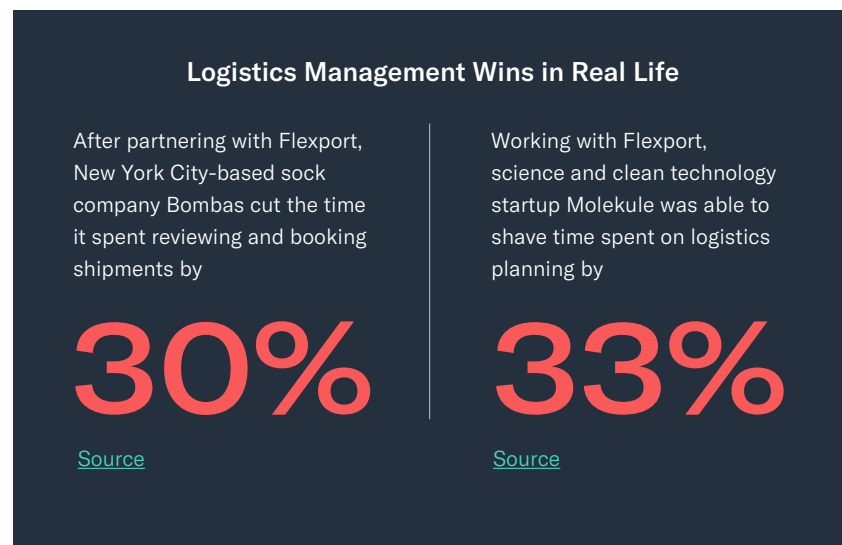
Building relationships with everyone in the process makes a stronger supply chain. With the right digital platform connecting all parties, barriers are naturally removed, allowing for more regular and straightforward interactions that foster greater collaboration.

3. Make Friends with Your Data

Data is — or should be — your best friend. When assessing freight forwarders and their services, find out what kind of data and reports are available. Look for the ability to access real-time snapshots from stakeholders that are simple to digest, along with strategic analytics that:

- Reveal patterns in inventory stock needs, transit times, and seasonal expenditures to enable cost-effective decision making
- Deliver insights for supply chain planning and projections that contribute to business growth and profit-making
- Provide accurate information for sharing downstream with parties like sales, marketing, and warehousing, as well as other partners

Reliable data helps you avert issues and stay ahead of the game.



4. Ask and Learn

Keep in mind that conditions are constantly evolving and negotiation is part of the culture. To stay at the top of your game, look for opportunities to challenge the status quo.

- Don't overlook potentially cost-saving opportunities like freight consolidation:
 - If shipping via ocean, ask your freight forwarder if they offer an LCL consolidation service to match consignees who are waiting for orders to ship with other consignees whose containers are not maxed out.
 - If shipping via air, ask about private air services, where a shipment's capacity, origin, and destination can be matched with that of other shippers.

These options can help you offset the cost of your container or mode of transport by sharing with consignees who are eager to get their goods moving faster.

- Don't be afraid to scratch the surface of contracts to see what's really included. Ask for specific details and spell out your service requirements.
- Consult with your freight forwarder to see if you can benefit from different transport modes, not to mention route and pricing options.
- Whether moving goods via ocean, air, or ground transportation, stay current with industry news and carrier announcements. Understanding trade lanes' rates and space, and keeping informed of the latest shipping news, can help avoid issues in managing the supply chain.

Keep Current with Industry Happenings

- [Freight Market Updates](#)
- [Avoiding Customs Mistakes](#)
- [Understanding the Ocean Freight Market](#)
- [Flexport Tariff Updates](#)

To learn more about how you can forge new ground in logistics management, visit flexport.com/our-vision.

About Flexport

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With its cloud software and data analytics platform, Flexport today serves almost 10,000 clients and suppliers across 109 countries. Its offerings span ocean, air, truck and rail freight, drayage and cartage, warehousing, customs advisory, financing, and insurance.

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