

One key step to finding answers to any logistics, supply chain, or technology challenge is knowing the right questions to ask.

Inbound Logistics assembled a team of supply chain and logistics technology leaders, and asked for their perspectives on the important logistics challenges and opportunities impacting your business.

More importantly, these logistics thought leaders can give you guidance when considering improvements to your business processes.

THOUGHT LEADERS

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THOUGHT LEADERS

How to Leverage a 3PL's Expertise with Packaged Applications



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Knowing how to quickly set up and configure supply chain technology so the solutions work for individual customers is the key to getting the most flexible and powerful performance from industry-leading package applications.

Q: *Can you describe Ruan's technology platform mix?*

A: Ruan's approach to business-enabling technology is primarily packaged software applications: transportation management systems, warehouse management systems, and network design. Our platform is based on Oracle Transportation Management for logistics management, TMW for dedicated fleet operations, and JDA for both WMS and network design solutions.

Importantly, we have leveraged our domain expertise to integrate these systems across our organization. However, there are also areas where we have built and run our own custom in-house applications when we do not find maturity in the marketplace around solutions that our customers need.

Q: *What sets Ruan's solution apart from other transportation providers?*

A: Expertise is a prime differentiator. Ruan has dedicated team members assigned to each customer. Our solutions teams are consistent from the onboarding process through continuous improvement projects. This knowledge about a customer's business and how their systems are set up, along with the expertise that our teams have on our applications, means that we are nimble with technology changes that address our customers' needs.

Adaptability is a top reason to lean on package applications as the backbone

of a platform where many system changes are enacted through system configuration by a business analyst rather than through IT-managed code development, which typically requires more time from idea to implementation.

Using adaptable applications doesn't force customers to fit into a single box, but rather creates a unique box for each customer. In end-to-end transportation processes, there are many similarities across customer operational tasks that take place in the middle, such as securing capacity, execution and tracking, and freight payment. But the ability to tailor solutions in the front of the process, such as how to capture orders and plan freight, and in the back of the process with customized billing formats and key performance indicators, is critical to meeting the customer's needs.

Q: *Should shippers consider hiring a transportation provider instead of purchasing technology to use on their own?*

A: The following areas typically drive the decision to partner rather than purchase technology:

- Harnessing the 3PL's expertise to configure the TMS system to meet evolving business requirements without expensive outside consulting guidance and limited in-house experience
- Avoiding cost and timeline overruns with in-house system implementation
- Integration and training with existing carrier network
- Managing the system upgrade process to keep current with evolving application functionality and support agreements
- Ability to focus on the core functions of the business while partnering with a provider with expertise in managing transportation and the associated technology

CRM System Brings Ease of Use and Multimodal Benefits

Q: *What obstacles do shippers typically face when working with outdated software systems?*

A: When customers are looking to ship something, cost and reliability aren't their only considerations. They also want the process to be simple and save them time. They want to avoid making phone calls, visiting multiple websites, and the risk of getting inaccurate information. When they have to work with older, outdated software to request a shipment, the entire process can be much more time-consuming and labor-intensive. They want an interface that's clean and easy to use, with fewer click-throughs and no toggling between pages or multiple websites.

Q: *Do you offer a solution that eliminates these problems?*

A: An integrated platform offers ease of use, with the shipper merely clicking a button to enter their shipment details and obtain a quote. They can feel confident that their quote will be accurate and their pricing locked in when they are ready to ship. This combines to save the customer time and money, and to help ensure their peace of mind.

The system we developed, DLS Worldwide's CRM System, provides customers with a simple interface in which shippers can find multimodal quoting, booking and reporting, shipment tracking, and invoice management with online payment options. It's simple, easy to navigate, and a one-stop shop for all logistics needs. Best of all, since this is our own proprietary software, we can make changes and enhancements on the fly. We consider feedback from our customers and strive to make this the best in the industry.

Shippers who've already signed on for this program like the ease of use, timely pickups and deliveries, competitive rates, and options provided. Overall they have seen a 12% freight reduction since implementation over a year ago. Our customers also like the personalized support that their customers receive from our staff.

DLS Worldwide optimizes your distribution and controls your costs through our spectrum of integrated services, unique sources of capacity, and global, technology-based delivery network.

Rely on DLS Worldwide for:

- Domestic LTL & Truckload
- International Air, LCL and FCL
- Expedited Air or Ground with Same Day, Next Day or Two Day Options
- White glove solutions including install & unpack, liftgate delivery, and more



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What to Look for in Real-Time Track & Trace



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Q: *What are the benefits of track & trace visibility?*

A: Track & trace ultimately helps companies provide better customer service. When used to track inbound freight, it allows companies to plan their receiving efforts more efficiently. When applied to outbound freight, it provides a way for the customer to have instant access to the status of their shipment, preventing long calls to customer service to find out where their order is and when it will arrive.

Track & trace data allows for the shipping process to move smoothly and expectedly and provides opportunities for remedies when things don't go smoothly.

Q: *How should my track & trace system improve my logistics?*

A: There are many ways to provide improved logistics management, but what companies need is a system that provides end-to-end track & trace that makes the data actionable. Some solutions only show you the status of the order once it leaves the shipping dock. Tracking data should show you when a truck is broken down, but there is no magic button to get the shipment moving again.

More advanced systems integrate the data from the vendor (for inbound freight) to the end consumer (for outbound freight). The data allows a shipper to diagnose the cause of their late shipments and develop sustainable strategies to fix it.

Q: *What is the biggest hazard when implementing a visibility platform?*

A: Many systems have great visualizations but lack the data quality required to improve logistics measurably. The problem usually occurs when incoming data streams need cleansing and normalization. Disparate sources provide different data quality. Your provider should be able to handle multiple data streams and types, cleansing it to create a platform that is both accurate and actionable.

Q: *What should I ask my track & trace provider?*

A: When evaluating a track & trace supplier, I would ask one question: "How will you help me create strategies that will provide me with a competitive advantage?" If they can't answer and show you how their system is going to make the data actionable, find a different provider.

Q: *What should my track & trace platform provide?*

A: The right track & trace solution should provide the following three things: First, actionable data that allows you to dig deeper into how you're performing and diagnose the issues. Second, strategy development data to identify where to begin and what actions to take to solve these issues. And third, a deployment strategy that allows you to expand beyond where you are today, creating competitive advantage and long-term value.

Integrating Multiple Data Sources in a TMS

Q: *What are some of the data management challenges to expect in a transportation management system (TMS)?*

A: The most important thing is to decide what data you want/need, which trading partner has it, and how you will obtain it in a format that will be required for standardization of reporting and data mining.

Typically, for a TMS to obtain pertinent data elements, it requires integrating with numerous trading partners including carriers, PO management systems, customers' ERP systems, WMS, visibility platforms, loadboards, accounting systems, insurance providers, other TMS/brokers, and more. Data from these sources can be delivered in a variety of methods and formats.

The development of a database schema and an entity relationship model to define and enumerate logical relationships between the data entities is needed. Normalizing the data to the lowest common denominator and working your way up will allow you to effectively integrate disparate data sources.

Q: *How do you address the issue of dealing with different data sources?*

A: Data integration in the purest sense is about carefully and methodically blending data from different sources, making it more comprehensive and therefore more useful and valuable than it was before.

To be successful, you need to be flexible in the method and formats of the delivery and receipt of data. Exchanging information from only one method or format limits your trading partners and

can limit the amount of data available in the data warehouse.

Your data sharing technology needs to consider:

- The types of data and the size of the data sets that are shared
- The data processing services and tools that are required to maintain or use the data
- The technical capabilities and skills of data users and data providers
- The types and levels of data and access security that are required
- The software and hardware required by network users
- The level of effort and cost to develop and operate the exchange network

The answers to questions such as these address the overall feasibility of the data exchange network from a cost-effectiveness and likelihood of success perspective.

Q: *What advice do you have for managing the integration?*

A: Be flexible. Don't be too rigid with your methods of communication or formats. Play to your trading partners' strengths by utilizing the method they use that best meets your requirements.

For instance, the current trend in sharing carrier data is using APIs; however it is still important to be able to utilize other traditional methods such as EDI and flat file exchanges for quoting, tendering, tracking, and invoice data since some carriers still utilize EDI vs API. Without EDI or some other form of data exchange, you would be excluding data from those carriers, leaving an unacceptable void of data. As methods and formats of data exchange continue to evolve, a strategy that can accommodate a variety of means to manage the multitude of sources is prudent.



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