A Freight Forwarder’s Guide to Achieving Competitive Advantage: Supply Chain Execution in the Cloud
Boundless Complexity

Freight forwarding is a complex business. Managing multiple customers and multimodal transport carriers, customs challenges, fluctuating demand and allowing for different languages, time zones and currencies all add up to a big challenge that stands between you and competitive advantage.
## 20+ distinct stages in a typical job order

### 87% view visibility as a key challenge

### Daily frequency of fluctuating workloads across time zones

### 4 transportation modes – ocean, air, road and rail

### Large competitors

### Integration with partners, customers and carriers
A Single Software Platform is a Necessity

In a business as dynamic and complex as freight forwarding, technology is crucial to maintaining efficient, flexible operations. For mid-sized and expanding small businesses that need to compete with larger providers, a cloud-based software platform can deliver operational efficiency, much needed visibility and the agility needed to both maximize revenues and deliver excellent customer service.

A few must-haves include:

- **Rapid deployment**: get up and running quickly with no lengthy implementation process
- **No infrastructure costs**: hosted, Cloud environment means no hardware investment or IT resources required
- **Turnkey templates**: best-of-breed functionality out-of-the-box
- **Easy integration**: easy integration with other business systems and those of customers and partners

Here are 7 tips for evaluating Cloud freight forwarding software, with a focus on revenue, profit and gaining competitive advantage.

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Automate Processes & Data Transfers

Despite advances in technology, many freight forwarders continue to rely on costly manpower to re-key information for each shipment. By using an automated system connected to trading partners, carriers, agents and brokers, information can be entered once and then automatically updated and passed on to the next party – saving time and avoiding errors.

Critical shipment documentation, including air waybills, bills of lading and manifests can be accurately system-generated and saved electronically for greater visibility.

Major efficiency gains and cost savings can be made by automating data transfer between systems, whether it’s for order management, the creation of export documentation or filing of customs declarations.

The benefits are huge. A mid-sized freight forwarder can save many thousands of man hours and avoid hundreds of costly errors just by using the right technology for process automation.

And of course those benefits transfer to customers.
Automation Possibilities

- Cloud-based, collaborative order management systems and services to streamline how information is exchanged with partners and customers.

- Electronic processing of invoices and e-freight capabilities.

- Rates and tariffs made available directly from the operational process – no copying or re-entering of critical financial data.

- Portals that enable customers to monitor shipment locations and manage exceptions such as diversions for weather or civil disruption.

- System-generated monitoring and management of milestones to provide proactive KPI management and ensure the customer’s standard operating procedure is followed.
When it comes to responding to your customers' rapidly-changing requirements, speed is of the essence. It's a very competitive market and shippers are increasingly demanding.

The speed at which you can set up new customers or alter arrangements for existing customers can represent the difference between winning and losing a contract. For example, how quickly could you add a new route or designated cargo area or accommodate different compliance requirements?

It’s critical to consider how a freight forwarding software package can enable you to operate faster, better and with greater flexibility. With a cloud-based platform, the setup of your hosted environment and staff training can be done with ease. Turnkey processes can be configured to your business without the need for expert IT resources or expensive hardware investment.

Look for a best-of-breed Cloud freight forwarding solution that allows for easy configuration and adjustments without costly developer hours. This added agility can create competitive advantage and open up additional revenue streams.
Explore Visibility

From manufacturers and retailers, to freight forwarders and logistics service providers, to ocean, air and road carriers; the various parties involved at all stages of the global supply chain benefit from visibility of goods being moved.

Reliable shipment visibility is essential to keep goods on schedule, keep costs in check, protect margins and keep customers satisfied.

Shippers are starting to demand better visibility from freight forwarders – and this is another opportunity for you to create competitive advantage.

Look for hosted freight forwarding software that provides end-to-end shipment visibility as a standard part of the platform.
Visibility

Multimodal Transportation

Consolidation
Cargo Warehousing
Customs Clearance
Delivery
Invoicing
Profit Analysis

Quotation/Booking
Stay Alert

Maintaining service levels can help ensure your slim margins are preserved. Alerts are a key defense against supply chain factors that are outside of your control.

As goods move through the lifecycle, customers are looking for a view of critical milestones in the supply chain. Even more important are automated alerts, notifying them when service level agreements or major milestones are at risk.

Alerts allow you and your customers to manage shipments by exception while driving greater efficiencies. Freight forwarding software vendors now offer a wide variety of options for alerts – simple notifications that an event has or has not occurred, sophisticated options for follow up activity, and pre-defined, automated processes to alert relevant parties based on certain business rules are just some of the possibilities.

Be sure any cloud-based freight forwarding software platform you select will keep you, your customers and your supply chain partners informed.
Example of alerts in practice:

- **Bad weather results in delayed ocean sailing:**
  - e-mail notification automatically issued to agent, customer and road carrier(s) for next legs

- **Goods held at Customs:**
  - System alert triggers urgent action internally,
  - customer e-mailed to notify of issue

- **Air cargo leg arrives on schedule:**
  - Notify warehouse/road carrier goods are ready for processing
Scalability is Key

If you’re a mid-sized freight forwarder looking for one solution to grow with you as your business grows, you’ll need to ensure it is flexible enough to suit your business both now and in the future. It must be easily scalable.

With a cloud-based freight forwarding solution, it’s essential that the vendor can demonstrate scalability well beyond your current size and complexity, e.g. performance impact of short-term and long-term peaks created by users in different time zones.

Make sure your chosen vendor has worked through rigorous testing scenarios internally and with other customers. Also verify that the software allows you to quickly and easily configure key processes without special customization extras, which could add both costs and delays that you cannot afford.

If operating in different countries, you need to ensure the freight forwarding solution offers a single platform for operations and visibility – not one siloed system per country.
While many shippers place more emphasis on compliance, many of them do not have the right resources and time to focus on ever-changing compliance requirements. This presents an opportunity for you.

Make trade compliance a priority. Provide continuous education for employees and enforce strong compliance practices within your own organization and you can then offer customs compliance as a service offering to fill the void for your customers and create a new revenue opportunity for your business.

There are many ways to leverage adherence to the myriad of trade regulations. For example, ensuring shipments are screened against the “denied party list,” checking for embargoed countries or acquiring and tracking all appropriate export licenses.

These are areas where you as a freight forwarder can leverage your Cloud software solution to provide trade compliance services to the shipper – hence enhancing both revenues and profits.
The Advantages of a Cloud Deployment Model

With a permanent eye on margins, your business likely wants to keep internal IT resources and capital costs to a minimum. And of course, geographically diverse operations add significant complexity to the task of managing IT infrastructure.

A Cloud solution enables midmarket businesses to compete on a global scale with many of the sophisticated features typically associated with other types of deployment models.

- Rapid integration with internal systems and those of customers and partners, facilitating a seamless, connected supply chain with end-to-end visibility
- Built-in EDI engine ensures straight-through processing of data, reducing errors and costs and speeding up processes
- Standard reports give access to the information needed to make informed business decisions

Fast implementation based on industry best-of-breed process templates.

- Select the best fit for your sector and size of business from a library of templates developed from successful implementations
- Benefit from the vendor’s extensive sector experience by adopting proven processes and workflows
- Reduce the time and effort involved in solution design, bypass the detailed definition stage and fast forward to measurable results

Hosted, managed and maintained by the vendor.

- Round-the-clock data center management with 24x7 monitoring and alerts ensure the software is always available with guaranteed service uptime
- Extensive security procedures ensure data security
- Comprehensive disaster recovery procedures ensure continuity
Rising to the Challenge

These are challenging times for you as a freight forwarder as you continue to deal with global volatility, spiraling oil costs and stiff competition.

Information technology, which has always played a central role in relieving the immense pressure on costs, time, quality of service and profitability, is now more crucial than ever in rising to industry challenges and ensuring survival. Getting the right IT infrastructure to support your supply chain execution initiatives does not have to be cost prohibitive – the right Cloud solution can have you up and running quickly.

Every forwarder should take a hard look at operations to determine areas for cost reduction, productivity and efficiency, as well as opportunities for new service offerings and revenue streams. New software tools on the market today can help you achieve both – resulting in higher profits and improved customer service.

Add the 7 tips presented here to your checklist to help ensure you pick the right cloud-based software platform for growth both now and into the future.
About Kewill

Kewill, a Francisco Partners portfolio company, is a global leader in multimodal transportation management software, providing organizations with a comprehensive end-to-end platform for managing the complexities of transportation, logistics and trade compliance. The Kewill MOVE® platform helps companies reduce costs, manage volatility and gain greater visibility across the logistics value chain. Trade, transport, store, comply, manage and integrate – the Kewill transportation management platform gives you the insight, agility and tools you need to deliver better customer service and streamline global supply chain execution for strategic advantage.

The Kewill platform supports supply chain execution activities for more than 7,500 companies in over 100 countries. Visit us at kewill.com.