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### A LOGISTICS APPROACH FOR FORWARDERS

Ask a handful of freight forwarders to define the term Logistics and you will probably get a handful of different explanations.

Not my word but words written by the British International Freight Association. The real problem here is that things have changed and many forwarders have just not caught up yet. Change is a constant in the world today and in these times of change, it is only those who will learn today, who will benefit from the future tomorrows.

But many forwarders will not learn. Look at Logistics-if you can get a handful of explanations, then they may not know just what Logistics is basically about? This can be very dangerous especially when many actually consider themselves as being "into" Logistics!

Forwarders really need to see that essentially, Logistics is a process to integrate, co-ordinate and control, the movement of goods and information, between suppliers/customers/consumers. By really understanding this; then forwarders can start to appreciate that there are numerous ways in which "Logistics" can be done.

Forwarders will also see that they (as logistics service providers) are only just one part of a cycle involving buying, making, moving, and selling.

Logistics is a process not owned by forwarders-they can only influence it. But to even influence Logistics, they need to understand what it is, how it affects their clients and how it influences and changes what their clients do!

Forwarders will need to see that:

- Different customer sectors have different requirements.
- A good knowledge is needed of the customers products, sources and markets.
- Current offerings will most likely need adapting.
- Services will be offered that are provided by other operators as the Logistics service provider/ forwarder cannot do everything, everywhere.
- Strong links and relationships are needed with many different people in the Client Company as Logistics goes beyond the usual contacts.
- Information technology will be needed at the level needed to "integrate, co-ordinate and control".
- The traditional role changes from freight movement to one involving progress chasing, monitoring, and managing the supply chain of their customers.

Then and only then, will forwarders be "into" Logistics, by providing a service that meets the clients Logistics needs. They will also move from substituting the word forwarding (or transport or shipping or airfreight) with Logistics, as hopefully by now, forwarders will have seen Logistics is not an alternative word for methods of transport! Times have changed and this involves the need to see Logistics as not just a sub-

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function of Moving, but seeing the cross-functional activity of Buying, Making and Selling as a whole. Remaining with an incremental view is dangerous!

Remember that a person is what they think. Thinking only about transport and related costs and services is just too narrow. Forwarders need to learn and then to change. Only this will bring about where they want to be. Some have but then the majority have switched off and stopped learning.  
Oh dear!