



ROGERS
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GLOBAL VIEW

Notes

Freight Forwarders, Customs Brokers



and Why You Might Want One for Your Trade Show

By Michelle Bruno

It is standard business practice for tradeshow organizers to appoint service providers to assist their exhibitors. From computer and furniture rental companies to florists and security, event producers have routinely recommended outside firms with specific areas of expertise to make participation more convenient for exhibiting companies. For international shows, selecting a freight forwarder and customs broker to manage transportation and customs formalities on behalf of foreign exhibitors is a great way to build goodwill with these important customers. Here's why.

Specialized service

International exhibitors are at a disadvantage compared to their domestic counterparts. In addition to the language barriers and unfamiliarity with customs formalities, overseas companies—especially those new-to-market—often require more assistance with logistics involving labor unions, general contractors, and other entities. Freight forwarders offer on site customer service that naturally spills over into all levels of assistance for their clients.

Protection for exhibitors

Unlike other service providers, freight forwarders and customs brokers protect foreign exhibitors from civil and criminal penalties by ensuring that they comply with importation regulations. It's one thing for an exhibitor to receive the wrong audio/visual equipment or order an Internet connection that doesn't work. It's another matter when the company inadvertently violates customs regulations that result in fines or seizure of the shipment.

Brand recognition

Having a recognizable international logistics company as a member of the service "team," indicates that the show is a world-class exhibition with a diverse mix of exhibitors. With that diversity comes the responsibility of accommodating foreign companies tasked with meeting a unique set of requirements: providing commercial invoices and packing lists, offering detailed information about the origin of the shipment, complying with the "10+2 Initiative," packing with fumigated wood packing materials, shipping goods internationally and clearing U.S. Customs.

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Performance assurances

Freight forwarders are heavily regulated and carry several different types of insurance in order to guarantee the safety and security of the shipments. Regulating authorities require separate licenses for airfreight, ocean freight, motor freight, freight consolidation, and customs brokerage. In addition to insurance for modes of transport, reputable companies also carry errors and omissions insurance to cover mistakes made in the process of shipping and clearing freight. All of the licenses and insurance translate into added protection and lower risk for the trade show organizer.

Access to metrics

Forwarders can provide up-to-the-minute, as well as, historical information about show shipments. Having access to up-to-date information helps show managers field inquiries from exhibitors tracking their inbound shipments or an appointed forwarder can handle the inquiries directly with exhibitors. In addition to booth size, the amount of freight that is imported is an indication of the exhibitor's investment in the show. Such business intelligence can be useful to booth sales representatives the following year when the sales cycle begins again.



Delegation of tasks and control

Appointing a single company to handle the inquiries of international participants relieves show managers of that logistical burden. It is understood by the contractor that their role is to assist all international companies. Plus, by reviewing pricing and

service offerings from the appointed company, show management can maintain a level of control over the contractor that doesn't exist with other exhibitor appointed companies.

Reducing exhibitor search time

By recommending a company (and placing contact information in the exhibitor manual) that has met certain requirements, show organizers save exhibitors the time and effort of searching for a company that can duplicate the offerings of the appointed forwarder—specialization in exhibitions, on site representation, network of overseas offices prepared with detailed instructions on shipping to the show.

Immediate assistance

Because of the complex and time sensitive nature of international shipments, appointed contractors supply on site representatives before, during, and after the exhibition to address exhibitor questions immediately. In most cases they will provide personnel to man a service desk in the exhibitor service area of the show and leave 24/7 contact information with show management and their exhibitor clients.

Freight forwarders and customs brokers provide an extra level of service for international exhibitors. Appointing this type of specialized contractor adds value to the show at minimal cost to the organizer. With the global economic recovery gaining steam, it's likely that international participation will again begin to increase. Exhibitions with an infrastructure to handle overseas companies have a better chance of attracting them.

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