

What Technology Is Necessary for a Modern Freight Forwarder?

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Technology is not a one-size-fits-all solution when it comes to freight forwarding. Every company has different challenges and processes that technology can help improve, but the problem is no two companies' needs are ever the same. With any discussion about the ROI of logistics technology settled years ago,

> the question is not IF but WHAT technology a forwarder should use.

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What's holding forwarders back from becoming digital?

One thing working against technology adoption is the large variety of technologies available. There are so many, it makes finding a solution that matches an individual company's needs difficult. It is probably why many companies never take the small, but necessary, first steps to gain the advantages of what technology can offer.

As we've already said, the best solution is not the same for every company. Yet, with all the marketing "noise" about logistics technology, **it's easy to understand why forwarders get overwhelmed with the choices and fail to improve on what they're already doing.**

So, how can a forwarder determine the right types and amount of technology for their needs? We suggest looking at two key areas of the business—your customers and your operations. **Forwarders don't need 'all' the technology, just the 'right' technology to serve them.**

Start here

To take the first (or next) step with freight forwarding technology, a company should first consider what potential solutions can offer from the lens of their shipper customers. ***What are the things that frustrate shippers that technology can fix?*** This list of customer complaints is probably very familiar.

- Taking too long to get quotes
- Tedious rate management and contract conversions to calculate rates
- Slow or inaccurate shipment tracking
- Waiting on callbacks
- Too many emails and unnecessary phone calls
- Confusing billing and poor reporting
- No access to data and unable to manage shipments proactively
- Paper-based *EVERYTHING*

The good (and bad) news is the types of technology available to freight forwarders are diverse and extensive. This has its advantages and challenges, however. More on that later.

The second step is identifying how technology can help your operations run better. Here are some of the key functions where it can create valuable internal efficiencies.

Operations Management

If a forwarder has any tech, it is likely a TMS to help manage its internal operations. The functionality covered by a TMS depends on the system and may extend to some things listed below. But, how effective a TMS is at performing those functions is questionable and is often cost-prohibitive for the majority of forwarders. This reality is a key reason why a lot of forwarders never even get started with tech. It's also the reason other niche functionality has flooded the market to fill those gaps.

Rates and Quoting

As a standalone solution or integrated with a TMS, rate management and quoting tools have become more available over the past several years. Rate management and quoting are complex and messy, as you know, making them great tasks to automate. The problem is many tools don't do it well, and the carriers often don't make it any easier thanks to their complicated and always changing rate sheets. In the end, calculating a quote based on your contracts can be tough but can be helped greatly with technology and by carriers that offer APIs.

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Track and Trace

Similar to rate management, automated real-time track and trace is a difficult but highly desired use of technology. It also has its limitations (i.e., the carriers themselves are even notoriously bad at providing good tracking info), but direct connections with carriers are still adequate for most situations. The hard part is taking the time to build all the API and EDI connections to pull in the tracking data.

CRM

Not as many forwarders are using a CRM (Customer Relationship Management) as they probably should. A CRM tool keeps all your customer information, from contacts to agreements all in one place. It makes account management easy and helps provide better and more consistent service.

Online Portal

> Your customers want to transact with you online through your website.

Each has preferences for how much and when, but they want that option. Quoting, booking, and tracking are the three most common tasks they want to perform online and NOT on the phone or through email where possible. Perhaps most important, the customer interface needs to be easy to use. This is where the siloed nature of the wrong technology and the trouble of creating a complete solution becomes more difficult. This is because all the systems we just listed, from Rate Management to CRM, need to share data freely.

Disclaimer: **It's true that some customers prefer to do things the old way. For some, change comes hard. But, forwarders that operate an online portal will open their business up to more revenue streams and types of customers.**



With all these options and needs, what should a forwarder do next?

The list of potential forwarder solutions shows that there are a lot of ways technology can help a freight forwarder and its customers. And, that a TMS is just one part. The goal for forwarders should be to take advantage of the best technologies for what their business needs. And for most, no one system can do it all.

There are a lot of easy excuses that forwarders use that prevent them from adding any of these necessary solutions… they have limited IT resources, it'll take too much time, and the cost is too high are common ones.

Today, none of these excuses are valid. That is not to say that taking the first step and adding technology can't be overwhelming, but you do not need technology to do everything all at once. **Our advice is to start with finding technology to do the basic things better than you are doing them now.** There are ways to get the most impact for the least amount of cost and effort.

Gama provides the most flexible and effective technology packages for freight forwarders

As a standalone solution or integrated with Cargowise, Magaya, your ERP, or any API-enable platform, Gama is a simple and intuitive solution for forwarders to give their customers and operations the technology they need.

In addition to providing your customers the ability to manage all their freight online through your website — from rates and quoting, to booking loads and tracking (in all modes), Gama helps your operations run better. For example, **with Gama:**

- Employees are freed from many tasks and empowered to be ambassadors for your business, not mired in the day-to-day.
- There's less time spent sending quotes, managing rates, handling paperwork, forms, and documentation, answering track and trace inquiries, or entering data.
- You'll save money, lower benefit costs and training times, experience lower employee turnover, and work more regular business hours while improving employee performance and accuracy.
- Prebuilt integrations with TMS and other systems like Cargowise make getting results fast and easy.
- A fully branded portal feels like a part of your website so shippers think it's your technology. Customers love their ability to self-serve and work with you on their terms.

What about CargoWise?

For many medium to large-sized forwarders, the question often becomes how additional technology can connect with CargoWise Web Tracker.

Gama makes Web Tracker from CargoWise work even better.

If you're using Web Tracker, you know it provides a lot of useful features. Gama's technology and pre-built integrations make them even more powerful.

With gama's improved interface, CargoWise users get:

- Expanded and more detailed shipment tracking and shipment visibility, including eta's
- Access to complete shipment documentation and invoices
- The ability to create custom milestones
- Online payment options that allow customers to pay invoices quicker and easier
- Two ways to integrate the applications, including the capability to send data from Gama to Cargowise



> Sealink is onboarding 210% more clients per month since implementing gama.

Shaizad Shroff, CEO Sealink International



> We've cut down per shipment time for quoting and printing paperwork and labels down from 35 minutes to about four. Avoiding redundant data entry was a big part of that time.

David Kadish, Director of Operations Primorus Worldwide

The Next Step

In the end, Gama enables you to become a digital forwarder instantly. These days, it's what shippers expect. The only question is will they get the digital experience from you or your competitors? Better yet, a digital presence creates a proven new opportunity for revenue growth for your company.



Visit ***www.gamasuite.com*** to learn how to use technology to improve your operations and create a digital experience for your shipper customers.