10 TIPS
STEP-BY-STEP SOLUTIONS

by Deborah Catalano Ruriani

Generating Accurate Global Documentation

International documents are key components of a flawless inbound supply chain. Improper documentation can stop import shipments dead in their tracks and you may not even know they are stuck.

1 Know what documents each country requires. Provide suppliers with a document guide based on each shipment's destination. Many order management systems allow suppliers to interface with their orders and print documents generated by your system. Leaving document preparation to your service providers increases costs and results in shipment delays.

2 Develop documents for each supply chain. Even though the documents you require may be the same for each of your supply chains—orders, returns, raw materials, and capital equipment, for example—the source of the data and the systems that create those documents may be different. Create a system to verify accuracy.

3 Know your government agencies. Some imports are subject to specific government agency requirements. In most countries, each agency establishes its own import regulations. In almost every case, customs will not release your shipment until you fulfill all government agency requirements. Make sure you submit that information with your customs entry.

4 Provide correct information. Get comfortable with global trade terminology and provide the correct information including harmonized tariff numbers, export commodity control numbers, country of origin, Incoterms, and units of measure. Supplying your customs broker with correct data increases the likelihood of an accurate customs declaration.

5 Localize your documents. Creating documents in the importing country's language significantly helps customs brokers and local customs authorities review and accept your documentation. In addition to language translation, localization includes the use of local currency and units of measure. Localizing your documents also helps avoid transaction or currency errors.

6 Train your team to generate accurate documents. A document is only accurate and complete if it is generated correctly. This includes understanding each element of the document, including the legal basis for its inclusion in the document.

7 Use electronic communication. Communicate your documents electronically over the Internet using EDI or XML. This delivery method allows supply chain partners to integrate your documentation data with their systems, eliminating manual data entry errors and delays.

8 Confirm document receipt. Once you've created and communicated your documents, confirm their receipt so you can correct a missing document situation before an actual shipment is delayed.

9 Audit your documents. Implement a program for routinely editing your customs brokers' entries. Make sure brokers are complying with your policies and accurately using your documents and their content. You can also measure cycle time to ensure brokers are processing your documents quickly and efficiently.

10 Become an Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) portal account. This enables you to run your own reports and verify classification, valuation, country of origin, and manufacturer's identification number. An ACE account also provides access to your customs compliance measurement results and exam rates. ■

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