
What You Need To Know

Tips to navigating the complex world of global shipping

Four Things To Look For In a Customs Brokerage Partner

Whether your company is new to the world of international trade or you have been shipping your goods around the world for years, it is important to be sure that your Customs Brokerage partner is meeting your needs and assisting in the overall productivity of your logistics program.

All Customs Brokers are not created equal. While all Customs Brokers facilitate the release of goods through Customs, not all Customs Brokers are able to positively impact your whole logistics chain. When choosing a Customs Brokerage partner, you will want to align yourself with an international trade expert whom you can trust to simplify the logistics of moving your goods across borders.

When choosing your Customs Broker, what types of qualifications should you look for to ensure a fast, efficient and accurate Customs process?





1 Experience, Credentials, Global Network

As an expert in clearing your shipments at international borders, your Customs Broker should be knowledgeable about the ever-changing regulations of the Customs-clearance process. They should also be knowledgeable about the specific documentation requirements related to your particular commodity. When evaluating a Customs Brokerage partner, you should confirm that they are licensed by the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Maritime Commission, and the Interstate Commerce Commission to ensure that they are allowed to perform all of the necessary transactions. Ask if the Broker participates in their industry organizations such as the National Customs Brokers and Freight Forwarders Association and if they are involved in activities specific to their port. Such participation helps Brokers keep their fingers on the pulse of the private and governmental agencies that keep freight moving quickly and efficiently in big and small ports. We highly recommend that you ask if your Broker is CTPAT certified – it is not easy to achieve and Brokers who are certified maintain the highest levels of professionalism and regulatory compliance.

The best Customs Brokerage partners will be able to tell you about their company history, their global network partnerships, and their licenses and certifications. They will also be able to share testimonials from clients who trust them with all areas of their logistics programs. An experienced Customs Broker should have the skills to facilitate the movement of the entire supply chain, including the transportation, Customs clearance and delivery processes, regardless of where it begins or ends.

QUESTIONS TO ASK :

Are you licensed by the Department of Homeland Security , Federal maritime Commission and Interstate Commerce Commission?

Do you have contacts at the port of origin and port of entry for my products?

Can you provide referrals to one of your customers whose import program is similar to ours?

What programs for duty reductions are available to me based on the country of origin of my goods?



2 Customer Service & 24/7 Availability

When your products get stuck in Customs, anywhere around the world, it is an unwelcome expense. Your business' success relies on an efficient Customs process to keep your goods moving. Delays can affect your bottom line so it is important to partner with a Customs Broker that knows how to communicate effectively with you and with all the players in your logistics chain. Your Broker needs to be available when you need to communicate with them and, most importantly, is available to troubleshoot your shipment in a timely manner when delays occur.

When your shipment is delayed for any reason and you need assistance, having to speak to numerous people or wait long periods for answers can be frustrating as well as expensive since delays can be costly. No matter where the problem occurs, you want to partner with a Broker who is available to respond and troubleshoot the situation as it is happening.

QUESTIONS TO ASK :

*What are your operating hours?
What days are you closed?*

*Do I have a personal contact that I
can work with and contact directly
as needed during business hours?*

*How will I be able to contact my point
person and what if they are not
available? What arrangements are in
place for off-hour contacts?*



3 Supply Chain Visibility

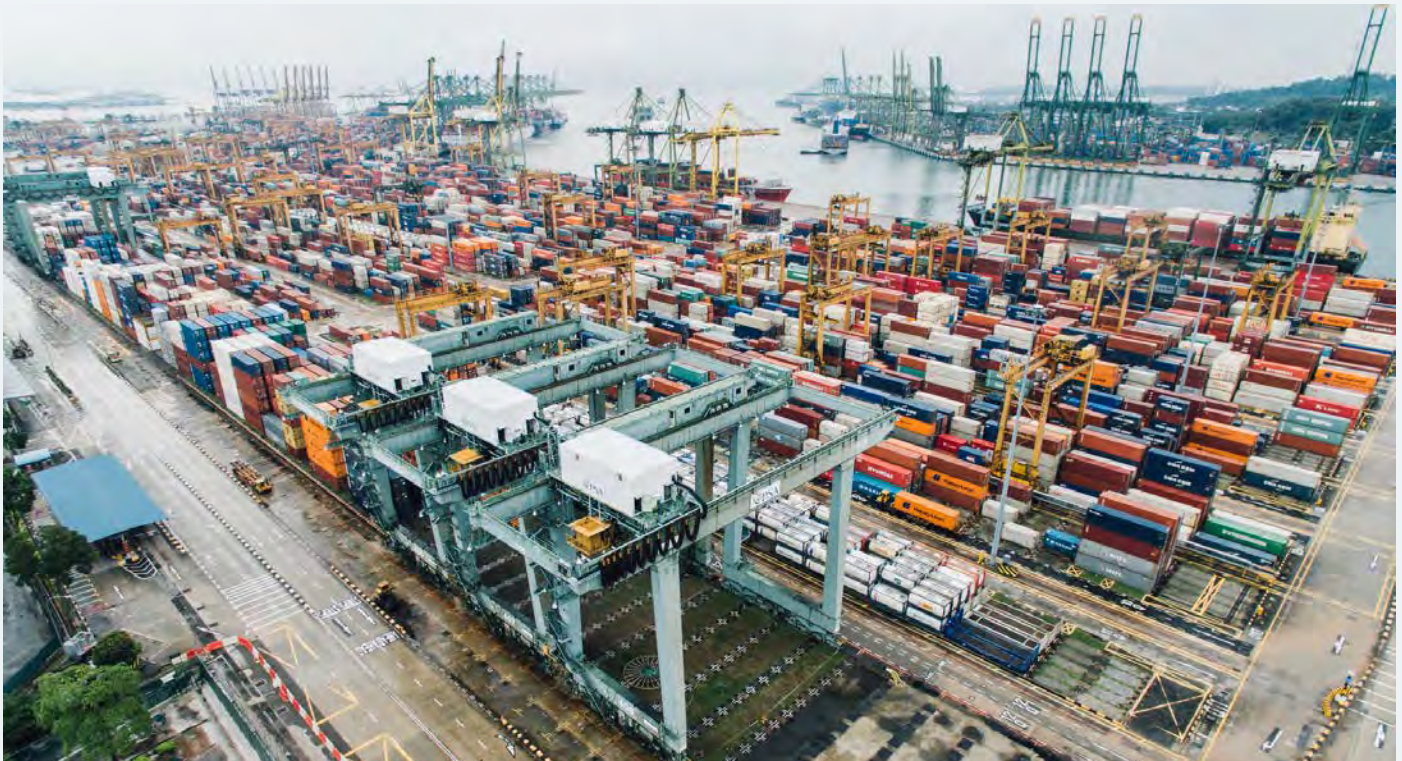
Supply chain visibility is the ability to clearly track your product as it travels through the supply chain, from point of origin to final destination. Having that visibility provides real-time insight into the movement of your cargo and the timing of the shipping processes. Having immediate status updates allows for better inventory management even while the cargo is enroute, which can improve service to your own customers, avoid costly delays and limit disruptions in the logistics chain. In addition to visibility, the Broker's system platform should be flexible enough to integrate and interact with your own system to maximize efficiency when exchanging data between your companies.

QUESTIONS TO ASK :

Can you provide real-time supply chain visibility?

Do you have a web-based platform with secure sign-ons that your customers can access to see their shipments?

Can your supply chain platform integrate with my inventory platform?



4 Experience With Your Type of Product

Not all Customs Brokers have the experience needed to be familiar with the requirements for shipping every type of commodity. Some types of products have complex requirements involving several different government agencies. There are dozens of different agencies involved in importing to the US and some commodities require releases or exams from quite a few of them on every shipment. There are requirements for classification, documentation, and examination and some agencies require further follow up even after the shipment has been delivered to the consignee. It is important to choose a Customs Brokerage partner who has proven experience and knowledge of the specific requirements for your commodities. A knowledgeable, experienced Customs Broker can help you avoid costly delays, fines, and even confiscation of your goods.



QUESTIONS TO ASK :

Do you understand my industry and my commodity? What are the specific requirements for classification, documents, and duties on my products and how can you help them pass through Customs as efficiently as possible?

Have you ever shipped my type of products and can you give me examples? What processes do you have in place in order to protect against problems when my products come in?

Do you maintain a classification database for all my products? How often is updated? Do you have processes in place to educate your employees as changes are made or processes are changed by any of the relevant government agencies? How do you notify your customers when changes are announced by any of the agencies?



When you need to get your cargo through Customs quickly and efficiently...we deliver.

With over 40 years' experience, the Licensed Customs Brokers at Western Overseas Corporation are confident working to clear any type of commodity through Customs. We understand that your product is unique and our Licensed Customs Brokers use their decades of experience to classify and process your shipments. This is done as quickly as possible while still maintaining the highest levels of professionalism and regulatory compliance. We have the knowledge to find you the most favorable classification and still ensure that your shipment is fully compliant with all government agencies' regulations. From the most-highly regulated commodities such as pharmaceuticals, liquor and automobiles to the oddities that come with the small parcels of E-Commerce, our highly-trained staff possesses the expertise needed to keep your business moving.

We offer a superior level of service and advanced technological tools to assist you with your import process. Whether it is communicating with suppliers, clearance by Customs and other government agencies, door-to-door deliveries, or any of the other myriad issues involved in importing your product, we have a solution for you.

If you have questions, we have answers. Contact the Customs Brokerage department at Western Overseas Corporation to discuss your global shipping needs and to get the answers you need to keep your import business moving in the right direction.