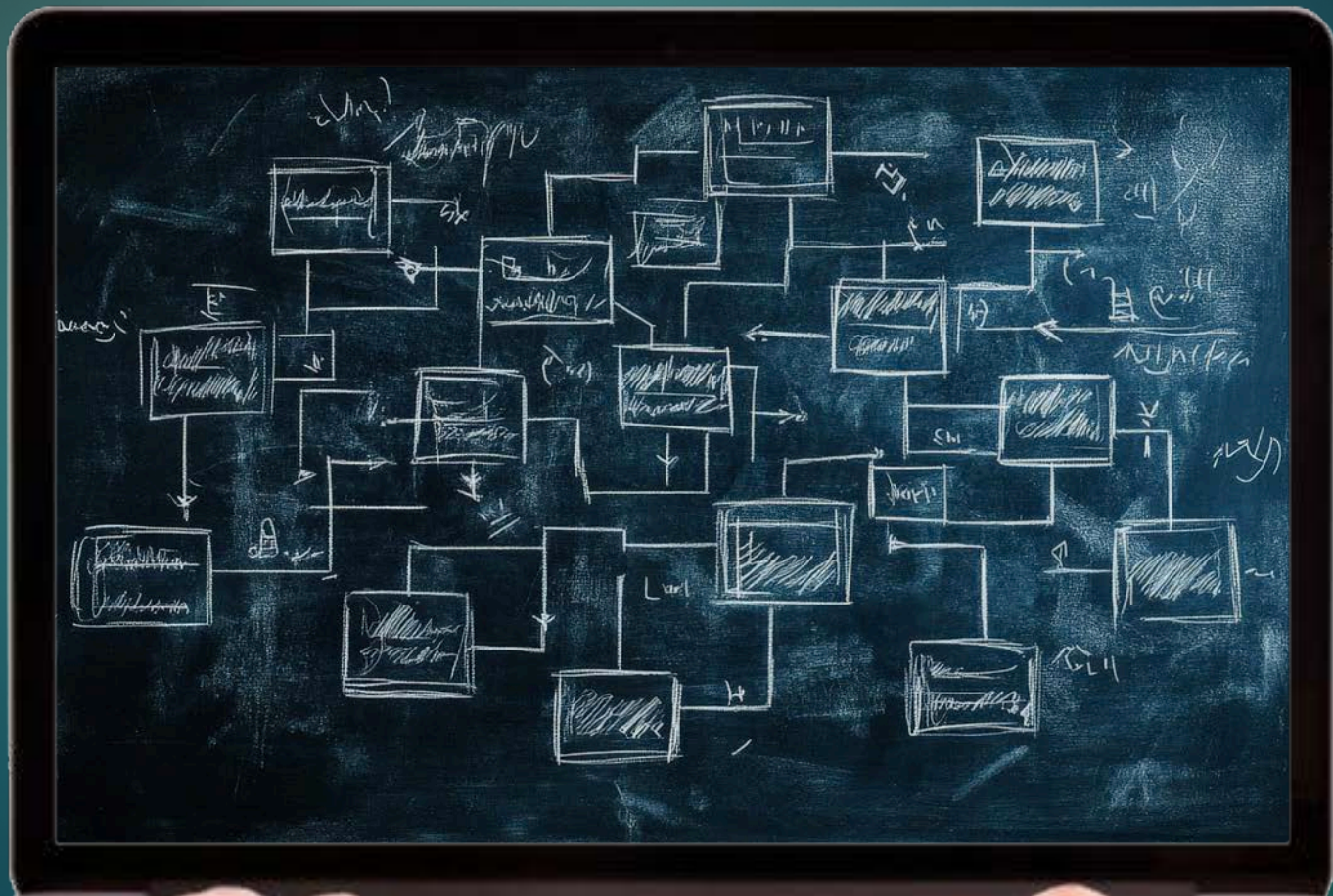


LOGIXBOARD

WHITE PAPER

Where the Shipper Customer Experience Falls Flat

UNDERSTANDING THE LIMITATIONS OF TODAY'S CUSTOMER PORTALS



Contents

2

Overview

3

A Day in the Life of an Importer/Exporter

- Day-to-Day Tasks
- Common Challenges

4

Analysis: Different Perspectives on Supply Chains

5

Bridging the Gap with Purpose-Built Technology

6

Conclusion

Overview

As global supply chains become increasingly complex, logistics service providers (LSPs) are facing a significant challenge: meeting customer demand for high-caliber technology that helps importers and exporters manage their supply chain. Today's shippers have increasingly rigorous expectations for real-time information at their fingertips. In response, LSPs have worked diligently to expose much of the data from their internal systems via customer-facing portals with tracking and visibility features. However, many have been frustrated with low adoption and usage rates, and customers continuing to rely on phone and email to understand the current state of their goods.

To better understand the shortcomings of today's customer visibility and tracking tools, we interviewed importers and exporters in the US, UK, and Australia who partner with freight forwarders and brokers to move materials within their supply chain. These interviews were focused on their daily tasks and typical challenges, and how the tools provided by their LSPs could be better-suited to their specific needs.

A Day in the Life of an Importer/Exporter

Day-to-Day Tasks

Every day, shippers navigate questions and tasks that center on planning, procurement, distribution, and inventory management. Throughout our interviews, two main themes emerged:

1. **Tracking whether a PO will be delivered on time** - As could have been predicted, the interviewees described many downstream issues they encounter when shipping delays occur—from stalled manufacturing lines to churned customers. Since on-time delivery is so critical to their business, they are looking out for many key milestones and risk indicators along the way. Has the supplier received the PO? Are they working on it yet? Is it scheduled for pickup? Is the transportation planned? Has it cleared customs?
2. **Deciding when to order more of a certain product** - Many of our participants spend a good portion of their day thinking about procurement and planning. They are responsible for determining how much inventory to keep on hand and when it's time to order more. They are searching for answers around how many units are in the warehouse, on order, and in transit. They must also consider what an appropriate lead time is for specific suppliers, carriers, regions, and even seasons.

To perform these tasks, shippers typically rely on:

- Internal Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems
- Customer portals and tracking tools provided by their LSPs
- Spreadsheets and email communications with their LSPs

Common Challenges

This fragmented approach leads to frustration and inefficiency. It often results in shippers completely abandoning the customer portals provided by their LSPs and falling back on fully email-based communication.

Feedback from the participants illustrates the shortcomings of the tools provided by LSPs:

“Usually either they don’t have a portal or they give you all these detailed milestones that don’t always make sense to us. I just want to know—where is it right now? Show me on a map.”

SOURCING MANAGER

- 19 years in supply chain
- Biotechnology (medical devices for cancer diagnostics)
- Kalamazoo, MI (USA)
- Materials moved domestically between MI, OH, and IL

“I have a lot of experience so I can piece all the information together with the knowledge I have. But my colleagues don’t have this kind of experience so they struggle to make sense of it. They usually don’t even use the portals we are given, and I think that’s why.”

LOGISTICS & WORKFLOW SPECIALIST

- 24 years in supply chain
- Chemical manufacturing (non-toxic color additives)
- Miami, FL (USA)
- Materials exported to 95 countries worldwide

“Most of these portals are pretty difficult to navigate. They’re not as easy as just tracking something. So I’m just like, ‘Guys, I’m going through email. I’m not dealing with this.’”

SENIOR LOGISTICS COORDINATOR

- 6 years in supply chain
- Retail apparel (clothing subscription)
- Los Angeles, CA (USA)
- Materials moved domestically and imported internationally

Analysis: Different Perspectives on Supply Chains

Looking more closely, the crux is that there are fundamental differences between the way shippers and LSPs operate within the supply chain. As we have seen, an importer/exporter spends their day focused on products (SKUs and POs) and must tackle many procurement and planning tasks. This is at odds with the container and shipment-focused lens of a freight forwarder or broker, who often spends much of their day in the weeds of booking and planning complex transit details.

The LSP's shipment-focused approach permeates to the technology they use internally. Rightfully so, Transportation Management Systems (TMSs) are built with this lens as well. Although this approach is ideal for supporting the internal operations of an LSP, it does not serve the needs of importers and exporters. This misalignment leads to inefficient tracking processes that involve excessive cross-referencing, and extra time and frustration while trying to obtain the information necessary to do their job.

"When you're asking [an LSP] to book a shipment, they ask for all these different pieces that are hard for me to get. Instead of just letting me key in the dimensions or number of pallets or weight, they want DIM."

MATERIALS COORDINATOR

- 1 year in supply chain
- Construction (university building materials)
- Dallas, TX (USA)
- Materials imported from Vietnam and Columbia

"We work from lists of part numbers and POs. But the forwarders send us container numbers and all the tracking is based on that. And you need to know exactly where the freight was picked up. And if there is more than one port in that city, you need to know which one."

SUPPLY SUPERVISOR

- 21 years in supply chain
- Automotive manufacturing
- Pontiac, MI
- Materials moved domestically and imported from Asia

"It would be so much easier if we could look up the actual materials—not just on a container basis. Maybe [LSPs] could tie the container to the part number, and the part number to the container."

OPERATIONS MANAGER

- 17 years in supply chain
- Chemical distribution
- Anaheim, CA (USA)
- Materials moved domestically and imported from China, India, and Taiwan

For LSPs to truly serve the needs of their customer—the need for a clear, end-to-end picture of their orders and goods—they must do more than simply expose their internal data.

Bridging the Gap with Purpose-Built Technology

To deliver a better customer experience, LSPs must provide interfaces that prioritize the terminology and tasks of *shippers*, transitioning from shipment-centric to SKU and PO-centric views and workflows. Additionally, customer-facing tools should connect the dots between each stage of the supply chain, allowing clients to seamlessly follow their goods through the full lifecycle without constant cross-referencing.

Depending on the size of the LSP and the number of IT and engineering resources available, this can be a daunting effort. Truly user-centric design is time-consuming, expensive, and requires product and design headcount that may not be realistic to have on staff. And when organizations try to balance being both a logistics *and* a technology company, IT projects often fail to meet their objectives. IT teams at logistics companies are already tasked with managing their internal systems, developing and maintaining integrations with customers, and ensuring security and compliance. Adding a customer platform to their plate can overwhelm the team and create too many competing priorities.

Additionally, it's crucial to consider the ongoing maintenance and improvement that a homegrown customer platform requires. Once the platform is launched, resources are still needed to address bug fixes and security vulnerabilities, and continuously innovate. In-house software can quickly become outdated once developers shift focus to other projects.

To avoid these common pitfalls, LSPs can partner with specialized technology vendors who can innovate more rapidly and leverage economies of scale. Implementing an off-the-shelf software product allows internal IT teams to concentrate on other priorities better-suited to their core competencies.

Conclusion

The future of customer experience in logistics lies in understanding and addressing the unique needs of importers and exporters. By embracing technology that prioritizes their perspective, LSPs can improve efficiency and communication for their customers, ultimately strengthening their client relationships and creating a competitive advantage in a crowded market. As the landscape continues to evolve, prioritizing the shipper experience will be essential for success in the logistics industry.

About Logixboard

Logixboard is a SaaS company enabling LSPs to unify all of their services and systems into a single pane of glass for their customers. With Logixboard, shippers can book, track, and manage their entire supply chain from a single platform that is purpose-built for their needs. Logixboard serves over 200 freight forwarding companies across the globe.