

# Action Guide for Freight Forwarders & Customs Brokers

Digitizing Operations & Transitioning to the “New Normal”





## How can you take action now?

COVID-19 has shown us that freight forwarders and customs brokers must be nimble, digital, and enable continuous communication. Looking beyond COVID-19, the industry is adjusting to a digital “new normal” as the flow of cargo stabilizes. The good news is that there is a lot that can be done now to:

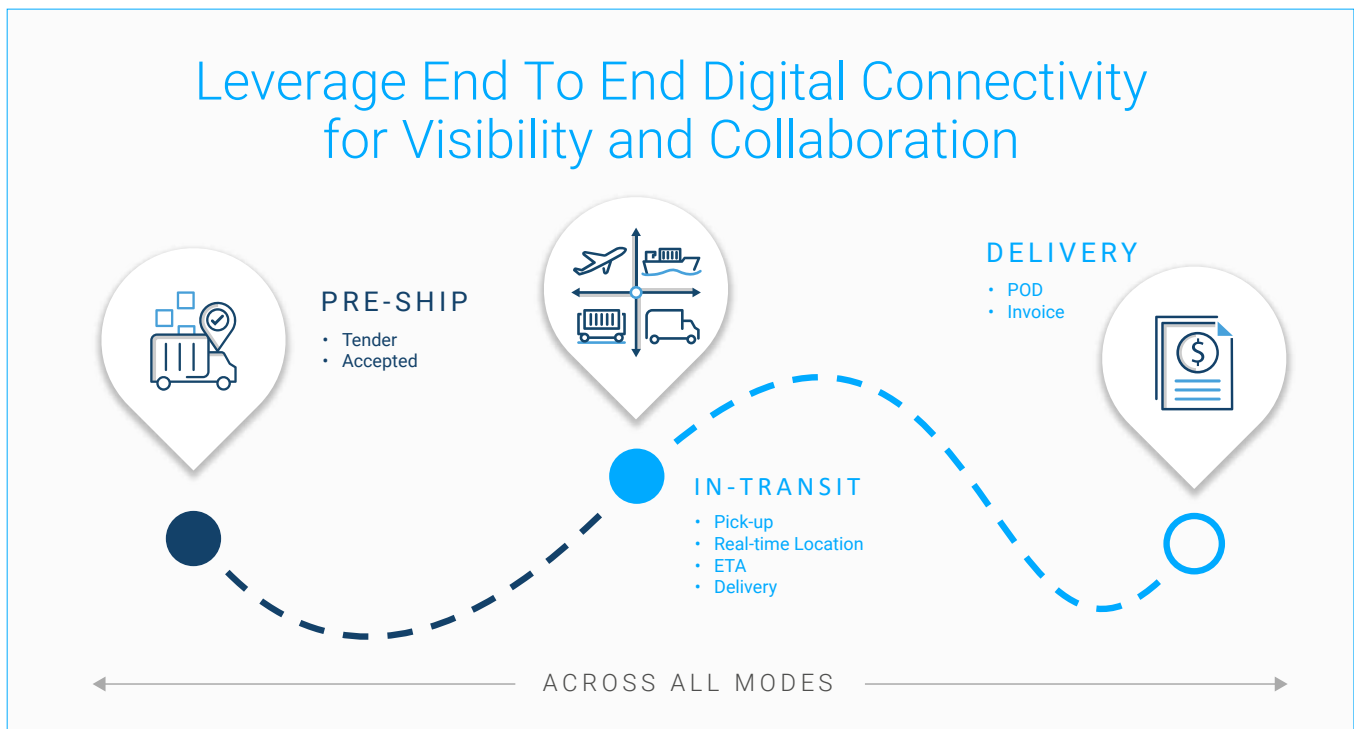
- Provide the world-class visibility that customers have come to expect
- Digitize internal processes and workflow
- Automate regulatory compliance
- Use smart analytics and intelligence to assess performance and explore new business opportunities

## Provide world-class customer visibility

The coronavirus impact has resulted in a **new normal** for freight forwarders and customs brokers and a large-scale shift in customer expectations. Prior to COVID-19, customers were expecting visibility at key shipment and clearance milestones. Now, customers expect continuous, multimodal visibility throughout the fulfillment process from purchase order to the point-of-delivery.

To provide world-class visibility and exceed customer expectations, brokers and forwarders need to update their operations with solutions that can provide end-to-end visibility. Leading solutions offer quoting and accurate rates prior to shipment, real-time location tracking and delivery updates during the shipment process, as well as post-shipment invoicing.

Brokers and forwarders should also seek out additional benefits beyond customer visibility. Best-in-class solutions can also enable connectivity with multiple parties. This connectivity allows carriers to lock-in the best rates and optimize bookings, facilitate collaboration with both local and overseas agents, and streamline internal processes such as accounting and billing.



*Market leaders are providing end-to-end visibility and collaboration across multiple modes of transport and are ensuring visibility prior to shipment, during transit, to delivery, and beyond.*

## Digitize internal operations

Digital disruptions had already begun to hit brokers and freight forwarders prior to COVID-19 as a wave of start-ups, suppliers, and customers have shifted to using innovative technologies.

Reacting to this **new normal**, brokers and forwarders who have digitized their operations enjoyed a competitive advantage as the disruptions from coronavirus began.

The move to work-from-home standards enhanced accountability, highlighted weak points in communication, and enforced the need to optimize workflows. Meanwhile, digital solutions enabled automation of manual processes such as tracking and shipment updates, reduced overhead, and streamlined operations by eliminating the inaccurate, paper-based operations.

Digitization came with a host of other benefits to those forwarders who have modernized such as allowing shipments and clearance patterns to be evaluated with KPI-driven analytics. These advantages will continue as the industry pivots beyond COVID-19.

## What to look for in a technology platform

- Are your customers able to proactively research available rates?
- Does your web-based portal or visibility tool allow customers to search shipments, retrieve documents, and view cargo statuses?
- Does your technology automate carrier selection, tendering, and tracking?
- Are you taking advantage of data connections and providing customer visibility in real-time?
- Are you electronically communicating with carriers and trading partners from one system or using multiple, brittle points of connectivity?
- Does your system enable automated compliance with ecommerce-intensive customs filing standards such as Section 321 Type 86 in the United States?

## Automate regulatory compliance

Although processes change and disruptions can impact operations, customs regulations never stop. Accountability and compliance must remain a top priority.

The **new normal** for regulatory compliance encompasses recent tariff changes and major disruptions such as Brexit and COVID-19. In this environment, demonstrating reasonable care and capturing an audit trail are critical. Potential fines and penalties for noncompliance have been increasing and the possibility for shipment holds and increased scrutiny by customs authorities is greater than ever.

Digitization allows forwarders to automatically capture booking and shipment data and reuse that information for security filings and other customs requirements. Automating these steps improves productivity, increases accuracy, and accelerates shipment clearance.

Digital processes also mean that more accurate information populates customs and Partner Government Agency (PGA) platforms such as the U.S. Automated Commercial Environment (ACE) or the Canadian Single Window Initiative (SWI).



*Automated compliance with customs entry types such as U.S. Section 321 Type 86 are key to meet the demand for high-volume, but low-value, ecommerce shipments.*

## Use smart analytics and intelligence to assess performance and explore new business

In this **new normal**, static reporting is not longer sufficient to gauge performance. Forwarders and brokers need to take the pulse of operations and expand their universe of leads to fuel the sales pipeline. This requires current and dynamic trade-lane or commodity specific insights.

Global trade intelligence solutions capture worldwide import and export flows and enable the insight that forwarders and brokers need. By monitoring global trade, forwarders can:

- Pinpoint trade shifts and market patterns for a given product or trade lane
- Present a broader pool of potential leads
- Offer competitive intelligence and industry trends
- Reveal trends into the key players, top products, or hot import locations for goods

Forwarders should look for solutions that can help to easily identify new opportunities and patterns by region, product, port, or market niche.

## We're here to help

As the industry shifts to the new normal, forwarders and customs brokers know they must digitize to provide better customer service, optimize operations, automate customs clearance, analyze performance, and find new leads.

Our market-proven solutions automate the collection of shared data and multi-party shipment processes. We help forwarders and brokers extend the command of operations with their logistics partners to meet delivery performance objectives. With analytics-driven tools to help businesses find leads and spot trends, Descartes can help forwarders and brokers take the pulse of operations and drive-up business.



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## About Descartes Systems Group

Descartes (Nasdaq:DSGX) (TSX:DSG) is the global leader in providing on-demand, software-as-a-service solutions focused on improving the productivity, performance and security of logistics-intensive businesses. Customers use our modular, software-as-a-service solutions to route, schedule, track and measure delivery resources; plan, allocate and execute shipments; rate, audit and pay transportation invoices; access global trade data; file customs and security documents for imports and exports; and complete numerous other logistics processes by participating in the world's largest, collaborative multimodal logistics community. Our headquarters are in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada and we have offices and partners around the world.

Learn more at [www.descartes.com](http://www.descartes.com) and connect with us on [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

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If you are looking to have a conversation about how Descartes can help you adjust to the new normal, **contact us** to learn more.

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**Uniting the People & Technology That Move the World.**