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In brief... in brief..... in brief...

GC3 logistics software from **G-Log** (www.g-log.com) has been chosen by US supermarket group **Giant Eagle** to optimise its inbound transport management operations.

The US arm of **Yamaha**, the provider of consumer electronic products and musical instruments, has selected QW Importer from **QuestaWeb** (www.questaweb.com), an integrated suite of cross-border solutions, to ensure customs compliance and to accelerate product shipments to customers.

Minorplanet Spain (www.minorplanet.com) has received an EC grant that will halve the cost to hauliers of installing its vehicle tracking and fleet management information boxes.

GE Global eXchange Services (www.gxs.com) is providing support for a new company being formed by the **Sri Lankan government** and **BC Computers**. The company's software and services will help Sri Lanka to facilitate electronic document interchange, expediting freight clearance for importers and exporters and enhancing the country's role as a regional logistics hub.

TXT e-solutions (www.txtgroup.com) will present its supply chain and customer management software at **The Manufacturer exhibition**, a new event being held in Telford on 24-26 September. The company's modular software includes demand planning, web demand management, production planning, and operations planning and scheduling packages.

The Port Pair Modelling system (PPM) from **Greybox Logistics Services** (www.greyboxlogistics.net) measures container owners' and operators' budgeted, simulated or actual operating costs and thus evaluates the true cost of doing business. PPM was developed as an in-house tool for Greybox's own fleet management clients, but is now available commercially.

Pan Nordic Logistics, jointly owned by the Danish and Norwegian Post, has implemented an Internet-based logistics and information management solution from **Tradevision** (www.tradevision.net) which will make it easier for customers to book and track shipments in over 50 countries.

No need for network

Singapore-based Cargo Community Network has launched a web-based service for the air cargo community in south-east Asia, CCN Exchange.

It will integrate several functions on a single platform, including multi-carrier cargo reservations, alerts in the event of delays or mishandling, track-and-trace and electronic invoicing. Unlike existing cargo "community" services, there is no need for a dedicated network to be established – the system can be operated through any Internet service provider.

CCN currently operates in Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines and Indonesia and plans to expand into other Asian countries.



Open platform may lead to paperless business

BY TIM POWER

The technological developments of the last 10 years have not yet had a significant impact on the processes of international trade. Here, paper predominates and the underlying concepts of the documentary credit and negotiable bill of lading have remained largely unchanged since their invention in the 16th century.

This state of affairs is expensive; the UN Centre for Trade Facilitation and Electronic Business (UN/Cefact) estimates the annual cost of administering these processes to be US\$3trn. A few hardy pioneers are working on this but industry is slow to change.

An important step in the right direction came in April, when the new electronic supplement to UCP 500 (eUCP), ICC's universally used rules on letters of credit, came into force.

It contains 12 articles, which, if incorporated into a credit, will rule when there are electronic or part-electronic presentations of documents.

The eUCP is expected to revolutionise the way documentary credits are used. Neil Chantry of HSBC London, a member of the task force which created the supplement, predicted that "after 10 years there will be virtually no paper based trade documentation".

Bolero International has been working

on this since its formation in April 1998 by the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (Swift) and the TT Club.

Bolero has created an open platform that allows all trade documents to be handled online from the creation of the initial contract through to change of title, payment and final delivery of the goods.

The Bolero core messaging platform allows the exchange of messages and documents while the title registry supports online change of ownership.

At the beginning of August, Bolero's production version of Settlement Utility for Risk and Finance (Surf3.0) went live. This application combines online document validation and trade document workflow management.

The settlement process relies on the participants in a transaction using Bolero XML documents and submitting them through the messaging platform to Surf. Bolero has created XML versions of the key trade documents: commercial invoice, certificates of origin and analysis, packing list, bill of lading and so on. Surf3.0 supports 26 trade settlement products including the all-important documentary credit.

Other service providers are adopting a different approach. Jacob Katsman of CCEWeb, which is developing @GlobalTrade, believes it is not practical to bring all parties in a trade transaction onto

the same platform at this stage.

"The reality is that most of the market is not ready for digital certificates and straight-through processing," he said. "We have built a pilot system, tested it with banks, listened to what they are ready for today and are adapting @GlobalTrade to meet market demand."

"As a result of what we have learned, we are now concentrating on providing value to the exporter and its bank, and securing adoption of @GlobalTrade by this part of the supply chain."

"Success here will bring in the importers and issuing banks later."

Katsman is sticking to his long-term vision of paperless trade but believes this will take time; his planning horizon is seven years.

Todd Middagh, of Originals Online, thinks that other forces are now coming into play. He said: "The original case for electronic trade was business efficiency. This remains true, but uptake has been slow. Now security issues and legislation are going to push the trading community towards electronic documents."

Middagh expects that legislation will require electronic information about cargo at or before container packing: "We believe that a secure electronic original document will be needed to meet this requirement."

One way or another, paper is on the way out.

Web invoicing fits the bill

Logistics provider Danzas is receiving, approving and paying Cargolux invoices via a secure Internet connection after the carrier adopted e-Billing B2B software from Citibank.

The technology is claimed to benefit Cargolux customers by enhancing air waybill data, streamlining processes and reducing manual interaction.

It will be extended to other customers in the next few months.

Data on the move

Thamesport has bought its first three Mobics (Mobility for Industry Workforce) – rugged portable computers that can be used as a wireless or plug-in device – to help manage its container operations.

The Mobic devices, developed by Siemens and Diagnostic Instruments, give employees access to data when they are away from their desks – for example, out on the terminal or checking lorries at gates.

Another 40-60 Mobics will be bought next year, and Felixstowe is also interested in testing the water, dust and drop-proof devices.

Joint effort for faster clearance

A group of transport and related companies have formed an e-business alliance to try to achieve faster clearance of shipments across the US-Canada border.

The Canadian Society of Customs Brokers (CSCB) announced the partnership, which brings together four customs brokers, two Canadian hauliers, a US-based courier company and a European shipping line, but declined to identify the participants "pending final approval".

Together with ViaSafe, an electronic platform provider between importers, brokers, carriers and customs, the partners plan to develop a common database and software called Tradegate, which will automatically route a carrier's bill of lading and commercial invoice information to the correct broker.

CSCB president Carol West said this initiative would streamline the release process and avoid delays at the border.

Due to heightened security requirements between the US and Canada, shippers are required to provide more information, which has to be submitted electronically in advance of the goods arriving at the border.

Booked online in a flash

Customers booking Lufthansa Cargo's td.Flash express service electronically will save money from 1 November under the company's "e for free" programme.

Freight forwarders in Germany using the traditional channels of telephone, fax or e-mail to the company's sales departments or call centres will incur a processing charge of

€5 per air waybill.

Electronic bookings via GF-X, www.lufthansa-cargo.com or the Traxon EDI system now account for only 7%-8% of LC's total. But the company will incentivise td.Flash customers by setting a target value for e-bookings and reimbursing processing charges for previous bookings via traditional means once the target is reached.

A spokesman said that if the scheme was successful in Germany, it would be rolled out to international customers.

The e-booking announcement came as part of a wider differentiated pricing structure which sees LC increase rates by between 3% and 10% depending on route and type of service, and by 2% for customers recently concluding long-term capacity purchase agreements.

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