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3PL AGL cools Igloo's supply chain pain points

The cooler manufacturer has increasingly relied on third-party logistics provider American Global Logistics (AGL) the past two years to manage core freight and customs services for the more than 3,000 FEUs of products it ships each year.

BY ERIC JOHNSON | TUESDAY, OCTOBER 24, 2017

Sometimes logistics management is just a numbers game.

Too many carriers, too many logistics partners, too many spreadsheets, not enough people. This, in essence, it what drives many companies to outsource some part of their logistics function. The complexity often takes a backseat to sheer bandwidth issues.

And that's what initially drove Igloo, the global cooler manufacturer, to try to rationalize the number of providers with which it worked.

"When I came on to Igloo, we had seven freight forwarders and six freight brokers,"

Carolyn Glynn, senior manager, international freight and customs compliance at Igloo, told *American Shipper* in an interview Monday. "The complexity with keeping up with that and in-transit visibility was tremendous every day. There was no one tool where you could get the information. Each freight forwarder had their own tool, and their own unique way of getting and giving the information. It was so time-consuming and things were falling through the cracks."

Two years ago, Glynn was pitched by American Global Logistics, a freight forwarder that emphasizes its configurable technology and support services to international shippers. Igloo had no experience with AGL, but was impressed with the pitch, and so dedicated 200 to 300 FEUs over the year to them to test the waters.

The relationship, Glynn said, has blossomed from that point, with AGL now a trusted technology and consultative partner to Igloo. The scope of the offering expands and contracts based on Igloo's evolving needs.

"We're now at two freight forwarders, a steamship line, and two brokers," Glynn said.

"Things are more clear, more efficient. More streamlined. AGL manages our steamship line contract, and is also our freight forwarder and broker. Now I can log into one platform and see 80 percent of our volume."

AGL's system is, at the present time, a standalone one, but Glynn said an integration with Igloo's enterprise resource planning (ERP) system from Oracle is in the works. The primary objective is to allow AGL to manage purchase orders from Igloo's ERP. Igloo is also implementing Oracle's transportation management tool, OTM, and Glynn said that while some of those functions will remain in-house, others will be outsourced to AGL as well.

From a numbers point of view, AGL helps Igloo's lean team manage roughly 3,000 FEUs annually across three main channels. There's one person dedicated to what Igloo calls direct imports, two dedicated to direct orders, and four to exports. Direct imports are moves from the foreign factory to a distribution center, while direct orders are shipments from the foreign factory direct to the customer.

In all, Igloo sell more than 500 products at 110,000 retail stores around the world.

The company handles everything from assisting Igloo in finding factories in other countries, official rulings with U.S. customs, auditing of files, customs entries, and automated export systems filings.

"Any assistance I need, AGL has individual with experience and education to get me where I need to be," Glynn said. "There's a set of daily tasks and procedures they follow every day. But I'm confident in their availability of services that I can come to them with something outside of the norm. Say I'm looking to ship to another country, I can ask them what do you see as being some hurdles for me. To make sure I'm constantly keeping up with our internal demands and requirements and ensuring we have no service disruptions and no pop-up surprises. They're able to do a sanity check that we're looking at the whole picture. They always step up to the challenge. If I don't know, they say 'give me two days.' They do their due diligence and get back to me when they say they will. They make us look successful."

The impact of AGL's services extend beyond logistics for Glynn. She's been able to leverage the visibility data that AGL provides in other functions.



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Maersk COO: Maritime shipping industry could consolidate further

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'Supercell' storm sends MSC Ines aground, blocking channel into Port of Durban

A violent storm has closed the Port of Durban and sent three large vessels and many smaller ships adrift or grounded in the harbor, according to Durban's National Port Authority.

U.S. blocks Peruvian timber company's shipments

"Our buyers have been able to see and understand in-transit visibility with no training," she said. "When you can get your whole team involved with knowing exactly what's going on with our shipments, that means manufacturing teams can plan, buyers can have their forecasts met, and their safety stocks at appropriate levels."

Glynn said committing so thoroughly with a single service provider was initially a big step for the company to take.

"In the first year, going to AGL, where they were more unknown, it was a bit of a hard sell to go with someone we've never worked with before," she said. "But they were saying right things, and doing the right things, and at the right cost. After that, the results spoke for themselves, and that required no sell to upper management. AGL was doing the heavy lifting."

Glynn extolled the value of truly integrating with a logistics partner. For one, it's created the mythical one-stop shop that is often mentioned in an aspirational way by shippers and 3PLs alike. She gets tactical services like booking and visibility, alongside strategic services like short- and long-term analytics (AGL provides a quarterly review of the relationship but Glynn can check on a host of metrics virtually any time she or her team wants). And AGL has verged into a consultative partner.

"Why not share information with your freight forwarders, especially with a non-disclosure agreement in place?" she said. "Why not give them that information. You're giving them the power to help you. And you're only as strong as weakest link. If your freight forwarder is weak because you're not empowering them, then your whole supply chain is weak. We try to be as transparent as possible with our forwarders to make this partnership as successful as possible."

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