Leverage Shipment and Order Visibility on any mode

infios

a Körber company

The international supply chain is a vital component of the global economy, but managing international logistics is a complex and oftentimes frustrating endeavor. Outdated manual processes, unforeseen delays and extreme disruption are the norm for many supply chain and logistics specialists, leading to operational inefficiencies and uncontrolled freight costs. "Visibility" is frequently touted as the solution to international shipping woes, but defining what constitutes visibility is still debatable and highly case-specific.

In regards to multimodal international freight—which may include ocean, drayage, rail, and trucking modes for a single shipment—visibility should be two-pronged to include data at both the shipment and order levels. With shipment- and order-level visibility, organizations can effectively monitor inbound freight, identify risks, manage exceptions, and plan future orders. Further, multimodal visibility can help smooth operations, create more efficient workflows, improve customer experience, and reduce total costs.

As an industry-leading international transportation management service provider, Infios understands the importance of end-to-end supply chain visibility and extended its capabilities in international freight visibility with the acquisition of ClearTrack Information Network.

The addition of ClearTrack makes possible global container, order, and item level visibility as well as the monitoring, collection, creation and control of supply chain compliance documentation. By combining ClearTrack's visibility features with the innovative transportation management capabilities of the Infios TMS, customers gain an industry-first: full lifecycle shipment visibility and transportation execution.

This e-book explores the benefits of Shipment and Order Visibility for shippers and logistics service providers and how combining ClearTrack's visibility capabilities with the Infios TMS is changing the game for multimodal, international supply chains.

Contents

Shipment and Order Visibility in smart transportation

With the addition of ClearTrack's Shipment and Order Visibility software, Infios can now deliver unprecedented global visibility and multi-enterprise collaboration across the shipment lifecycle at the container-, order- and item-levels. This high-level approach to supply chain visibility is available across multiple modes, including ocean, and results in a better understanding of inventory levels and status at any given moment, with the ability to identify inventory risks early and take proactive steps to mitigate out-of-stock occurrences or missed fulfillment schedules.

Let's dive into the Shipment Order and Visibility approach that makes this feature possible.

Unified system of record

International logistics involves numerous parties —suppliers, freight forwarders, customs brokers, steamship lines, transportation carriers, and more —sharing critical shipment details and updates throughout the process. The Shipment & Order Visibility tool digitizes communication between parties by collecting information from existing OMS, ERP, TMS, and WMS platforms and standardizing the data into a singular, accessible agnostic hub.

This provides visibility to the full continuum of supply chain activities, from order, tender, acceptance, arrival, and final receipt, and helps shippers transform their overall operations with enhanced collaboration.

Standardized processes and workflows

Standardizing operational workflows is critical to ensuring consistent flow of goods and reliable delivery schedules. A unified, master system of record helps shippers identify information gaps and other issues at each workflow milestone and regain control of processes that jeopardize the downstream supply chain.

It also allows the ability to better assess automation opportunities and free up operations teams to focus on exception management when a disruption falls out of tolerance and threatens supply chain continuity.

Improve delivery reliability

An organization depends on accuracy and reliability of shipments to minimize out of stock occurrences and ensure outbound orders can be filled as promised. When these systems fail and are subjected to disruption and unanticipated risk, the company is forced to maintain higher safety stock levels, which unnecessarily increases overhead costs and eats into working capital.

A unified system of record and standardized workflows ultimately help ensure that shipments are on time as planned, eliminating the need for excess safety stock and lowering overall operating expenses and costs of goods sold.

Benefits of Shipment and Order Visibility

Establishing processes for monitoring the movement of inbound freight is essential for companies working in the global supply chain. Manual tracking processes, however, are extremely inefficient and more susceptible to human error and oversight. Digitizing and automating shipment and order tracking alleviates these issues and offers a multitude of additional benefits.

Multimode visibility from origin to destination.
With the Shipment and OrderVisibility tool shippers can see the full shipment lifecycle across all modes—ocean, air, rail, drayage, and trucking—in a single hub.

Structured, accessible, usable data.
Shipment and Order Visibility captures disparate information from across the fragmented supply chain network and standardizes it in useful formats—making unstructured data structured and easy to use.

Network integrations configured to logistics processes.
Shipment and Order Visibility supports existing logistics platforms and networks, without dramatic changes to workflows and processes.

Accessible information source for all supply chain parties.
Shipment information and updates can be accessed on demand by logistics partners, configured to push alerts when specified triggers are hit, or exported automatically via API to existing ERP.

Gain control of the flow of goods.
Shipment and Order Visibility gives organizations a comprehensive view of their inventory cycles for every item and SKU. With increasing confidence in supply chain reliability, shippers can minimize safety stock levels and drastically reduce overhead.

Efficiently scale business processes.
With a purpose-built visibility system in place to manage shipment and order tracking, companies have the ability to scale faster without adding linear labor resources to logistics and supply chain departments.

The Shipment and Order Visibility feature creates a control tower for inbound freight across the multimodal network, and readily available 24/7. Data can be viewed at the vessel, container, order, or item level, giving logistics providers and shippers the information they need to strategically plan and execute supply chain operations.

Shipment and Order Visibility: use cases

Oftentimes, the best way to explain the value of a visibility solution is to discuss specific cases. The Shipment and Order Visibility feature creates a unified system of record for shipment updates, which can be used to drive value in numerous ways. Let's explore what this looks like in the real world for an import logistics manager.

User profile

As an import logistics manager for a major retailer, it is my responsibility to monitor and confirm the status of all international shipments transporting goods between suppliers to distribution facilities to ensure on-time delivery. We move hundreds of container shipments every month and require a large transportation provider network to maintain the flow of goods, so tracking shipments is a big task.

Previously, I had to monitor shipments manually. Several times each day, I logged into various freight forwarder and ocean carrier websites to view and collect shipment status information, which I manually entered in a tracking spreadsheet. The process was time-consuming and difficult to maintain, particularly as the business grew and volumes increased. Despite higher shipping volumes, the company's operating expense limitations prevented us from hiring in the department to support logistics efforts.
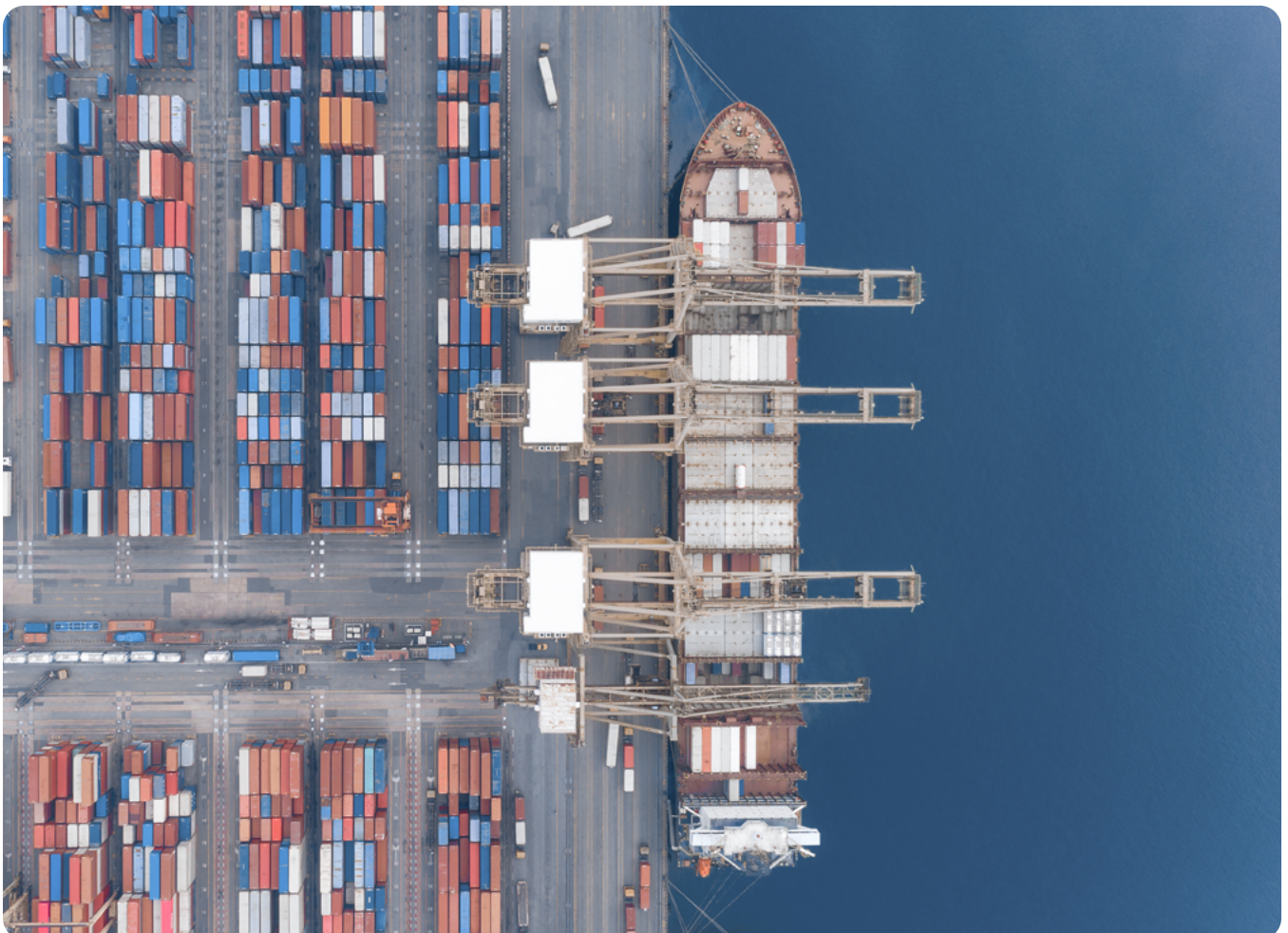
Recently, we began using the Shipment and Order Visibility feature to automate tracking and status update collection, which has significantly improved day-to-day operations and provides real-time data I can use to further optimize supply chain processes. Here are several examples of how I use Shipment and Order Visibility functions.

Shipment visibility: container-level

One of my most pressing responsibilities is collecting the current location and status of all vessels transporting our goods in shipping containers in order to identify issues that may cause delays and confirm shipments will arrive on time.

I securely log into the Shipment and Order Visibility solution and access the Geo-Map Shipments on Water feature to view the location of the vessel fleet transporting our ocean container shipments at any given time. The Geo-Map Shipments on Water feature enables me to easily identify the moving or stationary status of each vessel, as well as current location. I simply click a vessel's icon to view summarized vessel information including name, estimated arrival to port, status, speed, and the quantity of the organization's container shipments on board.

I no longer need to log into individual freight forwarder and carrier portals to see vessel information or do endless searches by container number and BOL. Instead, I can quickly identify potential delays that could threaten inventory and take actions to resolve the issue, including escalation to service providers and designating the shipment as "hot" for special, expedited handling across the network.

Order visibility: Item-level

The merchandising team often asks me to confirm the quantity and location of a specific goods item in the supply chain with the earliest estimated time of arrival to the delivery destination for distribution. Shipment and Order Visibility helps me achieve this in two ways.

First, I access the Geo-Map Shipments on Water application and view the Vessel Ledger filter feature to determine which containers are carrying that specific item. I use the Reference Number drop down, select 'Item No.' and search for the unique item number. The tool displays all vessels with ocean containers carrying that item. From there, I can then view the ocean container ledger displaying general information and the ETA to the delivery destination, along with shipment details and quantity counts of each individual item on board. With this information I can easily identify the containers that will be arriving first and track their progress throughout transit.

In the past, this process would require multiple searches across multiple carriers, compiled manually into a spreadsheet. With Shipment and Order Visibility I get answers in minutes instead of days, giving me more time to focus on managing exceptions and ensuring supply chain continuity.

Detention charges

As the import logistics manager, I assess if there are ocean containers at risk of incurring detention charges at the port of discharge so I can follow-up with the assigned dray carrier and avoid unnecessary transportation expenses.

To do this, I access the Shipment and Order Visibility Operations Dashboard to view all ocean container shipments organized by shipment milestones. Each milestone activity card displays performance metrics with ocean container shipment quantities. I view the At Port milestone and identify ocean container shipments that were discharged but not picked-up within two days. I can easily see a listing of each container with identification, carrier assignment, location, and discharge date information, as well as an event ledger with actual and planned activities. I can also create alert notifications to notify specified recipients when a steamship line outgate event is reported.

With easy access to centralized container data, I can very quickly identify containers that are at risk of incurring detention charges and escalate with the assigned carriers immediately. This capability resulted in substantial reduction in accessorial costs in the organization and also identified carrier-specific issues within our network. Thanks to Shipment and Order Visibility we are minimizing detention costs and optimizing our preferred carrier network.

Distribution center planning

In my role, I am also asked to confirm the quantity and contents of ocean container shipments scheduled to arrive at our distribution center location for the following week so the distribution center manager can plan labor and space requirements.

I again access the Shipment and Order Visibility Operations Dashboard to view all container shipments organized by shipment milestones. I view the Arrival to Distribution Center milestone card and identify ocean container shipments that are scheduled to arrive the following week. I select the ocean container shipment quantity value to display a listing of each container with identification, carrier assignment, location, order quantity and current estimated time of delivery. I then export the listing and distribute it to the distribution manager to support planning activities.

Having access to real-time container statuses is significantly easier and more efficient than the old spreadsheet method, which often included outdated information and inaccurate ETDs. This function helps me be more efficient, but also drives efficiencies within the warehouse and distribution center.

Conclusion

With increasing pressure on organizations and logistics service providers to increase supply chain efficiencies and reduce costs, achieving end-to-end visibility is critical. Timely, accurate, and complete shipment information is essential to meeting modern supply chain objectives—transportation management systems with advanced, automated visibility functionality provide the solutions to optimize workflows and improve delivery and inventory reliability. Leveraging TMS-powered visibility empowers logistics teams to proactively manage exceptions, make more informed decisions, and drive cost savings throughout the organization.

Visit our website to learn how Infios' Shipment & Order Visibility can deliver full lifecycle shipment and order visibility and transportation execution.

infios

a Körber company