Weights and Imbalances

From new container weight regulations to the impact of mergers and acquisitions, 2016 will feature a new round of steep challenges for shippers.
As I write this article, I am flying back from the World Bulk Wine Exhibition in Amsterdam to make it home for Thanksgiving. Writing about the year ahead always creates reflection on the year that has gone by, with the conclusion that the world is not a predictable place. The trade show was attended by exporters and importers from all over the world, demonstrating the global commitment to trade, going on with business despite the senseless acts of terror and security fears so close by. The city center of Brussels was virtually shut down, and an international manhunt was going on after the Paris attacks. Yet, we cannot and will not stop trading, traveling, interacting, and doing business across borders.

In 2016, trade will march on and global businesses will continue to adapt to change — whether it is in the face of labor upheavals, acts of terror, fluctuation of the grape harvest or new trade laws. Shippers, steamship lines, forwarders and trade associations will discuss and adapt to the new SOLAS container weight certification requirements. In the U.S., importers will adapt to a more “virtual” Customs and Border Protection, working with the new Centers For Excellence and Expertise for their specific commodity and learning the new messaging of the final rollouts of Customs’ Automated Commercial Environment.

While we do not have to worry about immediately expiring labor contracts, we do need to adapt to the increasing shortage of truck drivers and truck power, and pay attention to the brevity of the latest International Longshore and Warehouse Union contract and the potential new legislation preventing future meltdowns of the port system.

Truckers will adapt to new technology required to electronically record their hours of service. We will adapt to further consolidation in the steamship line world, as an industry plagued by staggering losses driven by overcapacity and low rates continues to foster alliances, acquisitions and cost-cutting measures.

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