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Notes



The Nitty Gritty Down and Dirty of Quotations for Service

By Michelle Bruno

Let's face it. Quotations for transportation services to and from international trade shows are complicated. They're detailed, long, and wonky. They can even put some people to sleep. On the other hand, quotations can be excellent decision-making tools that can ultimately save you money. Here are some tips on what information to provide to your freight forwarder and how to review the quotation you receive.

What your freight forwarder needs to know

Providing detailed and accurate information about your shipment is the first step toward getting a quotation that meets your needs. Whether you are shipping from the U.S. to a foreign trade show or the reverse, some basic information can put your freight forwarder on the right track to customizing a shipping plan and pricing it appropriately:

- The **total weight** (including the shipping crates) and the dimensions (length x width x height) of all pieces is required to determine the cost of

local transport and the ocean, air or surface costs. If the shipment is larger by volume (as determined by a standard calculation), the charges will be based on volume and NOT weight.

- The **value for customs purposes**, the harmonized tariff classification numbers for all the items in the shipment, and the preferred method of importation (permanent or temporary) will help the customs broker estimate the duty, taxes, and bond fees due in the destination country.
- The **preferred mode of transport** (air, ocean, surface), or the **time frame** available to ship to the show, helps the forwarder select shipping options and pricing that meet the shippers' needs.
- **Special handling requirements** for large pieces, liquids, or food items (for example) should also be spelled out. Special permits, licensing, or transportation requirements (cargo only aircraft, flatbed trucks, roll on roll off ocean vessels) can greatly influence pricing.
- Special **post-show shipping** requirements should be detailed in case special handling (the shipment needs to be at another show, for instance) after the show needs to be included in the round-trip pricing.

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What to look for on the quotations you receive

Regardless of the breakdown—some freight forwarders offer basic charges for less but include lots of small fees and add-ons—the bottom line cost is the most important figure. Here are some important things to keep in mind when reviewing a quotation for service:

- Make sure the quotation includes ALL of the services you have asked for. Some forwarders will not (or are unable to) quote customs charges, duties, taxes, delivery to the stand, or round-trip transportation. If there are services that you did not request, ask the forwarder why they have been included—there are often legitimate reasons or requirements to explain the added fees.
- Make sure the quotation you receive covers the shipment parameters you provided to the forwarder. This is especially critical for “special needs” shipments. If you receive an especially low price, make sure the bidder has covered the costs for special equipment or handling.
- Ask the forwarder to explain the pricing. Often, there are ways to lower the cost to ship to an international trade show using alternate modes of transportation or by making small changes. Open a dialogue with your service provider and address pricing issues together.
- Don't base your decision on price alone. Look at the company you are considering and ask some ques-



tions: Are they specialists in exhibition transportation? Do they handle international shipping or outsource it to another company? Do they have a resume of trade show (shipping) activity? Do they have a network of overseas offices or partners? Does pricing include having a person on site at the show?

- Be careful not to compare the costs of shipping to an international trade show with the costs to ship general merchandise. The services provided by a company that specializes in exhibitions are more comprehensive and reflect a level of expertise that is not normally available from a generalist forwarder or customs broker.

Transportation pricing changes regularly based on supply and demand, currency fluctuations, and global economic health. It's good business practice to ask for a quotation for services before shipping. Working closely with a qualified transportation specialist to parse through the pricing and shipping options, can save you money.

Join us in New Orleans at
IAEE's Expo! Expo! trade show
on Wednesday, December 8
at booth #516.
Play the Rogers Road Trip trivia game starting next week.
Look for an email with the details.

Global View Notes is published by:
Rogers Worldwide
 1550 E. Higgins Road, Suite 106
 Elk Grove Village, IL 60007
Contact:
 Jeanette Mucha, LCB
 Director National Sales
 Tel: (847) 806-9200
 Mobile: (847) 970-8017
 jmucha@rerogers.com

Editor:
 Michelle Bruno,
 CMP, CEM
Tel: (801) 520-0797
 michelle@brunogroup.com

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