Bridge Shipping implements CoreFreight

> " IT systems undoubtedly provide a competitive edge in the Logistics and Supply Chain industries. "

"CoreFreight's prime objective is to provide a comprehensive IT support system for South African Freight Forwarding and Customs Clearing operators," states Sydney Ramoorthy, Head of New Business Development at specialist software service provider CoreFreight Systems. "This needs to be delivered via an easy-to-use application in a manner which is totally reliable, regulatory compliant and cost-effective for the agent."

When Bridge Shipping recently commenced a review of their information systems for their Forwarding and Clearing business they elected to standardise on the CoreFreight application. The Bridge Group prides itself on flexibility, adaptability and, above all, urgency in everything that they do and wanted systems that would match this credo and support their internal processes which are designed to provide excellent service to their clients on a sustained basis.

Meeting Bridge's requirements

Sheldon Cockcroft, Durban-based Director of the company states: "Having had experience working with a number of different solutions we had a good idea of our requirements, which included: pure operational functionality; invoicing, file-financials and profitability analysis; management reporting and integration into our group financial accounting package. Operational staff and IT management were actively involved in the decision on the new system to ensure that all aspects were adequately covered and addressed the real issues. The decision to implement CoreFreight dealt with immediate operational requirements and provides strategic options for the future."

Andrew Smart, Financial Manager at Bridge, who was responsible for the project management of the implementation, adds "There are a number of features of the application which we found particularly attractive. In addition to meeting the standard requirements of SARS Customs Clearing, Bonded Warehousing and MAS, Portnet and other relevant 3rd party service providers, its internal features include detailed process audit trails, standard and client specific rates structures, flexible import shipment costings and client reporting. Detailed file-level accounting for each transaction gives us the ability to monitor and control shipment profitability to the level of detail we require. Real-time on-line credit checking provides control over this vital aspect of our business. Finally, sophisticated reporting is available for all aspects of the operation of the system incorporating automatic report scheduling as considered appropriate for either client reporting or internal use.

"We are satisfied that our requirement for operational efficiency, management control and client service are all

(From left) Sydney Ramoorthy of Core Freight and Andrew Smart of Bridge Shipping

addressed through the new system."

Painless implementation

"Further to this," says Andrew, "the implementation has proven surprisingly painless, without any disruption to client service. We prescribed tight timelines and these have been met". This is less of a surprise to Sydney who, with over 20 years experience in the implementation of forwarding and clearing systems across a broad spectrum of agents, from large corporates to single-user operations, led the project from the CoreFreight side and is well versed on the subject.

"Being Windows-based the CoreFreight application provides a familiar look and feel to new entrants to the industry and relieves stress associated with this aspect of the training.

of CoreFreight," continues Andrew. "As soon as appropriate we will consider using the CoreDocs application. This is a document image storage and retrieval facility which is purpose built for the CoreFreight application and we envisage this will greatly assist in the problems associated with the management of paper in our industry. All documents pertinent to the Import or Export file can be electronically filed, allowing instant retrieval from within the application as required – ensuring operator efficiency and customs compliance. We also see potential for the CoreXchange functionality, which will allow us to import CSV versions of supplier invoices without the need to recapture data, saving time and ensuring accuracy. The fact that this further functionality is available on the single integrated CoreFreight platform has huge advantages in the speed and ease with which the benefits of usage will accrue to the company."

Cost-effective solution removes IT complexity

CoreFreight provides cost-effective solutions to its wide range of clients. It offers access to the application over the internet in a secure hosted environment, which frees the client from the burden of the hardware and software infrastructure maintenance, and facilitates the growth of a branch network. Where appropriate the application can be provided on a server at the client's premises should they wish to maintain their own IT facilities.

The company actively pursues a policy of enhancing existing functionality and developing new features so that their clients can not only improve current procedures, but are prepared for new requirements as they become relevant. This means that with CoreFreight the operator need never find himself battling to meet service levels due to out of date technology or functionality.

"We believe that, based on our track record, CoreFreight warrants consideration in any objective evaluation of the software systems available to forwarding and/or clearing operators in the South African environment, whether looking for a solution for a start-up operation or simply to validate the cost-effectiveness of an existing system," says Sydney. The company's client base includes premier South African players across the spectrum – from niche operators to medium-sized and major clients conducting business independently or as the local agent representatives of multinational organisations and networks. The software is proven, easy to use and incorporates the modern technology required to accommodate future functionality, whether to meet SARS requirements or simply for its clients to remain competitive.

IT systems undoubtedly provide a competitive edge in the Logistics and Supply Chain industries. Forward thinking agents should, like Bridge Shipping, look for a solution that not only meets their current requirements, but that sets them up to meet the future requirements regarding both internal processes and externally to better service their clients. ◆

Even the older operators find the transition to a new application less daunting, particularly when combined with an appreciation of the improved functionality available."

From the user perspective the Windows interface with a logical process flow applied consistently throughout the application facilitates the adoption by new staff and cross-skilling of existing employees. The user interaction is made easy through the use of a "Personal Task Manager" comprising an "Inbox" and "Work-in-Progress" section which reflect the process status of each file allocated to the user, and easy access to the last point of entry on the file.

A major benefit of the training process is the opportunity to review existing procedures within an organisation. "Users with good industry knowledge are easily trained on the CoreFreight application," continues Sydney, "and are quickly able to identify areas to effect improvement in current processes. The exercise may validate some established procedures, but also may identify potential improvements to be considered in the company."

Flexible security settings allow the user access to be tailored in accordance with the organisational structure and requirements. Finally, when problems are experienced, as they inevitably are during the initial stages, the CoreFreight helpdesk gives real-time support to users on the system, via remote logon to the operator's CoreFreight screen.

Future functionality – CoreDocs and CoreXchange

"It's obviously our intention to continue to leverage the effort we at Bridge have made in the initial implementation