



Journey of the International Trade Show Shipment

By Michelle Bruno

Shipping exhibition materials from an overseas point of origin to a show in the U.S. is a bit of a mystery for the typical exhibitor. Once the shipment is collected from the exhibitor's warehouse, it is out of sight and mostly out of mind until it turns up at the booth. In reality, the goods change hands many times; they are loaded, unloaded, transferred, inspected, counted and compared by an entire supply chain of transportation professionals. Understanding the shipment's "journey" to and from the show helps exhibitors understand the importance of the tasks they are asked to perform and learn where and when small mistakes can have large consequences.

WAREHOUSE TO WAREHOUSE

Transport from warehouse, display house or original manufacturer to the freight forwarder's warehouse at the overseas point of origin. In this first stage of the process, the shipment is moved to the freight forwarder's facility to be inspected (for air/sea worthiness and approved wood packing materials), labeled (for overseas transport) and matched with the appropriate documentation including

the commercial invoice(s) and packing list. If the shipment is large enough to fill an ocean container, the container is "stuffed" in the forwarder's warehouse.

What exhibitors should avoid: combining permanent and temporary goods on the same invoice.

Why?: Temporary and permanent goods represent two different U.S. Customs entry types (non-dutiable and dutiable). The customs entry must match the invoice for each entry type.

WAREHOUSE TO PORT

Transport from the freight forwarder's warehouse to the carrier's warehouse at the airport/port. In the second stage, the airline (air freight) or steamship line (ocean freight) receives the shipment, matches it with the bill of lading and performs a security sweep on the cargo prior to export. Most reputable forwarders participate in the Customs Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAT), a supply chain security program sponsored by U.S.

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Customs and Border Protection (CBP). In doing so, they receive a number of benefits including priority processing for inspections from CBP when the goods arrive in the U.S.

What exhibitors should avoid: combining the goods from several exhibitors on one airway or ocean bill of lading (as may be the case with an international pavilion).

Why?: If U.S. Customs and Border Protection encounters a problem with one exhibitor's shipment, the entire group of exhibitors' shipments is delayed.

PORT TO PORT

Transport via air or ocean from the country of origin to the first port of entry. At this stage, airlines and steamship lines carry the exhibition shipment from the country of origin to the U.S. Most of the time (when the paperwork is in order and filed in a timely manner), the shipment is cleared in transit. By the time it arrives at the U.S. airport or port, cleared cargo can be immediately removed from the carrier's receiving facility and transferred to another warehouse—a practice that minimizes expensive storage fees at the airports and ports.

What exhibitors should avoid: not providing the freight forwarder with adequate or correct information for completing the **Importer Security Form** (ocean shipments only) in a timely manner.

Why?: The shipment CANNOT be cleared through U.S. Customs and will miss the show.

PORT TO SHOW SITE

Transport of cleared shipments from the airport or port to the show site or general service contractor's warehouse. For ocean shipments, sometimes the clearance port is in another city and the shipment has to be transported by a long-distance trucking company to the convention center. Most airports, however, are located in the same city as the

convention center and a local cartage company transports the cargo to the show site.

What exhibitor's should avoid: delivering freight directly to the convention center.

Why?: The amount of savings realized by transferring the freight from the airport/port directly to the convention center (service contractors assess a surcharge for receiving the freight at their warehouse) is often negated by the waiting time charged by the trucking company for remaining in line for hours.

SHOW SITE TO BOOTH

Delivery of shipment from the receiving area of the convention center to the booth. While exhibition shipments can travel long distances to get through U.S. Customs and on to the convention center, sometimes the longest distance is from the dock of the convention center to the booth. If the crates are not marked or marked correctly with the exhibitor's booth number, the shipment may not make it the last "mile" of the journey.

What exhibitor's should avoid: failing to notify the freight forwarder of a booth number change.

Why?: Freight forwarders have many opportunities to re-label the freight before it arrives at the convention center. Re-labeling is important for delivery of the shipment to the booth and the return of the empty crates to the booth after the show.

The procedures change slightly for different types of cargo. Food, alcohol and large equipment, for example, may take different routes and have different documentation requirements. All shipments—regardless of type—utilize a supply chain of companies, all of which are bound together by the international freight forwarder/customs broker. The forwarder—broker is insured, bonded, licensed and "connected" to provide exhibitors with the ultimate luxury: making the job look easy.

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