ACE M1: Lessons Learned

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Leading the Way to Port Progress
About the Maritime Exchange

• Membership based non-profit trade association incorporated in 1875

• Comprised of nearly 300 members: steamship companies, private & public terminals, tug operators, law enforcement, first responders, importers, etc.

• Mission: To Promote/Protect Commercial Maritime Operations in the Delaware River Port Complex

• Two primary areas of operation: Government Affairs/Public Policy & Operations/Maritime On-Line®
Maritime On-Line® (MOL) is a Community-Based System

- Created as a single portal for conveyance, cargo, & crew data
  - Designed in cooperation with and at the direction of the port community
  - Developed by industry professionals who understand the business
- Security/access rules determined by the users and maintains confidentiality of proprietary data
- Originally designed to facilitate commerce -- now used by federal government agencies, law enforcement and responders to assist in security and safety missions
- Unique among systems of its kind by integrating real-time data with static information
• **Ship Reporting:** Advance scheduling information on expected ship arrivals and departures as well as real-time and historical ship movement information

• **TRACS:** Cargo manifesting and release system certified on the U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) Automated Commercial Environment (ACE)

• **NOA/D On-Line:** Automated tool to submit advanced vessel arrival and departure notices, including crew list information, to CBP and the Coast Guard

• **Automatic Identification Real-Time System (AIS):** Real-time positions of commercial cargo vessels and tugs/barges transiting the Delaware River and Bay and the C&D Canal with links to the vessel schedule, cargo manifest, arrival/departure notice, and crew list
Conversion of TRACS to ACE M1

Timeline

- Pilot phase of the Automated Commercial Environment Multi-Modal Manifest (ACE M1) began in late 2010
- Maritime Exchange was one of only a few pilot participants
  - Port Authority System
  - Service Center
- Extensive testing continued throughout 2011 and 2012
- Test conversion in June 2012
- Final conversion to ACE M1 in August 2012
Lessons Learned

• START EARLY!!!

• Review the CBP specifications thoroughly – don’t rely on the published list of changes

• Be an active participant:
  • Customs Electronic Systems Action Committee (CESAC)
  • Trade Support Network (TSN)
  • CBP Conference calls and webinars
  • Pilot programs
• Develop use-case scenarios for all business functions
  • Do not skip functions you think have not changed
  • Test every screen, field, and button
  • Involve your end-users in testing
  • Test with trading partners
• Test your system conversion before final deployment
  • Leave enough time to make additional changes
  • Make sure CBP converts your account properly on its end
• Have a rollback plan
Post Conversion

- All hands on deck for the conversion and post-conversion support
- Budget additional resources beyond the initial conversion
  - Expect emergency fixes post conversion
  - Expect changes and fixes over the next several months
- Continue to participate in working groups, conference calls, webinars, etc.
- Actively monitor your data for hidden anomalies
Participating in the Pilot – Was it Worth it?

• There is additional cost and effort to being a pilot participant
  • Specifications will change
  • May have to reprogram multiple times
• Benefits
  • You can influence system development from both the operational and policy sides
  • More direct access to CBP support staff during the pilot
  • Much less of a chance that you will scramble to meet final deadline
  • Develop beneficial relationships with CBP personnel
Final Analysis

• The TRACS conversion to ACE M1 was successful without major issues
• Good idea by CBP to phase in ACE M1 rather than converting all participants at once (Big Bang)
• Challenges
  • Undocumented changes existed beyond the technical specification
  • Manual workarounds are necessary until ACE M1 fixes are deployed
  • Some fixes have unforeseen consequences – be prepared!
Questions?

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