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Global trade top 10 for 2010

With the arrival of 2010, it's time to ensure that you are taking care of the top 10 critical tasks as a global trade compliance professional to ensure your company's success. This list is not inclusive, but it should give you a very meaningful start to the first year of this new decade:

1) Review and/or develop objectives for the year.

These objectives must be driven by your corporate objectives, e.g. from the top down and not from the bottom up. Everything that you and your extended team plan on doing should be firmly rooted in these objectives. So take the time to clearly identify objectives for your department, your team, and each individual on your team, as well as your service providers.

2) Review contracts to ensure there are no barriers to achieving those objectives.

- Look at service provider contracts, including customs brokers, freight forwarders, consultants and counsel.
- Ensure that your rates are aligned with your corporate growth strategy for 2010.
- Review your continuous bond amounts, determine your total duties, taxes and fees paid over the last calendar month and ensure that you have sufficient bond amounts.
- Review your rates and ensure that you are paying competitive prices.
- Review your contracts for any global trade automation and content.
- Review your transaction levels for the past year and identify if there have been increases that would move you to a new transaction fee band.

3) Develop or update your global risk analysis.

This should be a chart identifying which countries you are operating in and what compliance activities you must support.

- It should provide an overall understanding of the scope of your operations and the level of risk that your company potentially carries for specific trade processes.
- Include all processes that your company must support, such as classification, valuation, free and preferential trade agreements, export declaration filing, screening and license management.
- Each country/process should be identified as low, medium or high risk.
- Risk should be based on volume, potential monetary exposure to penalties, risk of supply chain delays and the regulatory environment.
- If there are processes in specific countries that are unknown or undocumented you should identify them as unknown and as high risk due to the lack of information on the process.

This will provide a visual means to prioritize initiatives for the year and quickly identify processes and countries

that require attention to reduce exposure and risk.

4) Establish an audit schedule for the year.

Target the audits to specific processes and countries to help you assess risk or confirm that past issues have been addressed and resolved. The frequency of the audits should correspond with your objectives and risk profile.

While you're developing the audit schedule, you should identify your executive sponsor for each audit. This way you can ensure that leadership assimilates the results and that any areas for improvement have an executive champion.

5) Identify training and educational requirements for the company, your team, yourself and your service providers.

- Determine if there is a way to leverage new knowledge obtained by your team by having them conduct internal trainings once they've attended training.
- Utilize your service providers and ask them to provide updates on regulatory matters to your team and your internal customers.
- See if you can coordinate team meetings to coincide with one of the annual trade compliance conferences such as the American Association of Exporters and Importers, International Compliance Professionals Association or an industry specific conference.

6) Review the legislative landscape for pending regulations that will impact your company.

You can even utilize your global risk analysis to track upcoming regulations and their potential effects on your operations.

7) Meet with your sales and marketing team to understand their strategies for 2010.

Identify new market opportunities and any global trade compliance concerns that may be barriers to success.

8) Meet with your supply chain strategy team to identify new strategies or plans for 2010 that will require global trade compliance support from a planning perspective.

Identify existing operations that have issues or areas for improvement with regards to global trade compliance.

9) Review your compliance manuals and identify any processes, policies or procedures that require development or updating.

Based on your objectives, risk and overall strategies, ensure that these updates are aligned with your overall training strategy and that all training material is also updated.

10) Finalize your annual budget.

This task should be done last because it is nearly impossible to set a reasonable budget without first establishing your objectives, understanding your risk and knowing the internal drivers for your company's global trade compliance requirements.

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