

Include the People Factor in Supply Chain Security

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Supply chain security is more than securing assets such as ports and cargo. We have all heard it said that “people are our most important asset.” This premise needs to extend beyond our company's employees to those of our trusted supply chain participants.

Most supply chain security programs identify traditional vulnerabilities such as tampering, theft, pilferage and terrorism, and facilitate just-in-time trade in the wake of a significant supply chain disruption.

Best-practice supply chain security programs document auditable and repeatable processes for activities such as manifest document control, container inspection and cargo receipt and check-in processes. They also include technology as a risk mitigation tool. They deploy access control with integrated video at critical chokepoints, as well as container security devices, GPS or other gadgetry for transit visibility and exception alerting of a container breach. These programs focus primarily on what is loaded into a container and if/when the cargo is tampered with.

Holistic supply chain security programs include the human connection. Such programs borrow a page from Maslow's premise*, arguing that we first must meet an individual's basic needs for safety and security before we can enlist him or her in the broader mission of securing cargo and protecting consumer confidence. Rather than antagonizing business processes, security initiatives should link to corporate-wide social responsibility philosophies; this helps employees recognize how their efforts contribute not only to the security of their client's product, but to their own social and economic well-being. Security programs that fail to celebrate social and economic development with all strategic partners will likely remain reactive to security events and struggle with sustainability.

The convergence of who is involved at the loading, what is loaded into the container and if/when the cargo is tampered with should be the objective of supply chain security.

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