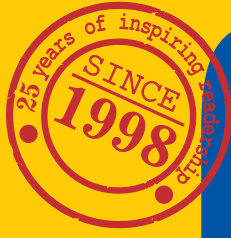


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Special Issue

**TECHNOLOGY
EMBRACING
THE INTELLIGENT
FUTURE**

**NEXT GEN AI WILL DISRUPT
THE FREIGHT FORWARDING INDUSTRY**

Amit Maheshwari
CEO, Softlink Global

Next Gen AI will disrupt the freight forwarding industry

Amit Maheshwari is the forward-thinking CEO of Softlink Global and a pioneer in digitalizing logistics. Being an early adopter of AI and with a proven track record of driving innovation within his firm, he delves into the question on everyone's mind: can Next Gen AI disrupt the freight forwarding industry today, in this interview.



CT Bureau

Can nextgen AI disrupt the Freight Forwarding industry as we see today?

Yes, it will! Freight Forwarding industry has been overdue for an evolution. For over 100 years, the industry has remained almost the same. From hand written to type written, from computer printed to PDF, change was incremental. The industry has always been dependent on human intervention. The new generation Artificial Intelligence has the power to completely revolutionize the industry right from route planning, booking, interacting with carriers, providing customer service, coordinating with various other stakeholders – everything can be done in a more efficient and enhanced manner. With that said, AI has already started to revolutionize the freight industry. We ourselves are building many tools which is helping our customers to automate their operations, thereby reducing human dependency and being more process-driven.

Your flagship product Logi-Sys is known for its constant product innovations. How do you plan to integrate AI into its future product enhancement?

At Softlink, innovation is not just a buzzword but a part of our DNA. After the advent of Windows and Internet, this is the third time that I am truly excited about a technology revolution. AI suddenly makes

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computers an intelligent machine which otherwise were dumb. We're excited to be developing an AI-powered

LogiTALK, utilizing Natural Language Processing to provide real-time, multilingual customer support, ensuring

queries are addressed with precision and clarity, no matter the language. Additionally, we're experimenting with AI to revolutionize the document review process, aiming to significantly expedite document verification. This will not only speed up the compliance process but also substantially mitigate risks associated with document discrepancies, offering our clients a more reliable, efficient, and secure logistics solution. These steps underscore our unwavering dedication to delivering a



tech-first product that stands out for its innovative approach in the ever-evolving landscape of freight forwarding.

You were recently awarded 'Pioneer in Digitalizing Logistics' recognition. With three decades of experience, what insights and advice can you offer to upcoming entrepreneurs?

From my humble beginnings coding software for customs clearance to now leading Softlink Global, my journey has been enriching with challenges and learnings. The logistics industry, particularly in India, was ripe for a digital transformation when I started out in the 1990s. My advice to the next generation of entrepreneurs is to keep an eye out for such opportunities where you can truly make a difference. Identify the gaps in the industry and be fearless in taking that first step to fill them. Remember, innovation and a customer-centric approach should be at the heart of everything you do. Embrace failures,

as they are stepping stones to success. And most importantly, always be passionate about your work, as that passion will drive you to never stop experimenting and innovating.

Considering the shortcomings that typical ERP systems face, how does your company tackle these issues and enhance customer value?

I'm proud to say that our knack for tackling the shortcomings of typical ERP systems comes down to a few key ingredients. First off, we've got domain expertise that's second to none. Our in-depth knowledge of the logistics sector empowers us to design solutions that are accurately aligned with industry-specific challenges. Then there's our collective passion. It's the fuel in our engine. We're a group of people who genuinely care about making our clients' lives easier. That passion is what drives us to pour our hearts into every line of code and every feature we design. Anchored in innovation, we continuously evolve our software to anticipate



Amit Maheshwari
CEO
Softlink Global

and meet the future needs of logistics and freight forwarding, ensuring our clients are always prepared for what's next. We're not just keeping up; we're set-

out. Our aim has always been to revolutionize the customs clearance process, turning it into a seamless operation that propels our clients' businesses forward.

With margins shrinking, what strategies can freight forwarding companies employ to boost financial stability and profitability?

Margins of freight forwarders have always been fluctuating. Being prudent with financial management is all about striking the right balance. Having all your financial data in one place means you can say goodbye to juggling different systems and the headache of manual data entry. Automating your financial processes just streamlines

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ting the pace. These core values drive us to deliver a product that not only solves today's problems but also paves the way for tomorrow's opportunities.

What has propelled Softlink Global to retain its unchallenged leadership position in the Indian Customs Compliance?

We've firmly established ourselves as the leaders in the Indian Customs space, holding an 80% market share, and our legacy spans across several decades. Our winning formula? First and foremost, our agility in adhering to the ever-evolving government compliances. We ensure our solutions are always in line with the latest regulations, providing a hassle-free experience for our clients. Our commitment to automation coupled with prompt, round-the-clock customer support is what truly makes us stand

everything, giving you a clearer picture of where you stand financially. That way, you can make smarter decisions that will ultimately increase your operational efficiency, boost your profitability and secure your financial future.

How important is the integration of software systems among various stakeholders in streamlining logistics operations?

Integrating software systems among stakeholders is essential for streamlining logistics operations, as it enables seamless communication and data flow, leading to increased efficiency and reduced errors. In this context, our solution, Trade-CHAIN, plays a pivotal role. It serves as a data and document exchange platform that connects our core product, Logi-Sys, to any third-party





software. This integration allows for a two-way communication channel with customers, agents, shipping lines, transporters, banks, and others. The platform enhances critical operations such as payments processing, e-invoicing, GST filings, and the handling of customs and freight forwarding-related shipments. Our customers can vouch for the substantial benefits it provides, ensuring that stakeholders can interact in a secure, efficient, and streamlined manner.

A common hurdle faced by clients is the lack of support after software deployment. How do you ensure Logi-Sys stands out in providing robust services to assist its clients?

The common trend today, at least as far as enterprise logistics software is concerned, is 'Set and Forget'. It has been my lifelong ethos to provide Software, not just as a service, but

accompanied with a service. This is because clients need technology partners that stick and help them achieve their business goals rather than just leaving post-deployment. For Logi-Sys, we have an in-house team of domain experts who are available on call, chat and email support on 24x7 basis. Our rapid implementation, tailored training programs, and dedicated support combine to provide a rich, long-lasting support system for our clients.

Technology is rapidly evolving. How does Logi-Sys stay at the forefront of innovation to provide relevant solutions to its clients?

At Logi-Sys, we stay at the cutting edge by constantly introducing revolutionary features that transform logistics operations. Our latest innovation, LogiBRAIN, revolutionizes data analytics, empowering businesses with sharper decision-making capabilities. Alongside,

we've launched LogiTRACK, a personalized portal enabling end users to track smartly and ship effortlessly, and TradeCHAIN, the secure communication platform I mentioned above, that streamlines data and document exchange. A testament of our commitment to innovation is Logi-Sys Arena, an innovation centre that we have dedicated to the logistics industry. This state-of-the-art facility is a multi-functional hub where visionaries and industry lead-

Logi-Sys Arena is conceptualized as a collaborative incubator, a fertile ground where thought leaders from logistics, customs compliance, and supply chain management will converge and innovate

ers will converge to shape the future of logistics. We take immense pride at Softlink Global in being at the forefront of logistics technology solutions, ensuring our cli-

ents have access to the most advanced tools in the market.

What are Softlink Global's plans for extending its international reach and strengthening its global presence in the future?

We've been on an incredible growth trajectory at Softlink Global, adding 500+ clients in the last financial year alone. With global offices in the US, UAE, Singapore, and the Philippines and serving over 4,500

logistics clients across more than 40 countries, we have significantly increased our international presence. We enjoy a whopping 23.5 per cent market share in the South-



East Asian markets. We are already the No.1 software not just for customs compliance but also for end-to-end freight forwarding & logistics solutions in India. Our goal is to become the No.1 software solution provider in the logistics industry worldwide. We're not just growing in numbers; we're investing in talent, adding over 50 professionals during a challenging time for many. Our commitment to our customers remains steadfast, and we'll continue to enhance our best-in-class customer support team. The journey ahead is exciting, and we're ready to take on the challenge.

We have heard that you have created an innovation centre and even dedicated it to the logistics industry. That is exciting to know. Can you tell us more about it?

At the precipice of change in the logistics landscape, where every idea sparks a potential revolution, Logi-

Sys Arena stands as a beacon of progress—"The Crucible of Innovation." This is not just a space, but a dynamic ecosystem, designed by us, to synergize the most brilliant minds and cutting-edge technologies in the logistics sector. Logi-Sys Arena is conceptualized as a collaborative incubator, a fertile ground where thought leaders from logistics, customs compliance, and supply chain management will converge and innovate. We are committed to elevating the industry by hosting an array of educational endeavors, such as specialized training sessions, webinars, and discussion forums. These platforms are not just about imparting knowledge, but they are catalysts for

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sparking dialogue, dissent, and development. Through these interactions, professionals and businesses alike can gain elevation in competency and strategic outlook. By engaging in ongoing discussions with stakeholders, we don't just anticipate the needs of the industry; we sculpt the very solutions that will drive it tomorrow. I invite all industry stakeholders to be a part of this transformative journey to redefine the contours of the logistics industry.

The logistics industry in India is facing a skills gap. What are your thoughts on the impact of this, and how can it be addressed to support the industry's growth?

The logistics industry in India is growing fast, but we need more people with the right skills, especially in areas like data analytics and AI. To tackle this issue, it is



crucial for government bodies and educational institutions to collaborate and develop comprehensive training programs that are in line with the industry's requirements. Softlink

is accessible directly on the Logi-Sys website.

In the light of recent geopolitical events such as the Israel-Hamas war, what steps can shippers take to enhance the resilience of their supply chains and better prepare for similar disruptions in the future?

The Palestine-Israel war is a stark reminder that our global supply chains, as strong as they may seem, are not immune to geopolitical events. These situations can have ripple effects that span continents. In light of this, shippers need to be ready to adapt and be proactive in their planning. One smart move is to diversify the supplier base. Putting all your eggs in one regional basket is a risky game. Also, having solid relationships with logistics partners and well-thought-out contingency plans, like backup routes and transportation methods, is key. And don't forget the power of building up inventory buffers and considering near-shoring to lessen risks. At the end of the day, being proactive in assessing and managing risks is what's going to make your supply chain robust and ready for whatever comes its way. 📌

