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QuestaWeb Inc.

Leon Turetsky
Chief executive

www.questaweb.com

From a global trade perspective, 2009 will witness the introduction of many new cross-border compliance initiatives, especially the long-discussed 10+2 security filing and the new ACE project that will heighten complexity for supply-chain participants. This trend toward greater regulation will cause more C-level executives at increasingly smaller global corporations to look to technology as the most cost-effective way to address compliance issues. The concurrent worldwide economic recession will affect corporate budgets negatively, making the acquisition of global trade management systems more fiscally challenging.

Innovation will be the guiding principle for GTM technology companies in this environment. Companies will not only have to develop more specialized solutions but also offer new price entry points to allow greater access to GTM functionality. Compliance-focused systems offering clear paths to full-blown GTM systems without fear of initial software investment obsolescence will emerge as leaders, dramatically improving companies' day-to-day management of products, vendors, documentation, landed costs and real-time visibility, while limiting corporate liability arising from errors or out-of-date information. Tomorrow, when global business prospers, companies will again seek full-scale GTM systems to fully automate their global trade.

The trend toward increased globalization will continue, with more companies manufacturing the same product in multiple countries using different vendors. Thus, software companies will need to re-evaluate their technology offerings, as single-country compliance solutions will no longer meet global corporations' needs. Fully integrated, multinational modules with rich compliance content will need to emerge to automate sourcing, procurement, logistics, financial and compliance processes. Given that most technology companies will not have the expertise to achieve this level of automation, the industry will witness greater specialization along the lines of content and execution.

Another exciting trend — more evolved compliance automation — will continue throughout 2009. This segment of the technology industry will grow exponentially in 2010 and beyond.