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What seemed to be a limitation instead confirmed an opportunity...



DEAR CUSTOMS LEADERS,

Continuing with my commitment to you to share more details about the elements of my vision for the World Customs Organization (WCO), I turn to the question of what it means to deliver. In this, I emphasize two elements: one, the duty of the WCO to execute programs well and, secondly, the importance of monitoring implementation. I've said to many that the WCO's instruments articulate a vision for what Customs should be, but the WCO must also help that vision to be reflected in members' everyday work. Only then does Customs truly deliver.

The feedback you have shared, be it through individual discussions, emails, or in larger settings, has affirmed the value of the WCO as a provider of critical capacity building support. It's an important element of the WCO's mission – one I believe in – and I appreciate the opportunity to learn from your observations and experiences to develop and refine approaches that ensure these efforts best meet the needs of members and move us all toward greater efficiency and effectiveness.



PLEASE SHARE YOUR FEEDBACK WITH ME!

Please continue to share your thoughts and ideas with me. You can reach me at IanSaundersWCO@trade.gov or you contact CBP Senior Advisor Christina Bell at Christina.A.Bell@cbp.dhs.gov.

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IN THE SPOTLIGHT

EXCELLENCE IN DELIVERING RESULTS



DURING A RECENT VIRTUAL MEETING...

with a Customs Director General, I expressed my disappointment that I was unable to meet with my colleague in person, as we were separated by multiple time zones. But my Customs colleague instead reflected back to me that technology was enabling us to bridge that divide. Indeed, technology has opened up new frontiers of information exchange and allows meaningful interaction when travel is either impossible or impractical.

I appreciated this perspective. What seemed to be a limitation instead confirmed an opportunity. The pandemic has forced all of us to revisit our traditional ways of doing business, which in a hands-on discipline like Customs, has required some creative troubleshooting. This said, with subsequent discussions across the spectrum of members, I continued to hear that online training offered by the WCO and other organizations was a much-needed lifeline during a particularly challenging time for our institutions.

THIS LED ME TO CONSIDER..

what other opportunities might be available via this new form of service delivery. In addition to the issue of format, I also began thinking about the types, the quality, and the measures behind the delivery of the critical implementation support that the WCO provides.

The WCO has developed rules, instruments, and tools that address the broad span of member needs. More than that, its certified experts who work directly with customs administrations to deliver the tools and training are important enablers of the WCO's mission. The organization can be proud of Members adopting WCO tools and integrating what they learn through capacity building efforts into their operations. I am also mindful that it is the development of novel delivery methods that helped members fulfill their critical responsibilities amid massive disruptions in travel and trade in recent years.

SO HOW CAN WE BUILD ATOP A SUCCESSFUL BASELINE?

Developing tools and organizing training are core parts of service delivery, as are timeliness and relevance. Still, another core element of service delivery is measuring the efficacy of the WCO's interventions - accurately capturing uptake, implementation, and adoption of the WCO's tools, instruments, and guidance. With this additional information, we can refine approaches, improve adoption, and more quickly realize the vision of a customs network that is stronger in every respect. I see this as an area of real opportunity. At the same time, we must face the reality that WCO resources have limits.

Thus, my approach is one that seeks to maintain support for members in a way that makes the most of the means available to us. Doing this means having to look at appropriate and "novel ways" to align funding to areas of work that are important to members, and employing methods that allow us to incentivize and gauge local progress.

WHAT MIGHT SUCH AN APPROACH ENTAIL?

Collaborative action planning with recipient articulation of targets for change over time; enhanced after-action methodologies to enable fulsome feedback, helping both recipients and the WCO to understand the nature and degree of changes based on interventions; and periodic self-assessment and advisory support to adjust action plans, including the development of "graduation" processes and communication of successes.

These are just a few initial ideas, ones I expect will be informed by being able to engage with the WCO's capacity building programs directly and by benefiting from your perspectives - as recipients, as donors, or as observers. All of us have an interest in ensuring the success of these investments, as well as their efficiency. The latter would allow us to redirect savings toward new or expanded services.

WCO SECRETARY GENERAL CAMPAIGN NEWSLETTER



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This approach also depends on a sense of shared responsibility. We must be able to understand and describe to others the real-world impacts of the WCO's implementation support. We must be able to communicate to our global stakeholders that Customs is indeed delivering what is expected. Successful delivery not only makes protection an operational reality; it bolsters credibility and gives us a foundation for seeking support to do more. Let's work together to help Customs deliver meaningful results nationally and expand the virtual circle of capacity building internationally.

IN CLOSING...

Helping Customs deliver implicates the duty of the WCO to provide and deliver services to the members it serves and to ensure that those services achieve the results that members seek. The WCO has demonstrated its capability, and I humbly offer to build on this foundation.

Delivering results is tied to the skills and abilities of the workforce, the processes and rules we apply, and the enabling technology and tools we employ. Delivering results requires harnessing the full range of talent available and willing to serve and ensuring organizations are able to identify and incorporate innovations. Next month I will be sharing my views on what it means for Customs to evolve and how I see the WCO contributing based on how it operates and what it offers.

Sincerely,

Ian Saunders



PROTECT. DELIVER. EVOLVE. ENGAGE.