Beyond the Buzz: Rethinking AI’s Role in Trade Operations

Moderator: Pat Vangtan, VP of Customs Brokerage Operations, Western Overseas Corporation

Panelists:

- Omar Abuhashish, Co-Founder and CEO, Reform
- Sam Basu, Co-Founder and CEO, Amari AI
- Tom Gould, Tom Gould Customs Consulting, Inc., & Gaia Dynamics
- Vincent Iacopella, EVP Strategic Growth, President Government and Trade Relations, Alba Wheels up

WESCCON

TomGouldCustoms
Global Trade & Compliance Consulting

Beyond the Buzz:
Rethinking AI's Role in Trade Operations

Wesccon 2025

Tom Gould, LCB, CCS

Chief Executive Officer of Tom Gould Customs Consulting, Inc.

- Customs and Tariff Strategy Consultant – Trade Compliance Expert
- With over thirty years of experience in international trade and customs compliance, Tom specializes in helping businesses and government officials navigate the complexities of tariffs, customs regulations and global supply chains. As the founder and CEO of Tom Gould Customs Consulting, Inc., Tom provides tailored solutions that ensure efficient and compliant import and export operations.

Member Commercial Customs Operations Advisory Committee (COAC)

- Advise the Secretaries of Treasury and DHS and the Commissioner CBP
- Tom served for more than 20 years as a member of CBP's Trade Support Network, including the trade leadership counsel. Tom formerly served as the Vice President of Global Customs and Trade at Flexport and Senior Director, Customs and International Trade, for Sandler, Travis & Rosenberg, P.A.

Chief Strategy and Compliance Officer for Gaia Dynamics

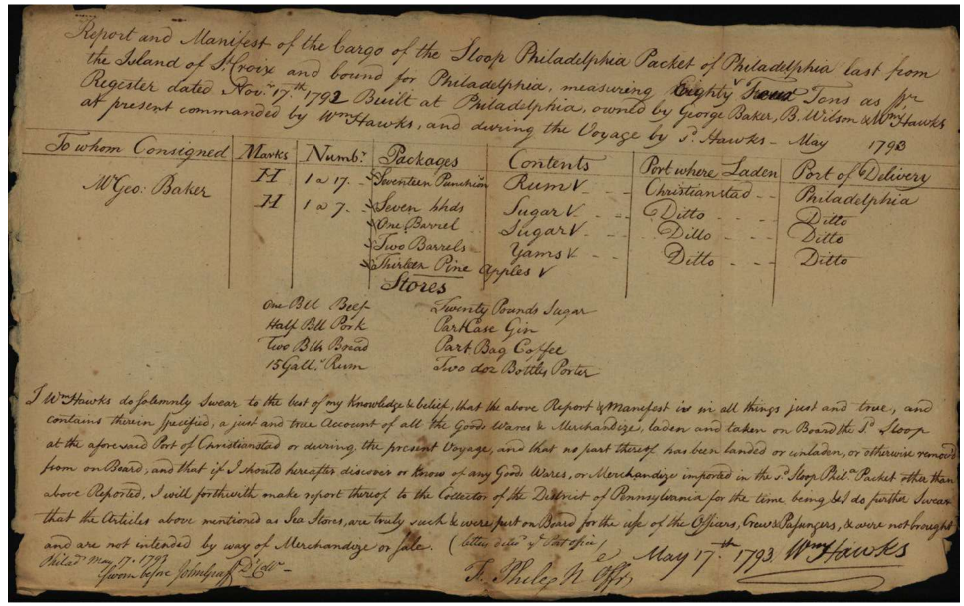
- Using Artificial Intelligence to solve global trade's toughest challenges

Former

- Vice President of Global Customs and Trade at Flexport
- Senior Director, Customs and International Trade, for Sandler, Travis & Rosenberg, P.A.
- Executive Committee CBP's Trade Support Network

A Brief History of Customs Technology

- Cargo Manifest 1793
  - Consignee
  - Marks & numbers
  - Packages
  - Contents
  - Port of lading
  - Port of delivery



Report and Manifest of the Cargo of the Sloop Philadelphia Packet of Philadelphia last from the Island of St. Croix and bound for Philadelphia, measuring Eighty Seven Tons as pr Register dated Nov. 17th 1792 Built at Philadelphia, owned by George Baker, B. Wilson & Wm Hawks at present commanded by Wm Hawks, and during the Voyage by S. Hawks - May 1793

To whom Consigned	Marks	Numb.	Packages	Contents	Port where Laden	Port of Delivery
Mr Geo: Baker	H	1 a 17.	Seventeen Puncheons	Rum	Christianstad	Philadelphia
	H	1 a 7.	Seven hhds	Sugar	Ditto	Ditto
			One Barrel	Sugar	Ditto	Ditto
			Two Barrels	Yams	Ditto	Ditto
			Thirteen Pine Apples			

Stores

One Bbl Beef — Twenty Pounds Sugar
Half Bbl Pork — Part Case Gin
Two Bbls Bread — Part Bag Coffee
15 Gall. Rum — Two doz Bottles Porter

I Wm Hawks do solemnly Swear to the best of my Knowledge & belief, that the above Report & Manifest is in all things just and true, and contains therein specified, a just and true Account of all the Goods Wares & Merchandize, laden and taken on Board the sd Sloop at the aforesaid Port of Christianstad or during the present Voyage, and that no part thereof has been landed or unladen, or otherwise removed from on Board, and that if I should hereafter discover or know of any Goods Wares, or Merchandize imported in the sd Sloop Phila Packet other than above Reported, I will forthwith make report thereof to the Collector of the District of Pennsylvania for the time being & I do further Swear that the Articles above mentioned as Sea Stores, are truly such & were put on Board for the use of the Officers, Crew & Passengers, & were not brought and are not intended by way of Merchandize or sale. (letters deliv'd at Post office)

Philad. May 17. 1793
Sworn before John Graff D. Colr -

T. Phelps N. Offr

May 17th 1793 Wm Hawks

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A Brief History of Customs Technology

- Typewriters
- Bicycle messengers or "runners"

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A Brief History of Customs Technology

- William Von Raab
- Commissioner, US Customs Service
- **“Automate or Perish”**
  - Wesccon
  - Palm Springs California
  - October 25, 1989

A Brief History of Customs Technology

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- Automated Commercial System
  - IBM 3084 “mainframe”
  - Electronic Invoice Program (EIP)
  - Remote Location Filing (RLF)

A Brief History of Customs Technology

- Customs Modernization Act “Mod Act”
  - December 8, 1993
  - Informed compliance & shared responsibility
  - Reasonable care
    - Importers provide CBP with classification, appraisement and other data
    - CBP will verify
    - … and issue penalties for non-compliance

A Brief History of Customs Technology

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- National Customs Automation Program “N-CAP”
  - Test new electronic functions before fully implementing
    - Cargo release
    - Protest
    - Automated Targeting System (ATS)
    - Customs Rulings Online Search System (CROSS)
    - Intellectual Property Rights e-Recordation (IPRR)
    - Automated Broker Interface (ABI)
    - Partner Government Agency (PGA)
    - Reconciliation
    - Global Business Identifier (GBI)
  - If a test is successful, the new functionality is implemented into ACE.

Customs Technology Today

- Automated Commercial Environment (ACE)
- ~~ACE 2.0~~ ACE Modernization

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Recommendation

- Talk to the Exhibitors & Sponsors that are building AI tools for us

Deep Cognition
Artificial Intelligence. Real Results.

Amari AI
Cut your customs clearance time in half

raft

GAIA DYNAMICS

Avalara
Cross-border compliance done right

Reform

Altana

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Questions?

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Wesccon 2025 –Vince Iacopella
AI IN CUSTOMS BROKERAGE

Translating Policy to Practice — Responsible Supervision & Control and the Broker’s Role

Context: Responsible Supervision & Control

Under U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) guidelines, Responsible Supervision and Control requires licensed customs brokers to:

•Exercise oversight over customs transactions.

•Ensure compliance with trade laws and regulations.

•Maintain accountability for entries filed under their license

This principle remains unchanged even as AI becomes more integrated into brokerage operations. Brokers must still ensure that automated systems operate within legal boundaries and ethical standards.

AI'S EXPANDING ROLE IN CUSTOMS BROKERAGE

AI is transforming the customs brokerage industry by automating and optimizing key functions:

Regulatory Compliance:

AI uses OCR and Natural Language Processing (NLP) to extract and verify data from invoices, bills of lading, and packing lists. Reducing manual errors and speeds up clearance.

Risk Assessment and Compliance

Predictive analytics flag high-risk shipments and potential regulatory violations. AI can cross-reference data with sanctions lists and trade regulations

Tariff Classification

Machine learning models analyze product descriptions to assign accurate HS codes, improving compliance and reducing duty costs

Real-Time Regulation Monitoring

AI systems track changes in global trade laws and update compliance protocols automatically.

Fraud Detection

AI identifies anomalies in trade data to prevent transshipment, misclassification, or undervaluation.

WHAT STAYS HUMAN?

Despite AI’s capabilities, several critical functions remain **human-centric**:

Knowledge Transfer & Context Setting

- Teaching ching the AI the rules of your operation, and your customers business rules

Legal Accountability

- Brokers are legally responsible for entries filed under their license, even if AI systems are used.

Ethical Judgement

- Decisions involving **gray areas**, such as valuation disputes or origin determinations, require human discretion.

Client Relationship Management

- Brokers provide strategic advice, negotiate with customs authorities, and build trust with clients—roles AI cannot replicate.

Exception Handling

- AI handles routine tasks, but **complex or unusual cases** (e.g., dual-use goods, trade remedy issues) require human expertise.

Supervision of AI Systems

- Brokers must monitor AI outputs, validate decisions, and ensure systems are updated with current regulations.

TRANSLATING POLICY TO PRACTICE

To align AI use with **Responsible Supervision and Control**, brokers should:

Audit AI systems
regularly for accuracy and compliance.

Document oversight procedures
to demonstrate control over automated processes.

Train Staff
to interpret AI outputs and intervene when necessary.

Maintain transparency
with clients about AI use and its limitations.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

ALBA

1. **Develop AI Governance Frameworks** within brokerage firms.

2. **Invest in hybrid training for brokers**—combining regulatory expertise with AI literacy.

3. **Collaborate with CBP** to define acceptable AI use cases and oversight standards.

4. **Use AI to enhance**—not replace—human judgment, especially in high-risk or high-value transactions.

TALK WITH US ABOUT YOUR CUSTOMS AND LOGISTICS NEEDS

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Amari AI

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Real outcomes, key metrics, and controls in production

Background

Sam Basu (CEO of Amari AI)

Former Senior Engineer at Google

- Years of expertise in AI, LLMs and automation
- Led critical infrastructure projects at Google
- Repeat AI founder

Current State

Struggling to keep up with changing regulations

Productivity levels dropped to half

Manual processes lead to mistakes

Higher rejects

Outcomes

Boost operational productivity

Dropped rejects and PSCs

Always compliant

Transition

Entry writers to reviewers

Spend time on consultative work instead of paperwork

ATA Framework

Auditability -> Trust -> Accountability

ATA Framework

Auditability

Confidence band

Cite changes and CSMS

Source-weighted evidence (AMS vs shipment docs)

Trust

Approve with eyes open

Accountability

Clear owners

Evidence-bound decisions

SOP updates

Bright Lines vs Gray Zones

Bright Lines

(Decisions that AI can take)

Read documents to draft entry

Alerts on new regulations

Duty math (known HTS, no special programs)

Data checks (Trade partner/MID checks, Parts DB lookup)

Gray Zones

(Decisions that humans should take)

Final HTS on ambiguous goods

Sec. 232/301 applicability & exclusions

PGA determinations & escalations

Questions?

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Reform

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Reform

Omar Abuhashish

Co-Founder and CEO
Reform

linkedin.com/in/omarabuhashish

Reform

3 – 5 years

Automation penetration

AI to automate **30% - 40%** of workflows

Value

Improve efficiency & offer better customer service

Human role

Handling exceptions & building customer relationships

Limitations

Regulations & cultural resistance

Reform

5 – 10 years

Automation penetration

60% - 70% of workflows & AI-handled exceptions

Value

Innovation at the process & infrastructure layers

Human role

Strategy & building customer relationships

Limitations

Uneven global regulation & shortage of domain-trained AI talent in logistics

Reform

10+ years

Automation penetration

80% - 90% of global supply chain workflows

Value

Complex and dynamic planning & optimization

Human role

Design and orchestration of AI & robot fleets

Limitations

Labor & safety laws

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Choosing the right AI partner

- Rate of innovation vs current state
- AI-native vs AI-added
- Extension of your team vs software vendor
- Immediate value

AI COST VS VALUE

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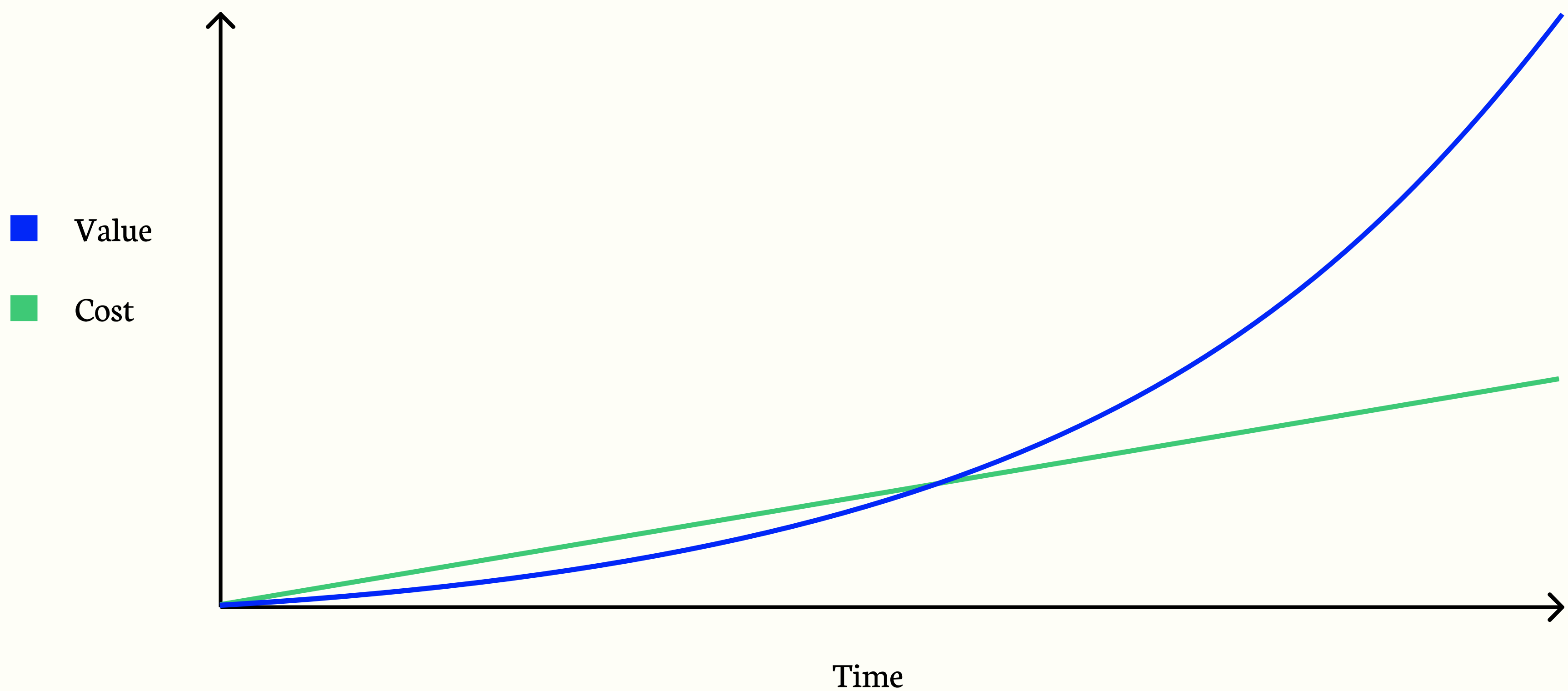

GREAT AI PARTNER

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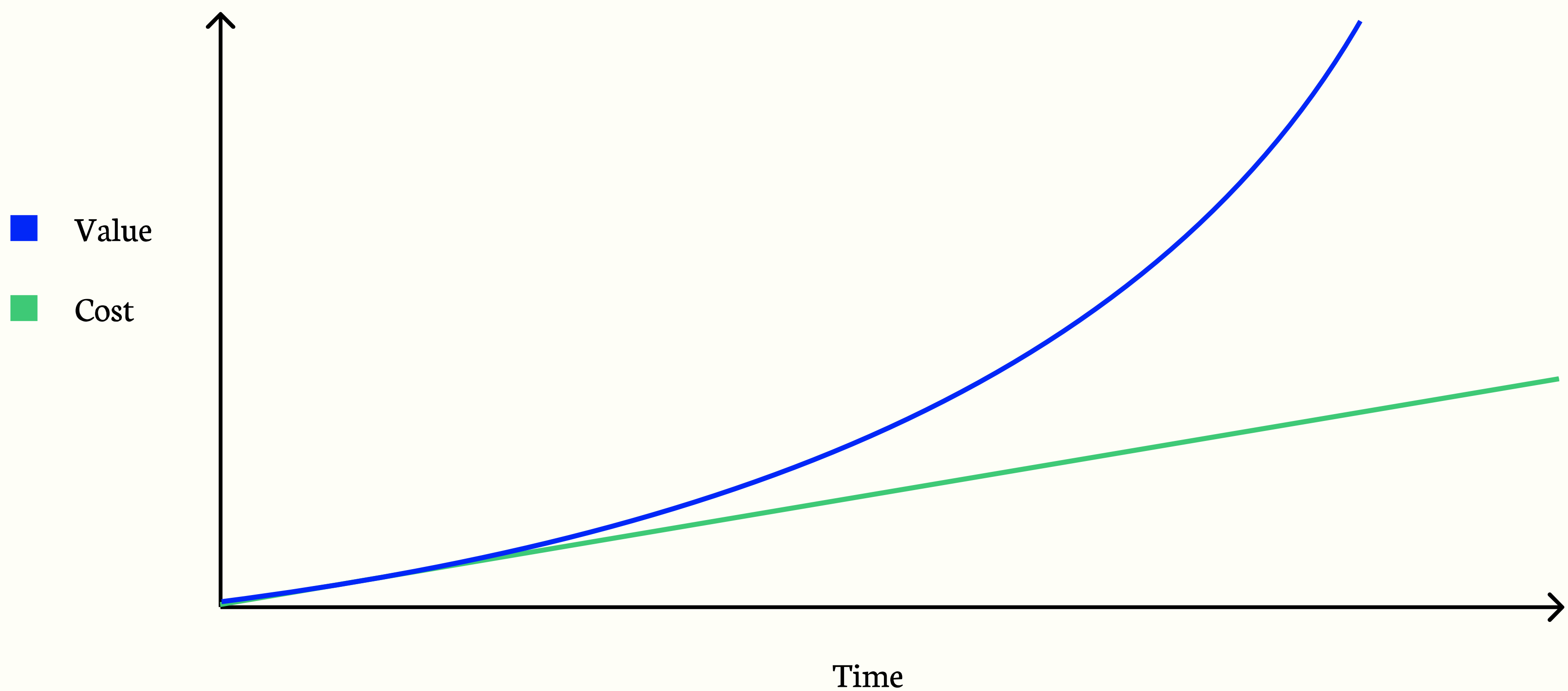

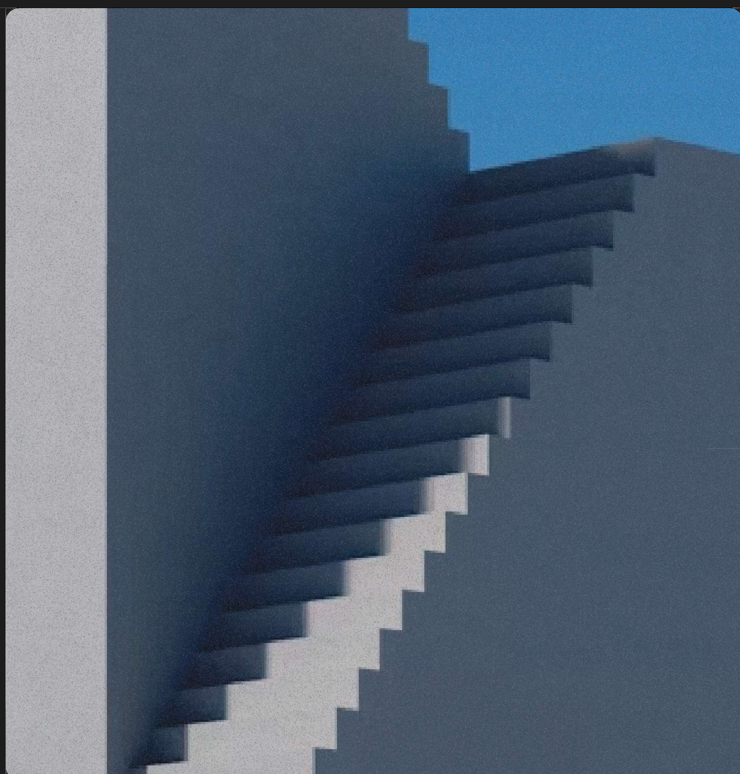

Key Takeaways & Next Steps

- Executives
  - Start small and iterate fast
  - Choose the right AI partner
- Technologists
  - Leverage cutting-edge technology
  - Stay up-to-date
- End users
  - Embrace the changes
  - Become AI-fluent

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Q&A