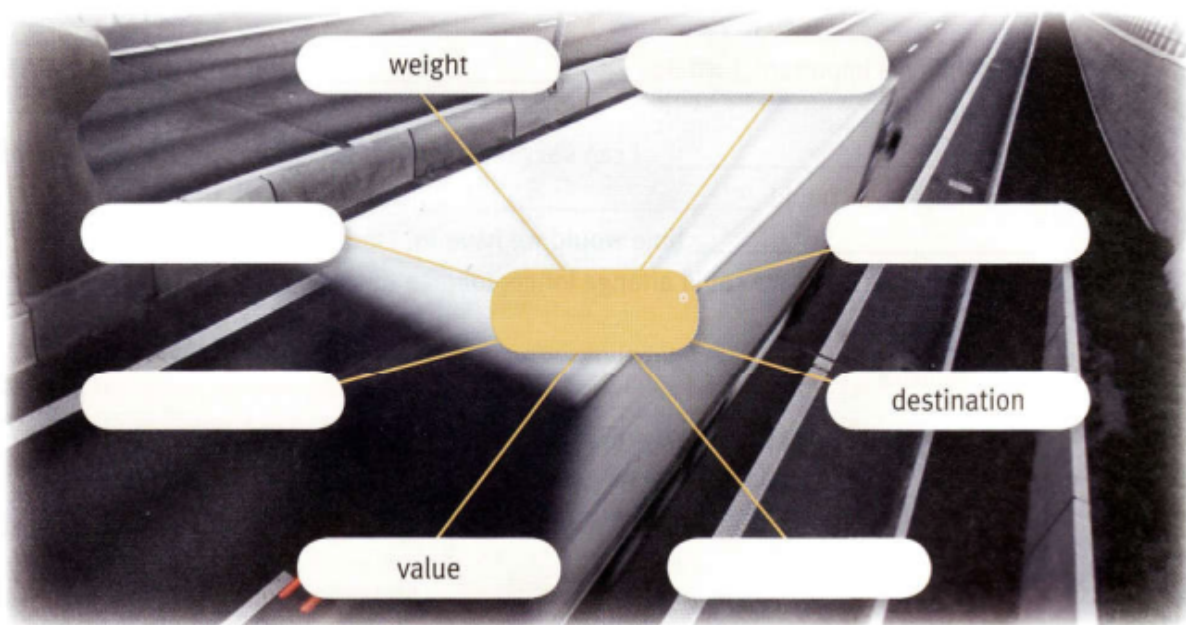


UNIT 3

ADVISING CUSTOMER ON FREIGHT TRANSPORTATION

Pre-activity

Make a list of all the different factors that would influence your choice of transport method for a shipment. Complete the diagram below.



Main Activity

Listen to the telephone dialogue and answer the questions.



- 1 What are the two different rail transport options?
- 2 When do they want to ship?
- 3 Where will the shipment go?
- 4 Which train option is recommended for large volume shipments?
- 5 What would make transport cheaper?
- 6 How much time will they have for loading the rail wagons?

Making Enquiries

When asking for information we always use polite language. We often start with a more general request for information before we ask more specific questions. Indirect questions such as *"Could you tell me how much it would cost?"* are more polite than direct questions e.g. *"How much would it cost?"*

To make enquiries, you can use the following expressions:

- *I'd like to ask/enquire about.,,*
- *I'm calling about... (on the telephone)*
- *I'm writing about/with regard to... (in an email or letter)*
- *Could you tell me how much/many/long/often...*

Advising Customer

When asking for information we always use polite language. We often start with a more general request for information before we ask more specific questions. Indirect questions such as *"Could you tell me how much it would cost?"* are more polite than direct questions e.g. *"How much would it cost?"*

To make enquiries, you can use the following expressions:

- *I'd like to ask/enquire about.,,*
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Offering Alternatives

Sometimes you need to provide the customer with several alternatives before a decision can be made. *You can use the following expression when offering alternatives to customers on freight transportation's option.*

- *Another option would be to ...*
- *Of course it would also be possible to ... (instead).*
- *Alternatively, you/we could...*

Here are some more phrases. Sort them under the correct heading.

I (would) need some information regarding...

In that case I recommend/suggest that you use/ship...

I think the best option would be to ...

If you prefer ... , we could also arrange ...

Could you let me have some information about ...?

We can provide/arrange/ship ... if you like.

As an alternative, we can offer you ...

What would be the cheapest/fastest/safest/most convenient way/option?

A Customer enquiries	B Advice and recommendations	C Offering alternatives

Reading

In this week's issue of our GLOBAL TRADE magazine we offer some expert advice on how to successfully ship goods abroad from Hank Wilcox. As the export manager for Jonston Cosmetics, Hank oversees the distribution of cosmetic products to more than 40 countries worldwide. Overseas trade and logistics issues play a major role in the company's business.



How do you successfully manage shipping logistics at Jonston Cosmetics?

I think it's most important to work with good freight forwarders. So before we actually choose a freight forwarder, we check whether their service level comes up to our standards.

What exactly does that mean?

Well, it means that we only want to work with forwarders who meet certain requirements. One thing that's really important is reliability. We need to be 100 per cent sure that our consignments are delivered to the customer at the right time. We also expect a high level of communication and co-operation between the forwarder and ourselves. And our forwarders must be able to provide flexible transport solutions at short notice.

And what about transport costs?

The price is also important obviously, but as I said, there are other things to consider such as quality of service, handling of paperwork and

advice. We usually ask for four quotations for each shipment.

What about all the documentation required in overseas trade?

We have a team of experienced logistics people who discuss the best possible freight options with the customer and handle all the paperwork. Documentation is really very important, especially if things go wrong. So we always make sure we have copies and duplicates of every document in case something is lost.

Consignments can easily be damaged in transit. Are your customers aware of that?

Yes, we always advise our customers on the risks and offer them the most suitable insurance for their consignments. Unfortunately, handling damage is quite common so it's always a good idea to insure a consignment. And insurance is less expensive than most people would expect; it usually costs between one and two per cent of the consignment's value.

Based on the text, answer the following questions

1. Does the text mention everything a "good" forwarder should be able to do? Can you add other aspects?
2. If you had to choose a freight forwarder, what criteria would be most important for you?

Role play

Work with a partner. Follow the steps below and practice making enquiries and giving advice. Use phrase from this unit.

A

Tell B what you would like to enquire about.

Give B some details of your shipment.

Tell B you are not sure you want this option.

Ask B about order/cancellation deadlines.

Thank B for help.

B

Ask A to be more specific.

Recommend one or two options.

Offer another alternative.

Answer B's question. Tell B you will give him/her a quotation within the next hour.