



## People Driving Productivity



**M**id-America Overseas (MAO) has come a long way since its origins as an ocean freight forwarder. Since 1976, the company has grown into a full service global transportation and logistics specialist, working across the full scope of supply chain operations.

Through expanding its breadth of industry expertise and services, MAO is a business that's clearly not afraid to evolve and develop. It therefore comes as little surprise to find that MAO takes the same approach to its own operations and IT capabilities.

"Without having been in the logistics space, you don't really realize just how broad it is," says Michael Mierwinski, Mid-America Overseas' Chief Financial Officer. "It's not just goods moving in and out of the country, but how everything is so reliant on data."

The realization that success in the logistics industry has as much to do with the efficient handling of data as it does moving goods, Mierwinski looked at MAO's internal processes, the relationship between IT and operations, and how technology could create more effective processes.

"When I joined the company, the systems that had been put in place were about six or seven years old and there was definitely a wall up between operations and IT," reveals Mierwinski. "When I came in, I changed that by saying it's no longer a management strategy of 'you'll do what I say' but now 'let's see what everyone needs done and we'll adjust to that.'"

Mierwinski began looking at software systems that would help streamline MAO's multiple operations: integrating data across the business, and facilitating communications between departments and with customers. It was also important to Mierwinski to work with MAO's employees to understand what they would need to work smarter and more productively.

"Our systems and processes needed to be defined by the users' requirements and our customers' needs. What we were really looking for was that single solution that had accounting, import/export, air and ocean—everything rolled up into one system. We evaluated a couple of different vendors, and WiseTech Global did come out as really the top choice."

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**Michael Mierwinski**  
Chief Financial Officer, Mid-America Overseas



**[www.maoinc.com](http://www.maoinc.com)**

Committed to excellence as a Global Transportation and Logistics provider.

**Founded:** 1976

**Country:** USA

However, like most things in life, many people were reluctant to change—even if those changes would bring about long term improvements and benefits. This posed a significant challenge to Mierwinski, but he found the answer lay in a well-defined training plan to reassure employees and to ensure a smooth transition.

“Initially, everybody wanted to change. We came from about seven systems that were tied together with various pieces and modules, so there was a lot of frustration at times with things not working. Everybody was on board until the point when we said we were changing. That’s when everyone said, ‘wait we can’t change, we’ve been using this for 10 years. I know how it works, we can’t change now.’ But I think that’s pretty standard anytime you have a large system roll out like that. We basically went into that process and said, ‘ok, here’s the timeline for the change and we’ll get everybody trained.’

“We wanted to have a local resource available at all times. We didn’t want it to be the type of training where everybody files in, we tell everybody how it works, then they all go back to their offices, and by the time we switch, they’re sitting there scratching their heads and saying ‘ok, what do I do now?’

“We sent out what we called our master trainers, and with them our subject matter experts who - for imports, for example - would know their job function inside and out. They would get trained on the import module, and then they’d go back and train their department.”

While a solid logistics software system has the potential for productivity, Mierwinski states that it’s really the people behind the IT that make the difference. By understanding that investment in innovations must be matched by investment in people, MAO has been able to get the best out of both.

“Systems are really a commodity nowadays, so you get a system, you implement it, and everybody implements it the same way. It’s a pretty standard structure. It’s really the people that are the key differentiators, people using the system to its full capability. That’s really what drives productivity, and those savings you’ll get from the investment and the technology.

“So I think people are really the biggest investment, and probably the most valuable. And it’s our job as management to make sure we give them the tools and the training to do their job well.”