

# Thinking OUTSIDE The



**M**oving cargo between the various transportation combinations is the essence of intermodalism. For many people that is where it begins and ends. But not for Sam Azzarello, General Manager, Logistics, and the folks in the MPA's Intermodal Department. They believe that the best transportation solutions often require creative thinking: thinking outside the box, opening up the box, or even making a new box.

"We work with our customers to plan and implement the safe and efficient flow of goods in the most cost-effective way possible. That's the bottom line. We do this by either starting from point of origin or as the cargo is en route, to point of destination, always keeping in mind the customer's requirements and needs," says Azzarello. For instance, we are working with auto parts manufacturers taking the product out of containers and transloading it into over-the-road vans for truck delivery and thereby reducing cost and improving efficiencies.

"We ask a lot of questions," adds Crystal Darcy, Intermodal Supervisor.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY KATHY BERGREN SMITH



“People call and ask for a list of trucking companies and we start asking them questions.” Questions like: ‘What is the cargo?’ ‘How is it packaged?’ ‘Can it be taken out of the container?’ Like a doctor looking at all the patient’s symptoms before recommending treatment, the Intermodal Department wants to be sure that it has looked at all the possible ways to reduce costs and improve efficiency within the supply chain.

As companies worldwide look more closely at the bottom line, logistics management is emerging as an area where a little creativity can save a lot of money.

“Think about it... if you move 1,000 containers annually, and, with a little ingenuity could save some money on each container, all of a sudden, you’re saving a lot of money,” says Azzarello. “The Port of Baltimore can provide that ingenuity.”

Thinking outside the box can mean opening it up first. Sometimes, transloading the cargo from a container to van trailer, Intermodal trailer or box car can net the shipper savings.

Many a traffic department has fallen under the budgetary ax in recent years leaving a void in the logistics area. “We are finding ourselves educating our customers while we look for the best transportation options,” says Azzarello. Many times, the Intermodal team finds itself working with people who do not have any background in logistics or supply chain management, but were thrust into the job due to personnel cuts. Or, if a traffic department still exists, there are so few people to do the job that they do not have time to research the best transportation options. That is where Azzarello’s team comes to bat. The Port of Baltimore continually studies and improves the efficient management of traffic flow.

David Thomas, the Port’s Director of Operations, says that the dual pressures of “just in time” cargo delivery and the need to continually address costs need not put the squeeze on cargo.

“We are able to handle cargo in ways that can actually save the customer money and get it there faster,” says Thomas. The Intermodal team utilizes the Port’s extensive network of trucking, rail and warehousing options in a multitude of ways to meet customer expectations.

“Every request is different,” says Crystal Darcy of the shippers’ requests. “We take each one apart and look at the pieces and put them back together and almost every time the customer returns and says, ‘we hadn’t thought of that!’” ↴

