

Every day thousands of companies move more than \$1.2 billion in goods across the Canada-US border. Customs brokers play a central role in this process.

They collect duties on behalf of shippers, ensure companies comply with complex government legislation, and pull together the key documentation to get goods cleared.

A customs broker is vital to the health of any company moving goods across the border, but their role doesn't necessarily stop there. The right broker can provide a competitive edge by delivering business intelligence and services that help clients assess the impact of regulatory changes and capitalize on trends and emerging markets.

### **Right Broker = Business Partner**

No two customs brokers are alike. If you're evaluating brokerage services for the first time or exploring a change in provider, there are a number of factors you should consider, beyond broker fees:

- Size of your company, volume and the type of goods you ship
- Provider's experience and references for clients in your industry
- Alignment of provider with your company's strategic direction
- Location and responsiveness of service personnel
- International affiliations for customs brokerage and freight forwarding
- Timeliness and sophistication of reporting
- Location of offices at key border crossings

### **Checklist:** Ask these questions when choosing a customs brokerage

#### **1. What is the size and structure of the support team?**

- Are personnel available in the field and from a central location (i.e. call center)?
- How will they reduce your workload and make it easier to conduct your customs business?

#### **What reporting options (including online) are offered?**

- For shipment tracking and history, invoicing, etc.

#### **2. How will the broker meet your responsibilities and minimize your exposure to The Administrative Monetary Penalty System (AMPS) in Canada and the Customs Modernization Act (MOD Act) in the U.S?**

#### **3. How will the broker communicate electronically: with you, your vendors, carriers, the CBSA (Canada Border Services Agency), CBP (U.S. Customs and Border Protection) and other government departments?**

#### **4. What are the broker's procedures for:**

- Release of information/notification?
- Accounting?
- Security?

#### **5. What is the broker's fee structure?**

- How do they define and charge for any "consulting" work that may be required?
- What are your billing options?
- Are there minimum or maximum fees?

#### **6. How will the broker resolve any errors in calculating the amount owed to the CBSA or CBP?**

- What are your recovery procedures?
- What are your obligations?

#### **7. How will the broker contribute to your bottom line?**

#### **8. How will the broker guarantee their work?**

#### **9. What professional and value added services does the broker provide?**

- News bulletins and information to keep you current and to help you proactively address issues
- One-on-one consultations or counsel
- Customs representation to government
- Training (in house or customized for your company)

## Switching Customs Brokers

If you are planning on switching customs brokers, it's good to know what you should reasonably expect your new broker to do for you during this process and what is reasonable for them to ask of you.

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### Things your new provider should do for you:

- Review your transaction history, tariffs used, rulings received, any penalties received, etc. and identify any areas of concern.
- Create an assistance package clearly outlining the information required from you for a smooth transition
- Answer any questions you might have about the transition
- Outline a schedule to gather any supporting documentation
- Notify your carriers of the change in providers
- Assign a service representative to keep current on your business and to provide an accessible contact

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### Things your new provider might ask of you:

- Request information that will enable a thorough review of your customs transaction history
- Ask you for a signed Power of Attorney (US) and General Agency Agreements (Canada) to transact
- Request or do a credit check to establish your credit
- Ask for a signed document confirming you have ended your relationship with your current provider
- Ask you to provide a reference if you are satisfied with the service delivered by your new customs broker

## Get a free needs and costs analysis

Experienced customs brokers like Willson International have built their business on delivering unmatched service across borders and will provide a no obligation analysis of your current customs brokerage fees, needs and history.

**Contact Willson International at 1.800.754.1918 for an inside look at the level of service they can provide and to gain a sense of the overall fit with your company, including:**

- A free analysis of your current customs brokerage needs and costs
- An introduction to Willson's secure suite of online client services
- An overview of Willson's unmatched service support teams (in-house and in-the-field)
- An overview of how Willson eases the transition from your current carrier (if relevant)

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### Other resources, recommended reading and help:

Visit these links for more industry insights and information:



**International Air Transport Association (IATA)**  
[www.iata.org](http://www.iata.org)



**Canadian Society of Customs Brokers**  
[www.cscb.ca](http://www.cscb.ca)



**International Federation of Customs Brokers Associations**  
[www.ifcba.org](http://www.ifcba.org)



**The National Customs Brokers & Forwarders Association of America, Inc.**  
[www.ncbfaa.org](http://www.ncbfaa.org)