

YouTrade

BPE offers online training for trade specialists.

By ERIC KULISCH

Global trade continues to increase in complexity as the world becomes more interconnected, creating challenges for multinational companies trying to develop skilled managers who can navigate the swirling business and regulatory waters across multiple borders.

Now trade compliance professionals can stay abreast of the latest import, export and supply chain security information and learn technical skills from the comfort of their home or office.

Beth Peterson Enterprises, a San Francisco-based trade consultancy, recently launched an online training and education program and is offering generic courses or ones customized to meet companies' specific needs.

Distance learning is common at colleges, universities and other organizations, but there are few comprehensive courses in the trade industry that provide import-export managers hands-on knowledge to deal with daily logistics and legal challenges.



Peterson

"If you have a global team you can't fly them out to get centralized training all the time. This allows them to get their employees trained in their time zone without incurring the expense of travel," said Beth

Peterson, BPE's founder and president, at the company's exhibit during the American Association of Exporters and Importers winter conference in Newport Beach, Calif.

Topics range from optimizing basic import operations, to Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism, classification and deemed exports. Each one-hour course costs \$150. BPE can also provide customized process or technology training for an extra charge. A company, for example, that has an application it wants its service providers to use can have BPE train the outside personnel. And BPE can set up a learning environment under the customer's brand so that the courses appear to be part of the company's in-house training program.

The training seminars are interactive and include a mix of videos and multimedia materials. When discussion turns to a particular regulation, for instance, the virtual instructor will zoom in on the specific page, explain where to find the rule and what it means. Company administrators can also receive alerts showing students' progress, including whether someone is in danger of failing or not completing a class. They can also run reports and statistics on employees. Instructors can be contacted by e-mail for clarification and refresher sessions are available.

Benefits include printable notes, a learning summary and a certificate of completion.

Peterson said BPE hopes to get the Na-

tional Customs Brokers and Forwarders Association of America to adopt the educational tool as meeting requirements for its customs specialist certification program.

"Academics can't teach this stuff because they don't have the practical, regulatory experience," said Marianne Rowden, an adjunct professor at John Marshall Law School in Chicago and a trade industry advocate in Washington.

"We need to bridge the gap between theory and practice. I think these types of programs will proliferate," she said.

Trade compliance experts are increasingly valuable "because the body of knowledge is so specialized and the liability is so huge" for companies that need to keep their total landed costs as low as possible, avoid compliance penalties and meet good governance standards, Rowden said.

Many organizations and associations are interested in implementing academic training and credentialing systems but face difficulties such as marketing, identifying the necessary body of knowledge, and designing an exam that doesn't discriminate.

Credentialing has been resisted in some quarters out of concern that it would raise expectations for companies to hire a certain number of certified professionals to meet reasonable care standards for compliance.

The trade attorney and lobbyist said a broad-based credentialed certification program is needed in the import-export industry because middle managers have the technical skill set to solve complex problems, but often don't get the credibility and authority within their corporate structures that they deserve.

Credentials should be global too because of the tremendous convergence between domestic and international regulations and could be a part of the solution to product safety problems in the news today, Rowden said.

"It would go a long way if Chinese companies had people with credentials that were recognized internationally," she said.

Governments would be smart to assist the private sector in building up its compliance capacity just as financial and technical assistance is given to some countries to help them modernize their customs administrations, Rowden said.

She recommended the United States, Japan and other nations with rules-based and automated customs administrations give grants to non-profit groups to help the private sector develop global compliance programs.

More information about the BPE online training sessions can be found at https://bpe-online.com/req/bpe_student/index.cfm.

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