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## Tech start-up aims to help forwarders digitize

**Greg Knowler, Senior Asia Editor** ([/users/gknowler](#)) | Jan 15, 2018 10:00AM EST

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According to a tech executive, complex rate contracts, massive spreadsheets, emails and PDFs bring frustration to industry players and destroy business efficiency. Photo credit: Shutterstock.

A new start-up solutions provider believes it has found a way to automate and decode [complex ocean freight contracts \(https://www.joc.com/content/10-tips-negotiating-service-contracts-container-lines\)](#) that remain a nightmare for freight forwarders and use up valuable time and resources.

Quotiss, supported by Techstars Ventures and Google for Entrepreneurs, said it has developed software to solve the problem of complex rate sheets and decode the rates using a smart algorithm that translates the longest contracts into a simple one-liner.

Marcin Zarzecki, CEO of Quotiss, said despite the freight industry's size and importance — more than 150 million TEU are shipped around the world every year — the commercial aspect of the business continued to run mostly offline and manual. He said it was becoming obvious that a "regular" forwarder would soon need to find ways to be on par with the digital world.

"Complex rate contracts, massive spreadsheets, hundreds of emails and PDFs bring frustration to industry players, consume massive resources and destroys business efficiency. No one has found a sustainable solution. Until Quotiss," Zarzecki said.

Once the carriers' contracts have been simplified by the algorithm and uploaded into the Quotiss system, the quoting process became fully automated. All the freight rates, local charges and quotes were stored on one platform, giving

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freight forwarders full transparency into their commercial activities, such as rates procurement, profitability, the efficiency of sales teams. All data was stored in one place, with no need to search through multiple folders and emails.

More than \$500 million in venture capital and other investment has poured into the startups in the past five years, according to the JOC's analysis of investments documented in Crunchbase, driven by an urgent need to trim costs, with growing demand among shippers for greater efficiency, speed, and transparency.

But as digitalization makes its way deeper into the forwarding industry ([https://www.joc.com/technology/ready-or-not-digitalization-its-way\\_20171230.html](https://www.joc.com/technology/ready-or-not-digitalization-its-way_20171230.html)), it is opening the door to smaller operators. "Modern technology used to be available only for the big players with massive resources. But this is changing," said Eugene Reznikov of Quotiss Hong Kong.

The digitalization of container freight has often been compared to booking a flight or a hotel room, but Quotiss said these comparisons did not take into account the complexities of transporting cargo across borders.

The company said when comparing forwarding with other industries that have recently been "Uberized" or digitized, it was worth mentioning that forwarding was far more complex than hotel booking or the airline ticket purchasing process.

"Imagine if every hotel would also be in charge of arranging visas, passing through immigration control, security check and a taxi ride for each tourist globally — would it still be so easy to book a hotel online with a couple of clicks?" Quotes asked.

The year, 2018, looks set to see a significant advance in the way it deploys and embraces technology. Leading the way will be blockchain, the Internet of Things, and [artificial intelligence](https://www.joc.com/international-logistics/logistics-technology/artificial-intelligence-promises-smarter-containerized-supply-chains_20170620.html) (AI), which are increasingly being discussed in terms of having potentially transformative impacts on the industry. Online marketplaces, which have been around in different forms — largely without success — for more than two decades are also beginning to take hold.

Gordon Downes, CEO of the New York Shipping Exchange, a marketplace that uses a system of contracts to tackle the problem of carriers rolling cargo and shippers who fail to send the volume of freight that they committed to sending.

"There is still a lot of hype around technology in our industry today," Downes said. "I think 2018 will be the year we see which technologies actually deliver value to the industry, and which don't."

Haven CEO Matt Tillman said that although freight forwarders and logistics providers have until now adopted technology, they "haven't forced their shippers to do the same."

"We'll see that change in 2018, if customers expect to continue receiving great customer service," he said. "Shippers of low-margin, high-volume merchandise will continue to get squeezed and will turn to modern technology to prevent logistics destroying what little margin remains."

Quotiss said the technology that helps streamline complex logistics processes was already here, such as electronic communication, big data analysis, and transport management systems, and the start-up had a warning for those slow to move into the digital world.

"Early adopters are already enjoying the benefits, becoming faster, more flexible and cost-efficient. There is a visible pressure from the digitized forwarders towards their traditional competitors," the company said.

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