

GLA GLOBAL CONFERENCE 2026

How Freight Forwarders are Unlocking Growth with AI

Staying competitive in an era of rapid AI transformation in freight



ABOUT ME

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12+ years building and scaling global trade and logistics businesses, across industry leaders and venture-backed startups.

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Where AI is adding value today

Three functions inside every freight forwarder are being rebuilt with AI right now.



SALES

Automated quoting

Parse requests, pull live rates, build quotes, and respond to customers in minutes — not days.



PROCUREMENT

Sourcing at scale

Reach more agents, normalize every format, and find the best rate without back-and-forth.



OPERATIONS

Always-on data entry

Process status updates, invoices, and exceptions 24/7. Push everything into the TMS without manual work.

More complexity, more data to wrangle, same 24 hours.

What we're hearing from forwarders we work with today



Greater reliance on spot rates

Fuel volatility and capacity swings have pushed carriers away from contract rates and toward spot quoting.



Higher rate sheet refresh

Carriers and agents now reissue rate sheets more frequently and team has to update records.



Overall, amount of info to keep up with skyrocketing

Pricing inboxes are flooded with updates across formats that are hard to keep up with.

Quoting is the perfect job for AI.

Pricing doesn't need to focus on one request at a time. AI agents can run dozens in parallel, in the background, the moment they land.

01



Inbound, automatic

Quote requests arrive. The agent picks them up the moment they land – no human trigger.

02



Extract & normalize

Parse origin, destination, commodity, dims, incoterms, equipment. Transform messy data into structured fields.

03



Find the best rate

Pull from rate sheets, contracts, and live market data. Compare across carriers and lanes in seconds.

04



Build & send

Assemble the quote, apply markups and rules, draft the response. All before the customer's coffee gets cold.

Agents take action without prompting – running quotes in parallel, end to end.



Real life Demo

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THE IMPACT

Lower cost. Bigger pipeline. More revenue.

The math is simple: faster work with fewer people, plus more reach into the market.



Faster turnaround

What took hours now takes minutes. Quoting, reconciliation, sourcing all collapse from days into the same shift.



Lower operating cost

Do more with the team you already have. Shift headcount from data entry to high-leverage work.



More revenue

Touch more lanes, agents, and customers. See where prices actually are. Quote smarter and win more business.



Thank you.

If you'd like to discuss more, come talk to us!

starboard.biz

Sumeet Trehan · Founder & CEO

Faster, more dynamic operations workflows

Anywhere your team waits for an update and then keys it into the TMS, an agent can handle it. 24/7, faster, with no fatigue.



Real-time shipment updates

Email comes in, portal updates — the agent reads it, translates it, and writes it into your TMS the second it happens.



Smart invoice reconciliation

Invoice lands in the inbox, AI parses line items, matches them against the shipment file, flags discrepancies, updates the TMS.



Inbox triage and replies

Reads every message, classifies it, drafts responses, and pushes the relevant data straight into your system of record.



Exception handling, 24/7

Catches delays, missing docs, and routing issues in real time. Surfaces only what actually needs a human.

Sourcing rates is mostly back-and-forth. AI eats that for breakfast.

Reaching out to agents and partners for rates is high-volume work. Exactly what generative AI is best at today.



Mass outreach to your agent network

Reach every partner at once, in their format, in their language.



Ingest every reply, normalize every format

PDFs, spreadsheets, email bodies, portal exports. All structured, all comparable.



Filter for exactly what you need

No more checking with 5 agents and digging through 3 portals to find one rate.

THE PARALLEL

AI SDRs are already running outbound at scale across SaaS, finance, and recruiting.

It's coming for freight procurement next. The forwarders that move first will source from a wider market and price smarter.

SUMMARY

AI is not a chatbot anymore.

Today's models take multi-step actions, analyze data, create documents, and run multi-party conversations. New capabilities map almost 1:1 to the work pricing, procurement, and operations teams do every day.



Multi-step actions

Plan, execute, and adapt across long workflows without a human nudging it forward.



Data analysis

Compare rates, run pricing logic, flag anomalies, and explain its reasoning.



Document creation

Generate quotes, contracts, summaries, and customer-ready responses end to end.



Multi-party conversations

Hold context across customers, agents, and internal teams in parallel threads.

This is already reshaping other industries. The forwarders we work with are starting to adopt it now.