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CUSTOMS AND INTERNATIONAL TRADE COMPLIANCE FORUM

Should you be planning a career in global trade compliance?



This has been perhaps the most closely hidden secret profession in international trade, particularly in the UK – that is until Brexit happened. Now, skilled candidates are in short supply at any level and are actively being poached for what has suddenly been recognised as a business critical role and for larger companies' global teams.

Global trade compliance is an open profession. There are roles from new entrant, through subject matter specialist, right up to director level, with excellent salaries to match. No two days will ever be the same – I can attest to that, having been in the profession for more than 40 years – and with access to company systems the job can be done from anywhere.

You need to be able to handle the stress of short deadlines and the pressure of work that matters to the supply chain. Many roles

require international travel. You have to have a mind that loves complexity and puzzle-solving and a will that is strong enough to say no to those higher up the hierarchy. Interpersonal skills are very important.

The aim of the role is to add to the physical supply chain design all the legal, customs and financial aspects that can make or break supply chain planning – for example, it is no use having the cheapest, fastest physical supply chain if it results in paying more import duty than would be necessary if another route were taken. There is also no point in a company making wonderful deals for sales around the world if compliance means export licences will not be granted or the proposed client is on a sanctions listing so the goods can never be sent. Those outside the profession would be appalled at how often things like this happen.

< Global trade compliance is an open profession

You have to be happy to be the go-to person, as well as the influencer who tries to ensure 'it' does not happen in the first place. You are the face that government authorities will come to if there is a problem, so you must be capable of negotiating a way through such dilemmas.

Most people in global trade compliance in industry and consultancy are expert practitioners, but there are also roles with global legal firms for lawyers, who will often engage in major court cases or negotiations with government authorities on behalf of the expert practitioners.

Training is available. Start by learning about customs processes and rules, and then move on to understanding how to analyse, improve and document processes and what business standards can be employed to help. Then learn how to survive an audit and to manage audits from various authorities, all while taking in the differing rules in play in the countries your company's goods either come from or move to, so you start to understand the differences and opportunities.

CILT can help with its industry-leading qualifications: the Certificate of Customs Competency and the AEO Certified Practitioner course, both of which are accredited and certified by CILT. Do not overlook this excellent career option.

Susan Morley FCILT
Chair, Customs and International Trade Compliance Forum.

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