

# ODeX survey spots barriers to digital documentation adoption in global trade

Stakeholders wrestle with data security concerns and implementation hurdles

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FreightWaves interviews ODeX on digital documentation survey results. (Photo: Jim Allen/FreightWaves)

The maritime industry is rapidly evolving due to technological advances and demand for efficient logistics, all crucial for global trade growth.

Recently, documentation and fintech platform ODeX conducted a survey to assess the maritime industry's views on digital documentation in ocean

freight shipping. The survey aimed to understand challenges and adoption rates in digital platforms, as well as leadership attitudes on the subject.

"I was shocked when I started looking into these problems," ODeX founder and CEO Liji Nowal told FreightWaves at the Manifest conference in Las Vegas.

"Most companies are already using Gmail and other simple technologies. Yet, here are these carriers and freight forwarders making six, seven copies of documents and printing them off."

As a founder who had held multiple professional positions prior, she found it funny that the industry was not only working with such mundane procedures, but that forwarders had to hunt down invoices for months just to keep the books straight.

## **Survey results**

Nowal is optimistic for a more digital future in global trade and the [survey](#) gave insight into the cause behind the slowness of change.

"The survey found that 50% of operational problems in global trade are documentation-related. The documentation may be inaccurate or incomplete and it impacts two parties. One, the forwarder is not able to provide the delivery service, and two the cargo owner may have millions of dollars of product just sitting around somewhere, leaving them vulnerable," she explained.

Among other results:

- About 30% of respondents highlighted issues like blank sailings and rollovers as logistical challenges.

- A fifth of respondents noted delays and issues at customs and regulatory compliance as problems as well.

Again, Nowal noted that those issues could be avoided with shipment data being shared electronically, while also giving shippers, forwarders and carriers time during transit to remit any missed information instead of waiting for shipments to reach the bottlenecks throughout transit.

Yet, with many different actors involved in global trade, what will get the community to switch from traditional methods of information sharing?

Nowal and ODeX's study points to two issues: not realizing solutions are available and fear of implementing the technology appropriately and safely.

"When we looked at the study, it says that 40% of people have not used any digital tools or don't want to use them due to concerns with data security. Although the one thing that stood out for me is the 30% of people who were not even aware of digital tools being available to fix these problems," she said.

Nowal said more awareness should fix that.

"The topic doesn't make mainstream media. It doesn't sound fancy, but people agree it gets things done," she said.

According to the company's survey, 70% of respondents understand that everyone in the global shipping ecosystem must play a part in implementing digital documentation platforms.

Nowal noted that many of the respondents has already implemented digital, real-time payment solutions and now she believes it's time to consider implementing digital documents and "marrying the two" technologies.

"I feel it's a criminal waste of resources to not be considering both since the economy is import-driven. This economy is completely sustained by trade. If we, as a tech community, do not have these conversations with stakeholders, it is going to be very difficult to see the amount of adoption that needs to take place."

In October, ODeX took its first steps into digitizing U.S. markets as Hapag-Lloyd [announced](#) it had implemented the technology for its payment reconciliation processes. ODeX's solution was already being used by Hapag-Lloyd customers in Asia, the Middle East and Africa.

"We are excited to go live with ODeX and anticipate substantial benefits for our customers as we further optimize and streamline our processes," said Stuart Sandlin, Hapag-Lloyd's president of region North America, in the release.