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Ahead of the game

Kitt Carswell and Frank Tezzi of CGI explain how the CGI Trade360™ platform meets the needs of the trade finance market and will continue to do so in the future.

The uncertainty in the global economy is pushing the corporate world to increase its emphasis in getting the most out of financial supply chains. Buyers and suppliers are looking to move towards better technology solutions to streamline processes and increase accuracy and efficiency. This is creating deeper and more intense relationships with technology providers as cooperation and collaboration are now watchwords of trade finance.

Kitt Carswell, senior offering manager at CGI, observes: "Technology providers play a unique role in the market as we have to be interoperable with banks, corporates, and their collaboration platforms to enable them to play their role in a timely and efficient way. Our customers, the banks, are a vital part of trade and by extension we are an integral part of that global network, so being ahead of the game is now more important than ever."

CGI's trade finance platform, Trade360, is first and foremost a global solution. Any financial institution that has a global presence probably suffers from some

fragmentation as different regions or branches are likely to have different requirements and standards they must meet. Typically this is accomplished by deploying trade systems locally or regionally; however, Trade360 allows banks to use one platform globally while allowing configuration and customisation to meet local standards and requirements.

Says Carswell: "For larger banks that have a global presence this is critical, as being able to have that view of their business as a global entity is increasingly important both for their own risk purposes and their own understanding of the business, but also because their customers are becoming more global. They need to be able to match their customers both on the ground at their points of service while also being able to provide a homogenous service across the world."

"Trade360 is flexible enough to allow any number of operating models, so customized capabilities at specific locations can be aggregated into global or regional back office hubs. Our customers can operate the way they want and create an efficient operating model. They have seen at least 30% improvements in operational costs, if not more."

Trade360 is not just flexible in terms of how it can be geographically implemented, but also in its functionality. Frank Tezzi, director of Trade and Supply Chain Solutions at CGI, explains: "Not only is the platform a single global solution, but there is also comprehensive functionality across it. We cover traditional trade, open account, supply chain finance and now also have cash management capabilities. If you look at our competitors they offer products that are either broken down by region or by product set. So if you are a global bank you could have numerous solutions across your global network, whereas under Trade360 it is all under the same platform."

In this way Trade360 is ahead of the game in terms of where the market is naturally moving. The convergence of trade and cash solutions by banks has been talked about for some time, but is now a priority for many corporates as in the end it is all about their cash flow. With credit short and lines cut or reduced,

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Proven solutions for trade and supply chain finance processing

Along with CGI's unmatched consulting, integration, and implementation services, the suite of CGI trade products is available to help you achieve breakthrough success in trade, supply chain finance and cash management through the intelligent and efficient use of information technology.

Key products

- **TradeFlow** – An innovative document imaging and workflow application specifically designed and developed for processing of trade finance transactions, CGI's TradeFlow revolutionizes the global trade operations workflow in the context of the bank's existing back-office technology.
- **CGI Trade360** – Trade360, a comprehensive and highly customizable Software as a Service (SaaS), delivers all the software, infrastructure and support resources necessary to power a bank's global trade business. As a result, CGI enables banks to provide the full range of trade, supply chain solutions and cash management anywhere, anytime to their corporate customers.

making capital work and flow more efficiently is of the utmost importance.

Says Carswell: "The cash management capabilities are targeted to mid-market and developing/emerging market customers, so a bank can lead with cash management for example and then cross-sell open account and trade finance delivered on the same platform. Trade360 allows banks both to meet corporates' comprehensive needs, or provide one service and demonstrate the efficiencies that can be made through the Trade360 platform."

"It is seamless across the front-end portal as well as fully integrated in the back office. In the same way that the front-end can be customised to meet the needs of a bank, the back office can also be handled and processed by different parts of a bank as required as it can be accessed from anywhere 24/7."

With CGI handling the development, maintenance, and upgrading of the technology, banks can focus on the core competencies of their business. A continuous stream of new functionality allows them to stay ahead of the curve and CGI clients such as Bank of Montreal (BMO) and ANZ have taken advantage of that to push products out to the marketplace faster than with a traditional product development model. This success is reflected in the aforementioned banks winning Trade Finance Awards for Excellence 2010 as Best Trade Bank in Canada and Best Trade Bank in Australasia respectively.

CGI is already thinking about where it can continue to add functionality to Trade360. Carswell notes: "The next stage of development is going to be in the area of payables management which will bookend the existing receivables management offering. This will require enhancements to the front-end and we are

defining requirements for the back-end now. We know that there is great demand for this at the moment so it is a priority for us."

Another area of focus is compliance. Trade360 has strong denied party checking and limits checking that integrate compliance and credit officers in a seamless workflow, but CGI is looking for more effective ways of addressing Know-Your-Client and anti-money laundering. Adds Carswell: "It's an area that is a challenge for the industry as a whole, and we are yet to see solutions built around creating efficiencies there."

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In conclusion, Tezzi notes: "It is a continuing challenge for banks to rethink their strategies and approach to all of the areas that Trade360 covers as they find significant walls exist internally. However as the convergence occurs in the industry of traditional trade into open account and supply chain into cash management, Trade360 as a managed service is able to meet banks' needs as they evolve with the market. Being a customisable global platform, CGI's Trade360 is already meeting the needs of where the industry is heading." ■

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