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Time changes both our routine and our priorities. Companies are quick to grasp these changes, and the quickest earn the most.

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## LOGISTICS OUTSOURCING AS A MEANS OF ENHANCING BUSINESS EFFICIENCY

In a rapidly growing business environment the problem of managing an efficient supply chain becomes a question of the highest priority. But not all companies are capable to succeed in this peculiar sphere of activities. Successful supply chain management requires highly-trained staff, substantial amounts of capital and financial expenditures, sufficient and relevant experience and expertise and other resources which often turn out to be unaffordable for many companies. So, there's no wonder that the provision of wise solutions and a skillful approach to the supply chain management are now becoming an independent sphere of business.

In the Western world the process of outsourcing logistics services to the third-party firms began in the 1970's when the companies started to pay more and more attention to the effectiveness of their logistics procedures. Moreover, with the amounts of global trade, transportation and warehousing increasing in geometric sequence handling all these procedures became a challenging task for many companies.

The solution was found in outsourcing logistics services to the specialized firms, which in their turn also began to extend the range of their activities, starting from particular spheres such as transportation and warehousing to combining them all in a well-coordinated system of services.

In the Republic of Belarus the process of outsourcing logistics services is currently taking its first steps (Zviazda, 12.02.2011). The market is saturated with firms able to render only certain services but the lack of full-blown 3PL-providers (3<sup>rd</sup> party logistics) is obvious.

More and more Belarusian companies are in the need of a support for their logistics operations. This problem is especially urgent for those companies who are rapidly growing and extending their markets.

The problem of cost-effectiveness of logistics is also on the agenda for the most companies, and it is the 3PL-providers who are able to handle it the right way.

As the Belarusian economy is export-oriented it is crucial for Belarusian exporters to maintain the process of foreign trade operations correctly, and it's also the task which a 3PL-provider can accomplish smoothly.

3PL-providers cover wide range of activities including transportation and transshipment, customs clearance, warehousing and different packing or assembling operations and, finally, they keep their customers informed of the status of their goods thus providing the customers with all the necessary information. Due to their experience and expertise, 3PL-providers can enhance the efficiency of the named activities providing tailor-made solutions for their customers.

Of course, many Belarusian companies are somehow reluctant to accept such changes in doing business because they have their own logistics departments or just in the name of saving their not so great finances. And to some extent their views can be justified. Outsourcing logistics services entails significant expenditures (owing to the high tariffs of 3PL-providers) and some kind of diminishing their influence on the processes being outsourced. Also there is a fear of redundancy and lack of knowledge about the services of 3PL providers.

But global practice gives us another point of view. By outsourcing logistics operations companies can pay more attention to their main activities such as manufacturing of trade. Also they can be sure of successful fulfillment of the outsourced procedures because the parties are legally-bound and 3PL-providers bear responsibility for their work.