## SCALING UP CUSTOMS DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION BY EMBRACING A DATA CULTURE AND BUILDING A DATA ECOSYSTEM.

**IN THIS ISSUE:**

*Digital Transformation*
*Data Ecosystem*
*Data Culture*

"*Scaling up Customs Digital Transformation by Embracing a Data Culture and Building a Data Ecosystem*" is the theme for International Customs Day (ICD) 2022. Celebrated each year on January 26, ICD 2022 is dedicated to the efforts of Customs administrations who have accelerated their digital transformation, by embracing a data culture based on a true knowledge-driven data ecosystem, which leverages science and technology.

Data is one of the most valuable assets to a company and is key to a successful digital transformation. As trade increasingly becomes digitized, cross-border data is becoming more important for international transactions. The use of technology creates a digital record of the activities undertaken by Customs administrations that can be used to facilitate trade and the collection of statistical data.

### WHAT IS DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION?

Digital Transformation is the cultural, organizational and operational change of an organization, industry or ecosystem through a smart integration of digital technologies, processes and competencies across all levels and functions, in a staged and strategic way. In other words, it leverages technologies to create value for various stakeholders. In carrying out the 2022 ICD theme, Customs administrations can give momentum to digital transformation through three (3) key strategies:

- Building a Customs Data Ecosystem Based on Trust

As defined by the Open Data Institute (ODI) Mapping Methodology, a data ecosystem consists of data infrastructure, people, communities and organizations that benefit from the value created by it. Data infrastructure in this context is made up of data assets, standards, technologies, policies and the organizations that steward and contribute to them. Customs administrations are a part of a data ecosystem that collects and analyzes vast amounts of data and information from various sources, mostly accessible through recent advances in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). This data is then shared and used to formulate strategies, mitigate fraud, facilitate trade and increase revenue collection by optimizing the resource allocation and managing Customs performance.

The Jamaica Customs Agency (JCA) is one of many Border Regulatory Agencies (BRAs) in the data ecosystem. Other BRAs include: the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA), Ministry of Health (MOH) and Ministry of National Security (MNS). The JCA is also aligned to other such entities within that ecosystem that are responsible for activities such as trading, shipping, warehousing, and port operations which all contribute to the generation of critical trade data. One of the ways in which, the JCA has facilitated trade is through the implementation of Jamaica Single Window for Trade (JSWIFT). This is a 'one stop shop' electronic system that allows traders to submit information at a single point to fulfil all import and export regulatory requirements.



In July 2019, an online version of the Immigration/Customs Declaration Form (C5 Form), was introduced through a collaborative effort between the JCA and the Passport Immigration and Citizenship Agency (PICA) aimed at reducing waiting time at immigration and Customs.

Data integrity is prioritized by the JCA and is maintained among parties who collect and use data.

To ensure data integrity is established and maintained, the following should be implemented:

1. Establishing formal data governance to ensure the relevance, accuracy and timeliness of data. The JCA has enhanced its data governance through standardized organizational charts and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) aligned to the relevant actors.

2. Making use of standards developed by the WCO regarding data format and data exchange. The WCO Data Model ensures standardization of information required from stakeholders. For the JCA, promoting and implementing such standards are among the main operations of the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) and JSWIFT platforms.

3. Appropriate management of data to ensure that the right people have access to the right data and that data protection regulations are respected. The JCA's commitment to the preservation of data integrity is reflected in confidentiality and data protection principles being incorporated in the Customs Act and Regulations.

This is further augmented by the Agency's drive to ensure that staff members are adequately capacitated to access and manipulate the data to achieve the desired outcomes.

4. Adopting progressive approaches, such as data analytics, to collect and successfully exploit data to drive decision-making. One such example is, the Time Release Study (TRS) which the JCA uses to measure performance by evaluating Customs release activities for persons and commodities, both at air and sea ports. The TRS provides the Agency with practical data in terms of clearance times, leading to strategic policy decisions geared towards even greater efficiency.

- ## Embracing a Data Culture by Bridging the Human Resource Gap

A data-driven culture is at the heart of digital transformation. It is one where every member of an organization has access to data analytics, along with the knowledge needed to utilize the data in order to manage the business. Becoming a data-driven organization empowers team members with insights to improve efficiency and increase the effectiveness of decision-making. Therefore, the success of any digital transformation process is dependent on the professional calibre of persons actually charged with its implementation.

JCA pulls data on a day-to-day basis to perform most operations. Such data analytics is essential in encouraging compliance. In order to achieve our mission statement of facilitating trade, protecting our borders and optimizing revenue collection, top managers have to set expectations that decisions must be anchored in data. Apart from establishing a clear mission statement, the JCA makes data accessible to its team members by; investing in a variety of data systems and tools, which in turn strengthens their skill sets. The JCA was able to successfully foster a data culture through its implementation of the Jamaica Electronic Trade System (JeTs), which is the JCA's ASYCUDA. Sensitization sessions and trainings were executed in order to build capacity amongst staff and relevant stakeholders, which saw the transition of the Customs ecosystem from one based heavily on paper to practically a paperless environment.

- ## Fostering a Collaborative Culture among Customs Administrations

Customs Administrations worldwide have access to vast amounts of data, as do other actors along the supply chain. This data is essential and can be leveraged in numerous ways. It can be used to inform trade data statistics, local & foreign investment, donor funding local policy decisions among other things. The data can also be used to foster transparency, accountability, promote voluntary compliance and facilitate trade through making key parts of this data and its analysis available to academia and the

general public.

Through the Agency's core values CAPIT (Customer Focused, Accountability, Professionalism, Integrity and Transparency), the JCA guides its interactions with stakeholders in relation to the delivery of all services. The Agency's website, www.jacustoms.gov.jm is a good example of the JCA's commitment to owning these values. Information regarding Customs operations, trade policy including tax treatment and free trade agreements, along with relevant Customs applications are domiciled there, and can be accessed by the public.

The JCA, along with other modern Customs Administrations operating worldwide, depends heavily on data analytics to support services required to access data and support decision-making.

The digital transformation of the Customs landscape is ongoing and will continue to adapt to the changing global environment through establishing a strong ecosystem, embracing a data culture and fostering collaboration among all Customs administrations. Once this is achieved, data will then become the global mother tongue that fosters greater cohesiveness between Customs and all players along the international supply chain, enhancing and building efficiency in international trade.





The International and Industry Liaison Unit (IILU) is committed to raising awareness on topics relating to the International Trade, as well as issues concerning the Caribbean Community which may affect our internal and external stakeholders. Our quarterly Newsletter seeks to highlight global trade topics and their importance to Customs Administration worldwide, specifically as it relates to the Jamaica Customs Agency. As we realize our vision to becoming a modern customs administration delivering excellent service, we recognize the importance of knowledge transfer in delivering our objectives and use this forum as one way of contributing the vision of Jamaica Customs Agency (JCA). The IILU is located at JCA's Head Office and our officers are available to respond to your trade-related queries.

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