6 July 2021

CIFFA Survey sheds light on Member Investment in Technology

A CIFFA Member Survey was launched and the results finalized this June querying membership on various aspects of technology, including: freight management systems, business process automation, predictive analytics, digitization, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity.

CIFFA Associate Member, Drew Simons of Roxville Technology Inc. drafted the survey and presented the summary to the CIFFA Technology Committee June 29.

In order to gather input, CIFFA invited 68 members to participate in the survey. The surveys were completed via Teams. Roxville used PowerPoint to share information and questions with the respondents. The source of the answers from members was anonymous, and members who participated received a copy of the full report.

The respondents were comprised of the following sized companies:

- Small (6 – 25 Employees) 62.5 %
- Medium (26- 100 Employees) 37.5 %

The CIFFA Regions were represented as follows:

- East 37.5 %
- Central 50.0 %
- West 12.5 %

Respondents were asked to rank the technologies discussed in order of importance to their business. Core Process Changes (Freight Management Systems and Business Process Automation) and Analytics were identified as most important while Artificial Intelligence and Blockchain were identified as least important.

Using technology has the promise to help avoid the unnecessary costs and mistakes involved in simple, repetitive processes.

In responding to the question about how a freight management system improves control over processes and human behaviors, the advantages stated that it is scalable, but the disadvantage communicated was that it hinders thinking outside the box, and customer service depends on human interaction and getting the right data into the system.

The process of digitalization was described as the move from paper records to electronic records including the introduction of collaboration tools but excluding Freight Management Systems and Business Process Automation. Some 87% pf members indicated that they had simplified internal processes with the wider application of digital solutions, while 13 % said they had not.

The survey also looked at Cybersecurity. In the majority of cases members felt they were comfortable with their level of protection but they felt more exposed with information theft.

The cloud platform area also generated a lot of conversations. Many respondents used this opportunity to talk about what they felt was the role of a freight forwarder. Some perceived that processes would become more streamlined and efficient, while others commented on the traditional relationship model chnaging with customer requirements.

Survey respondents were asked to provide overall comments related to technology, and some of the takeaways included the following:

- Some respondents said CIFFA should not recommend which software members should use, while others said that the association could advocate ways in which software would be best for freight forwarders and could indicate a reputable source about what freight forwarders should implement.
- Looking for a place (forum) where members or IT people can share their experience with various systems and learn more from other members

The survey document will now provide CIFFA with guidance on what areas to focus on, through the Association's Technology Committee work and in terms of overall member benefit focus.