

CASE STUDY



U.S. CUSTOMS & BORDER PROTECTION
and **COMPUTECH**

Automated Commercial System

THE CHALLENGE

EVERY YEAR, more than 23 million shipments of commercial goods enter the United States. To track, control, and tax these imports, the U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) relies on the Automated Commercial System (ACS). Originally deployed in 1984, ACS facilitates the flow of legitimate trade by providing CBP officials with detailed information on all goods imported. This data also enables CBP to stop illegal trade and inhibit threats to America's safety and security.

By the mid-1990's, foreign trade volumes were increasing annually by 15%. Consequently, ACS was working near capacity and began to experience periodic gridlock. In addition, system upgrades to meet compliance issues obligated CBP to analyze, update, and test 3,000 programs and more than 6 million lines of code. Furthermore, CBP had to modify ACS to conform to the Customs Modernization Act of 1993. Requirements included remote filing of entries, reconciliation of duty payments, and electronic filing of protests.

After September 11th, the need to enhance ACS intensified. According to the CBP-Computech team leader, "In addition to collecting revenue, this automated system also records vital information that we could use to assess threats. We needed ACS at full capacity for national security."

THE SOLUTION

ALREADY UNDER CONTRACT to maintain ACS, Computech emerged as the ideal partner to take on these challenges. With unique system knowledge and proven technological skills, Computech developed and executed a plan to address the systemic problems from the inside out.

The CBP-Computech team analyzed each ACS component to assess limitations and then devised the means to remedy root causes and rebuild components to accommodate the future growth of imports. Hundreds of ACS programs process transactions. The team scrutinized the bottlenecks and delays and identified a new technology to set up and organize multiple queues: IBM's "Message Queuing" software (known as MQ Series middleware). As custom software could not handle ACS demands, the MQ Series technology optimized high-volume transaction processing and enabled technological advances without disrupting CBP's day-to-day activities.

The team's improvements prepared CBP to meet the challenges of global trade post-September 11th and positioned ACS to evolve into the Automated Commercial Environment (ACE).¹

¹ The ACE is a secure portal that provides a single, centralized, online access point for the trade community, CBP, and other government agencies.

THE SUCCESS

THROUGH THE COLLABORATIVE EFFORT of CBP and Computech, ACS currently handles more than twice the import transactions processed in 1997. Widely recognized as one of the world's most sophisticated and integrated large-scale business systems, ACS accomplishes the following:

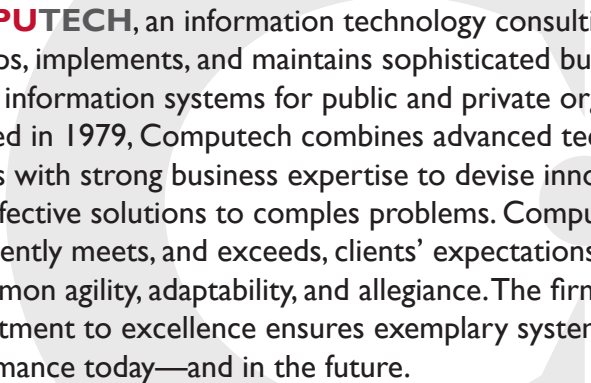
- Provides Customs officials with timely access to accurate shipping information.
- Ensures the uninterrupted flow of trans-border commerce.
- Reduces the paperwork requirements for both CBP and the importing community.

Most impressive, ACS enables CBP to process more than \$1 trillion worth of imported products and to generate approximately \$20 billion in tariffs for the Federal Government.

Faster turnaround time. Superior reliability.

AND DOUBLE THE IMPORT VOLUME IN JUST SIX YEARS.

“THERE IS NO MARGIN FOR ERROR when tracking international trade. The nation’s security is at stake. At Customs, we needed to upgrade our automated system’s capacity to meet accelerating demand and comply with new legislation. Computech resolved our trade system’s inadequacies, while building a strong foundation for future growth. CBP now operates at an unprecedented level of efficiency and can meet the challenges of global trade in a post-September 11th world.”



COMPUTECH, an information technology consulting firm, develops, implements, and maintains sophisticated business-critical information systems for public and private organizations. Founded in 1979, Computech combines advanced technological abilities with strong business expertise to devise innovative, cost-effective solutions to complex problems. Computech consistently meets, and exceeds, clients' expectations with uncommon agility, adaptability, and allegiance. The firm's commitment to excellence ensures exemplary system performance today—and in the future.



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