

## Elevating Business Through Professionalisation

### Elevating Our Business Through Professionalisation in Customs Compliance and Freight Forwarding

By **Cobus Fourie**

*Managing Director: GEODIS*



As a global leader in logistics, GEODIS is committed to delivering excellence and reliability across the supply chain. With operations in 166 countries and a workforce of nearly 50 000, we offer comprehensive solutions that span freight forwarding, global contract logistics, distribution, project logistics and supply chain management. Our success is built on a foundation of innovation, customer-centricity, and a deep commitment to professionalisation within our industry.

In an industry as complex and dynamic as freight forwarding, professionalisation is not just a strategic choice; it's a necessity. Our commitment to professionalisation directly influences our ability to deliver exceptional value to our clients and maintain our competitive edge in the market.

**Professionalisation in customs compliance and freight forwarding signifies a dedication to excellence and adherence to industry standards.** By supporting our employees in gaining Professional Designations, we align our business with the highest quality assurance benchmarks. **These designations are more than just credentials; they reflect our dedication to maintaining a standard of excellence that our clients can trust.**

Employees with professional designations bring specialised knowledge, skills, and expertise to their roles, which are invaluable assets to our business. Their advanced understanding of regulatory requirements, risk management, and logistics optimisation empowers us to streamline operations and enhance service delivery. This expertise not only improves our internal processes but also translates to superior service for our clients, fostering stronger relationships and long-term loyalty.

In today's competitive landscape, customers increasingly seek organisations staffed by knowledgeable and competent professionals. By prioritising professionalisation, we demonstrate our commitment to meeting—and exceeding—customer expectations. Our clients can be assured of our capability to handle their logistics needs with the utmost professionalism and care.

The freight forwarding sector plays a pivotal role in the South African economy, acting as a vital conduit for international trade. Given South Africa's strategic position as a gateway to sub-Saharan Africa, efficient freight forwarding is essential for facilitating the seamless movement of goods into and out of the region. This sector supports economic growth by enabling exports, fostering import activities, and linking local businesses with global markets. The professionalisation of freight forwarding in South Africa ensures compliance with international standards, helping to enhance the country's competitiveness and attractiveness as a trading partner. As such, GEODIS is committed to supporting the professional development of our employees in this region, ensuring they possess the expertise required to navigate complex regulatory environments and deliver optimal logistics solutions.

At GEODIS, we are fully supportive of professionalisation in the industry. We believe that investing in our employees' growth is investing in the future of our business. By encouraging and facilitating the pursuit of Professional Designations, we empower our workforce to reach their full potential. This investment not only enhances individual career paths but also strengthens our organisational capabilities and reputation.



### **Cobus Fourie**

*Cobus Fourie is a seasoned executive with over two decades of experience in the logistics and commercial sectors. Currently the Managing Director at **GEODIS South Africa**, he excels in crafting and executing business strategies that drive growth and customer satisfaction. Cobus holds a Masters in Business Administration from the University of Stellenbosch and a Bachelor of Commerce in Marketing Management from UNISA. His career is marked by leadership roles at prominent South African companies, where he managed large teams and spearheaded new business development initiatives.*





## Professionalising Freight Forwarding: A Shared Responsibility and Opportunity

*By Bernard Vilakazi (Sector Specialist: Transport and Logistics, Absa Business Banking)*

In today's increasingly complex and fast-paced trading environment, the freight forwarding and customs compliance industry is more vital than ever. You move the goods that move the economy – and with that responsibility comes the need for trust, transparency and technical excellence.

At Absa Business Banking, we don't just fund logistics; we understand it. We also believe that the professionalisation of this industry is both urgent and transformative.

### Why professionalisation matters now more than ever

The Institute of Customs and Freight Forwarding (ICFF) is doing crucial work in elevating standards, shaping a community of practice and positioning the industry as one of skilled, ethical professionals who are key to unlocking trade.

Absa has seen first-hand how businesses that embrace professionalisation, from governance and compliance to ongoing training and industry participation, become stronger, more resilient and more competitive in the market.

We were honoured to attend all three of the ICFF's key regional roadshows this year, in Gauteng, the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. In addition to providing networking opportunities, these events served as masterclasses on where the industry is going and how we can get there together. The insights shared by ICFF leadership, along with the calibre of thought leadership across the value chain, were remarkable.

That's why Absa has proudly become a member of the ICFF and, more importantly, every single member of our national Transport and Logistics sector team is now a registered, active ICFF member. We're not observers – we're participants in the future of this industry.

To our peers in freight forwarding, we say this: think of registering your staff with the ICFF as an investment, not a cost. Leaders often ask, "What if we train our people and they leave?" But what if you don't, and they stay? Imagine the risk of having unskilled or underexposed employees managing your reputation, compliance and customer relationships. Professional development protects your brand, improves your performance and prepares your business for bigger opportunities.



## How Absa supports the sector

As Sector Specialist for Transport and Logistics at Absa, my role is to understand your world and help tailor solutions to support it. My colleagues and I know that freight forwarding is unlike any other sub-sector. It involves multi-party coordination, international banking, time sensitivity and high exposure to compliance risk – and Absa's offering is designed with that in mind.

## How do we help? By providing:

- **Dedicated sector expertise:** We don't speak in general terms. Our team understands Incoterms, customs bottlenecks, port congestion, documentation workflows and the real-world pressures you face daily.
- **Growth-enabling financial solutions:** From working capital solutions and trade finance, to fleet expansion loans and international banking, we support forwarders looking to grow, automate or expand cross-border.
- **Sustainability and environmental, social and governance (ESG) integration:** We offer financing options and ESG guidance to help your business align with global expectations while keeping margins intact. From cleaner fleets to warehouse solar, we walk the sustainability journey with you.

Absa proudly positions itself as “the bank of the entrepreneur” – and that commitment extends directly to freight forwarders.

Whether you're a start-up forwarder breaking into the market, a growing operator expanding routes and volumes, or a well-established player navigating multi-national trade corridors, our support is tailored to meet your evolving needs.







## A call to our industry

The future of freight forwarding in South Africa depends on how we upskill, organise and professionalise. The ICFF has created the structure – now it's up to all of us to step into it.

Absa is not only your financial partner. We're your sector partner participating in, listening to, learning about and contributing to the same ecosystem as you.

Let's continue to raise the bar, together. Because when the sector thrives, so do all its players – from the port to the processor and the forwarder to the funder.

At Absa, we go beyond financing logistics. We help to shape its future ethically, strategically and professionally.

## Absa scoops global banking honours

Testament to the great work we're doing to support entrepreneurs and sustainable business practices are two accolades received at the latest Euromoney Awards for Excellence – the most prestigious honours in worldwide banking. Absa was named:

- **Africa's Best Digital Bank for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)**, thanks to our groundbreaking digital onboarding platform that empowers SMEs with faster and simpler access to multiple banking products through one seamless application.
- **Africa's Best Bank for ESG**, which reaffirmed our leadership in sustainable finance and impactful transformation across the continent.

## About the author

*Bernard Vilakazi is the Sector Specialist for Transport and Logistics at Absa Business Banking. With experience across financial services and logistics ecosystems, he helps to position clients for growth by providing industry insights, ESG guidance and strategic support aligned to market needs.*



# Supporting You Every Step of the Way Through the Evaluation Process

*From the Chairperson's Desk*

*By Yolandi Dercksen, Chairperson of the Institute of Customs and Freight Forwarding (ICFF)*



At the Institute of Customs and Freight Forwarding (ICFF), we understand that applying for a professional designation can feel like a big step. For many, the thought of going through an evaluation process may seem daunting or uncomfortable. I want to reassure every professional in our industry that you are not alone in this journey.

Our purpose is to support and guide you through the process in a way that allows you to feel confident, valued, and proud of your achievements. Whether you are formally qualified or have built your expertise through years of hands on experience, we believe that your knowledge and contribution to the Freight Forwarding and Customs industry should be recognised.

## Two Pathways – Tailored for You

We know that every individual's career path is unique. That is why we have created two distinct evaluation pathways to ensure fairness, inclusivity, and recognition of both academic achievement and industry experience.

### Pathway 1: For Those with a Formal Qualification

If you hold a recognised qualification in Freight Forwarding and Customs, this pathway validates your expertise by considering:

- Your years of relevant work experience,
- Reference letters from your management,
- An updated, detailed CV,
- A short essay reflecting your experience at the level you are applying for,
- And an online evaluation session with two of our Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) to confirm and validate your experience.

### Pathway 2: RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning) – For Those without a Formal Qualification

If you have built your career through practical experience rather than formal studies, this pathway recognises your contribution through:

- Your years of relevant work experience,
- Reference letters from your management,
- An updated, detailed CV,
- A structured Competency Assessment aligned to your experience and application level,
- And an online evaluation and feedback session with two SMEs to review your assessment, evaluate your knowledge and experience, and provide feedback to help you grow.



## PATHWAY 1

With Formal  
Qualification

Relevant Work  
Experience

Reference Letters  
from Management

Updated &  
Detailed CV

Essay Aligned to Experience  
& Application Level

Online Evaluation /  
Feedback (with SMEs)



To validate experience

## PATHWAY 2

RPL (Recognition of  
Prior Learning) - No  
Formal Qualification

Relevant Work  
Experience

Reference Letters  
from Management

Updated &  
Detailed CV

Competency Assessment  
Aligned to Experience &  
Application Level

Online Evaluation /  
Feedback (with SMEs)



To validate knowledge &  
experience, provide  
feedback

## Why Two Pathways?

Because our industry is filled with talented individuals who have reached their level of expertise in different ways.

- Some have invested in formal education and qualifications.
- Others have invested years of hard work, practical learning, and on the job development.

**Both deserve equal recognition.** That is why we have developed two fair and structured pathways, giving everyone the opportunity to achieve their professional designation.

## We're Here to Support You

The ICFF is committed to making this process transparent, supportive, and meaningful. We want you to feel proud, not pressured. If you or your organisation need any further details or guidance on these pathways, please reach out to us. We are here to walk the journey with you, to recognise your expertise, and to help you achieve the professional credibility you deserve.

Warm regards,

**Yolandi Dercksen**

Chairperson – ICFF



### Durban Roadshow

The month of July was a very productive one for the ICFF, we took our roadshow to Durban, and our roadshow was a resounding success. We had good attendance, and once again ABSA was phenomenal in their support. They sponsored the whole event at their regional office.

Thank you to representatives from the industry that attended, good conversations were had, and there was complete agreement on the importance of developing our people towards professional designation.

#### A note of thanks to:

- Mearsk Shipping
- Mediterranean Shipping Company
- Bidvest Tanker Terminals
- ABSA Transport Logistics division
- TETA
- SAASOA
- SAAFF
- HRMP Logistics
- Merlog Logistics
- Fullsail



We also want to extend our thanks to **Maria du Preez** from SAAFF, **Shevon Kotiah** from Heineken Beverages SA and to **Donald McKay** from XA Global Trade Advisors for their presentations and contributions to our roadshows.

### Busting the myth of being Evaluated

In my previous article in June, I focused on the perceived fear of individuals of being evaluated towards achieving a professional designation. We have addressed this by publishing in this news edition our evaluation process and options available to assist the industry in busting the myth of being evaluated. This is to guide potential members and their employers of exactly what is expected of them and what the evaluation entails.

Please also check out our website on [www.icff.co.za](http://www.icff.co.za) for more information.



## TETA Industry Steering Committee

The ICFF has been nominated to this Industry Steering Committee established by TETA as the recognized industry professional body. We will be supporting the employer associations, namely SAAFF, SAEPA and SAASOA in developing and re-scoping of industry qualifications framework and career pathing. It's our responsibility to ensure that our employees are kept abreast of the latest changes in the way the industry evolves and facilitates international supply chains.

All of this is being done to ensure that our industry's competency and proficiency standards meet global requirements towards professional designation by the ICFF. Once an individual obtains professional designation from the ICFF, the industry can be rest assured that you meet global standards and you operate at a certain level of expertise.

We will be keeping you updated on the focus areas and expected outcomes of this committee as we carry out our mandate.

### Reminders

**Our next webinar** is on 13 August 2025 @ 12h30 to 13h30  
***National Single Window: Understanding the single window system: Functionality, case studies & SARS Pilot Insights***

Don't miss it, please ensure you book and confirm your space!  
RSVP with Lerato: [Imapheto@icff.co.za](mailto:Imapheto@icff.co.za)



### Book a call or Schedule a Meeting

Please book a call with us or schedule a meeting should you be interested in becoming a member of the ICFF or to obtain a professional designation. We are here to guide and assist. [Imapheto@icff.co.za](mailto:Imapheto@icff.co.za) or visit our website on [www.icff.co.za](http://www.icff.co.za)

# Bite-Sized Insights

Topic:

National Single Window -  
Understanding the Single  
Window System: Functionality,  
Case Studies & SARS Pilot  
Insights



13 August 2025  
via MS Teams  
from 12:30 – 13:30



## Guest Speaker: Clifford Evans

Clifford began his career at the South African Post Office in 1981, spending eight years in the Foreign Parcel Section. During this time, he received training from Customs and Excise in tariff classification, the calculation of various duties, and the application of the Prohibited and Restricted Goods List.

In 1988, he transitioned to the private sector, taking on the role of in-house clearing agent for a large mail-order company. Over the next four decades, he worked with several major logistics companies, including Project Freight, CEVA Logistics, Meihuizen International, and most recently, served for eight years as the Customs Liaison Manager at Berry & Donaldson.

Career highlights include contributing to the drafting of the Rules to the new Customs Acts, representing the South African Association of Freight Forwarders (SAAFF) in Parliament on NRCS-related challenges, and winning a legal case against TNPA that successfully prevented penalties being imposed on incorrect Cargo Dues Orders. He has served on the SAAFF Western Cape Executive Committee since 2009 and are an active member of Exporters Western Cape and the Port Liaison Forum.



**Ingrid du Buisson**  
CEO



**Yolandi Dercksen**  
Chairperson

R200.00 for non-members.

✉ RSVP to [Imapheto@icff.co.za](mailto:Imapheto@icff.co.za) ➡ [www.icff.co.za](http://www.icff.co.za)

