Waterlink Pakistan: Developing a long-term strategic plan

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ABSTRACT

Waterlink Pakistan is a fast growing International Freight Forwarding Company. In 2004 the war on Afghanistan started and this brought in new business ventures for Pakistan’s shipping industry. The American army invaded Afghanistan and there was need of logistic services in order to provide the transportation service to the different companies that catered to the American Armies’ need. Waterlink Pakistan recognized this opportunity and expanded their business by entering into the Afghan Transit. Afghan Transit brought in a lot of business for Waterlink Pakistan and the company grew. Today Afghan Transit accounts for about 60% of Waterlink Pakistan’s Trade. Captain Ghulam Mustafa (Entrepreneur) now faces a problem as majority of the company’s business depends on Afghan Transit and in the near future the American Army is planning to move out of Afghanistan. This will bring the business down to a great deal. The moving out of American Army will take about 4-5 years but the company has to look at the future aspect of its business.

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Introduction

Waterlink Pakistan (Pvt.) Ltd. was established in 2003, is a fast expanding International Freight Forwarding Company. The company provides the following services: Air Freight, Afghan Transit, Chartering, Project Cargo, Supply Chain, Sea Freight, Road Transport and Warehousing. The company has grown and reached new heights as its subsidiaries and sister concerns have evolved over the years. Waterlink Pakistan (Pvt.) Ltd. is one of the leading and active Afghan Transit Trade company with its presence in Kabul and Kandahar.

Furqan International came into existence in 2003, a subsidiary of Waterlink Pakistan (Pvt.) Ltd., a well established custom house agent in Pakistan, facilitating its customers with prompt and efficient custom clearance services at all major ports and airports in Pakistan. FastTrack established in 2008, a subsidiary of Waterlink Pakistan (Pvt.) Ltd., and specializes in projects and warehousing with a bonded facility in Karachi being one of its main strongholds. MultiModal Transport service established in 2010, a subsidiary of Waterlink Pakistan (Pvt.) Ltd. is exclusively focused on the road transportation sector and has a fleet of more than 500 trucks of owned/leased vehicles. Globex Link in 2010, a subsidiary of Waterlink Pakistan (Pvt.) Ltd., it deals in commodity brokerage for all the products offered on NCEL.

Having started on a small scale with only 15-20 employees (Exhibit 3 & 4 for Employees), Waterlink Pakistan (Pvt.) Ltd. now has national and international offices covering a large network that it’s over 200 employees have worked hard to build. Waterlink Pakistan (Pvt.) Ltd. has its headquarters in Karachi with offices in Islamabad, Lahore, Faisalabad, Sialkot, Peshawar, Torkham, Quetta and Chaman. Internationally, Waterlink Pakistan (Pvt.) Ltd. has offices in New York, Mississauga, Dubai, Kabul and Kandahar. ¹

The Entrepreneur

Capt. Ghulam Mustafa, a young boy from the outskirts of Sialkot got his basic education in a small village of Sialkot. He started his journey with big dreams and moved to Karachi for his higher education. At the age of 15, he started his career with selling milk and newspaper all around Karachi, as he had the responsibility of his family on his shoulders. He went to United Kingdom for his education in shipping and from there he started his career in Pakistan

¹http://www.waterlinkpak.com/
Merchant Navy in the year 1976. He started off as a cadet and by 1993 he sailed as a Captain under various companies.

From year 1993 to 2001, he worked in the Head Office of Pakistan National Shipping Corporation as a General Manager in the commercial and marketing department. He decided to take an early retirement and with over 30 years of maritime and commercial shipping experience started his own business as he thought his experience would provide service to the shipping community. He started on a small scale with only 15-20 employees. Gradually with hard work and strong determination the company grew and now has national and international offices covering a large network.  

**Core Values**

- Regard for the employees
- Ethics and Integrity
- Quality and Continuous Improvement
- Leadership
- Individual Growth and Development
- Teamwork and Partnership

**Departments**

1. **LOGISTICS**

- The department of Logistics efficiently handles cargoes of militaries, government organizations, NGO, commercial traders, oil companies, construction companies etc.
- The department offers a number of services of Inland distribution, Custom clearance, Satellite tracking
- Security, logistics, management and consultancies.

Waterlink Pakistan (Pvt.) Ltd. deals in non-commercial clients and has business of 15000-20000 containers per year.

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2 Interview with Capt. Ghulam Mustafa
3 Waterlink employee handbook
2. **FINANCE**

The finance department performs the following tasks

- Preparation of financial statement
- State of affairs
- Results of operation
- Implementation of financial and monetary policies
- Ensure compliance of rules and regulation by SECP
- Manage accounts of employees in the company

3. **EXPORT**

The export department performs the following tasks

- Indicate sale Booking
- Coordination with carriers and shipping lines
- Follow – up with the clearing agent
- They hire empty containers and load it for clearance at the vessel
- Follow – up till containers reach to consignee

Waterlink Pakistan (Pvt.) Ltd. does business of about 10,000 TEU (Twenty equal units) per year in the export department.

4. **IMPORT**

- The import department performs the following tasks:
- Book Freight from shipping companies
- Custom clearance from the country of origin
- Sea Freight
- Custom clearance at the country of delivery
- Delivery to the consignee

Waterlink Pakistan (Pvt.) Ltd. does business of about 4,000 – 5,000 TEU (Twenty equal unit) per year in the import department.
5. ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT

The administration department\(^4\) looks after the day to day routine work of the company and also looks after the Human Resource work, some of the tasks done by admin department are to look after:

- The application for appointment
- Complaints for misconduct or efficiency
- Personnel Data
- Attendance registers
- Repairs/maintenances of company’s/vehicles
- Monthly report on expenditure of telephones
- Daily electric meters reading
- Prepare monthly attendance report for deduction of salary
- Daily attendance report

Competitors

Waterlink Pakistan (Pvt.) Ltd. is a fast growing company in the field of shipping. During the past few years it has made its way to the top 5 companies in the business, and till today it strives to grow and move up the ladder. Waterlink Pakistan (Pvt.) Ltd. has faced a number of competitors in its time of struggle and till today it competes with other companies. Different departments have different competitors.

a) Import & Export

In import and export department Waterlink Pakistan (Pvt.) Ltd. deals with local as well as foreign clients and it faces competition from the following companies

- GML
- Dynamic ship
- Servotech ship
- AMI
- Globlelink Pak

\(^4\) Interview with Mr. M.A. Aleem
Sea Hawk Ship
CKO
Seagold Limited

Waterlink Pakistan (Pvt.) Ltd. falls among the top 5 companies in the import and export business, with a business of 10,000 TEU (Twenty Equal Units) in exports and 4,000 – 5,000 TEU (Twenty Equal Units) in imports.

b) Logistics

Waterlink Pakistan (Pvt.) Ltd. performs a number of services under the logistics department, Afghan Transit being a major part of the business. In logistics the company has the following competitors: Waterlink Pakistan (Pvt.) Ltd. ranks among the top 3 companies in the Afghan Transit.

Raaziq Group is one of Pakistan’s largest logistics and auxiliary services provider established since 1974. It has more than 600 people working in the organization and has a nationwide network. Raaziq provides its customer with complete solutions to their business supply chain. Raaziq Group provides a worldwide network for all of your airfreight needs, with time-defined and guaranteed services supported by preferred carriers. They offer competitive rates for all time and cost requirements. Another service provided by Raaziq Group is ocean freight; ocean transport is a vital part of shipping industry in the world today. They offer multi model shipping, global tracking and worldwide logistic capabilities all at competitive rates. There are number of other services provided by the company such as supply chain management, transportation, warehousing, custom clearance, Afghan land bridge etc.

E2E is one of the leading providers of end to end logistics service in Pakistan. It specializes in international and local Air/Ocean freight and other associated supply chain management solutions that also include the warehousing facility. E2E also offer the carriage of their consignment by road to almost any part of Pakistan. E2E ensures to get its customers goods to market quickly and economically providing them cost effective ways. E2E provides the

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5 http://www.raaziq.com/
6 http://www.e2escm.com/overview.php
following services supply chain management, air freight, sea freight, transport, warehousing etc.

**Dynamic shipping**\(^7\) has experienced over 300% growth in the last 5 years. That is a startling 60% sustained growth on yearly basis. The company offers the following services global consolidation, air freight services, road transportation, Afghan Transit Trade, Warehousing and Distribution.

**Agility Pakistan**\(^8\) is a Kuwait based organization that was established in 1979 and by 2004 it had grown to be the largest logistic provider in the Middle East. The services it provides are as follows freight forwarding and logistics and other special services.

**Afghan Transit Service**

Afghan Transit Service is part of the services provided by the Logistics department of Waterlink Pakistan. This service started in 2004 and now makes almost 60% of the company’s net revenue. Because of its major contribution in the earnings for the organization, it has been given special attention by the management and Captain Ghulam Mustafa takes final decisions pertaining to all dealings in Afghan Transit Service.s

Afghan Trade service started after the start of the Afghan war in Afghanistan. Few global associates, who wanted to forward their shipment to Afghanistan, contacted the company for their shipment. Realizing the potential of the business, the company started a separate service dedicated for the Afghan Trade only. Mr. Furqan Ali Mustafa was appointed as the Director for the Afghan Transit Service. Along with him, Mr. Mohsin Malik (General Manager) and Mr. RizwanYousuf (Manager) have also been actively involved in this service and are the main leads that have made the business a success. The department also then consists of an assistant manager and 25 other staff members for clerical tasks.

Under this service, the company is responsible for shipment of goods destined for Afghanistan passing through the territories of Pakistan. As per the State laws of Afghan Trade Transit policy, no custom duty or other taxes are applicable for goods bounds to Afghanistan. The department handles cargoes of militaries, government organizations, NGO, commercial traders, oil companies and construction companies operating in the Afghanistan.

\(^7\)http://www.dynamicshipping.com/
\(^8\)http://www.agilitylogistics.com/EN/Pages/Agility_About_Us.aspx
The service in details contains Documentation of all papers, since this is a shipment in highly sensitive countries involved, documentation is very important. Finance and accounting of payments and invoices, making sure about the security provisions, custom clearance procedures, delivery of the goods and guarantee of the service provisions for which a contract is signed between both parties. Waterlink provides it’s customers with transportation of 20 feet and 40 feet containers.

With regards, to the shipment services, the department offers services including Inland distribution, Custom clearance, Satellite tracking, and Security, logistics, management and consultancies services to its customers (*Exhibit 7 for all overall process flow diagrams*).

**Current Problems**

Afghan Transit being the supplier of shipment services to inland Afghanistan faces a lot of issues. Firstly, availability of the proper trucks strikes as a major issue as many transporters are not willing to carry the shipment to inland Afghanistan, and even if they do, charge a higher margin as compared to local transport charges, which makes it difficult for profit margins as a whole for the whole deal of the shipment.

Another issue is the in-route theft and pilferages since at times the trucks are attacked and looted by the militants and the whole loss comes upon the company. This is covered by the insurance companies, but at times the organization faces difficulties transporting to certain areas of Afghanistan and also the delay in shipment causes a major setback in credibility of services by the company. This is one of the major reasons that proper trucks are not available and that truck drivers and transport dealers are worried about more than the amount of earnings.

Other issues for Afghan Transit at current are the involvement of Government regulations, slow procedure of customs clearance at Pakistan ports and involvement of NLC (National Logistic Cell) due to which strict measures are taken to deal with American Army’s shipments.
**Physical Environment:** Waterlink Pakistan has been operating its Afghan Transit services from its headquarters situation in Clifton. In order to support the overall process of the Afghan Transit Services, the company has its bases also in Afghanistan (Bagaram, Kundus, Kandahar, Hirat and Camp Bastion).

To facilitate the customer, the company provides details of its shipment through regular emails to its clients. With that procedure, the clients are aware of the process of their shipments and the client is sent the vessel schedules to keep abreast and send quotations accordingly.

Waterlink also has branded some delivery trucks, and loading/unloading equipment at the port. These products help make the service tangible. The vehicles take a route from Karachi to Quetta or Peshawar and from there to the border of Afghanistan. The trucks go to Afghanistan through two borders Chaman or Torkham and from there to other cities in Afghanistan.

**Promotions:** Waterlink is in the B2B industry where the traditional media activities do not work. In order to reach out to the industrial customers for the service, the company relies a lot on Personal Selling. Since most of the clients in this Afghan Transit are high profile government and political people, Mr. Ghulam Mustafa or Mr. Furqan Mustafa personally contacts the clients and takes the orders for shipments and signs contracts. Since many of the clients have long term based contracts, the company dedicates each of the clients to individual personnel in the organization. The communications is mostly handled by Furqan Mustafa.

Besides, personal selling, the company promotes itself through organizing a number of conferences, seminars, and sponsoring university events. It also participates in the trade exhibitions that take place across the world. Around the year, either Furqan Mustafa or Capt. Ghulam Mustafa attends conferences around the world, on logistic services and its developments and also showcasing Waterlink Pakistan for its services in the Afghan Transit. In order to promote the company, they distribute the promotional brochures (Exhibit 6) of Waterlink Pakistan at the trade shows that they attend and sponsor. It is also considering employer branding to attract young and fresh blood in the organization by sponsoring events such as HR SUMMIT 2010 in IBA and Captain Ghulam Mustafa attending as Chief Guests in Entrepreneurial sessions in IBA.
For promotions other than the above, Waterlink distributes its branded T-shirts, brochures, Cups, desk calendars and stationery material at all conferences, seminars they organize and attend. Even in IBA’s events, one of the promotional objects was handed out to students.

**Pricing:** Waterlink follows a cost plus and value based pricing strategy. The company adds up its cost on the processes that are to be followed from delivering a shipment from the USA to Afghanistan (including Air Freight and Logistics), and applies certain percentage over the costs for its pricing strategy. At all times, it is not just the cost plus strategy, Waterlink also analyzes the amount of value it provides to its clients as being one of the few companies in this kind of service, and adds that certain percentage to its overall cost plus pricing model to come up with a final quotation which it gives to its clients. Also, since it’s in the B2B business, the price is not fixed and after negotiations the deal is finalized with the final price in the deal. The negotiations are conducted either by Furqan Mustafa or Capt. Ghulam Mustafa but final decision is always under the Chairman’s authority.

**Insurance services:** Waterlink Pakistan provides its customers with full insurance service for their products and that are transported from the port to different places in Afghanistan. They provide full insurance for (a) Theft and pilferages; (b) Fire and (c) Damage. If any problem occurs during the transportation of the goods to the different places Waterlink Pakistan takes full responsibility of it and pays the damage to its client.

**Problem at Hand**

Waterlink has invested heavily on its business in the Afghan Transit services, which is also its major source of revenue, but this source of revenue doesn’t seem like lasting longer. Afghan Transit services are for the International forces present in Afghanistan and as long as they are present, the business can flourish. However, if the forces are terminated or removed from Afghanistan (which is being planned in the next 3-4 years) can pose several problems for Capt. Ghulam Mustafa and his organization.

Waterlink has had difficulties in the past with the economic and political conditions in Pakistan deteriorating and investors not ready to set up business in Pakistan, due to which imports from several countries have stopped functioning. Also due to the same conditions exports have also gone to a downturn and since the Pakistani image is declining, people do not trust or rely working with the Pakistani based organization.
TEACHING NOTE

Case Synopsis

This is a real life case study and it aims to prepare students for a managerial role in corporate sector especially senior positions in marketing and branding assignments. This case study also illustrates how to develop a long term strategic plan.

Case Objectives

1. To illustrate the concepts of Strategic Management.
2. To illustrate application of marketing tactics in highly competitive market.
3. To appraise the importance of unconventional marketing tactics.
4. To appraise marketing skills needed steering a brand with strong legacy.

Target Audience

This case was written for undergraduate students taking course(s) in any one of the subject area namely Principles of Marketing and/or Marketing Management. However, it may be used for discussion in Strategic Marketing courses as it highlights various concepts of strategic marketing. It provides an excellent opportunity to students to see how managers can develop a strategic plan for an obvious business problem.

Case Methodology

All facts and figures have been taken from the official website of the Waterlinks; otherwise all other secondary sources are mentioned and appropriately acknowledged. Principally this case is a teaching case and written solely for class room discussion and academic purposes only. It doesn’t intent to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of managerial situation. Materials or statistics provided cannot be used by third party as evidence. This strategy has been proved fruitful in describing fundamental concepts through case study design in many other cases (Anjam & Siddiqui, 2013; Fahim & Siddiqui, 2013; Husain & Siddiqui, 2013; Mangi & Siddiqui, 2013; Salman & Siddiqui, 2013; Siddiqui & Anjam 2013a; Siddiqui & Anjam 2013b; Siddiqui & Anjam 2013c; Siddiqui & Fahim 2013). More recently the marketing concepts in Pakistan have been illustrated through a single case study
design in services sector (Siddiqui & Fahim 2014; Sibghatullah, Siddiqui & Siddiqui, 2016, Latif, Sibghatullah, & Siddiqui, 2016).

Suggested Class Plan – 75 minute

What strategic alternatives can be exercised successfully in this case?

Capt. Ghulam Mustafa and his team is currently thinking on different avenues to look for, apart from continuing to service Afghan Transit for the next 3-4 years.

a) As mentioned, Waterlink has already divested into commodity brokerage dealing in all products offered on the NCEL through its Globex Link subsidiary. It is building its own warehouses near Port Qasim, which they plan to give out on rent to get in different streams of revenue. Since they have been in the Logistics function for a long time and have gained quite some experience, the organization is now looking to expand into supply chain management services for other organizations. They also intend to look into the tracking department where there are not many players in the Pakistani industry.

b) Waterlink can look into is moving operations out of Pakistan and moving it to either Canada or Dubai from where they can do similar services for other nations and still not be a Pakistani organization to get out of that view of the Pakistani image.

c) The other recommendation was to establish warehouses in Dubai, since they are already planning to establish warehouses here in Karachi at Port Qasim, they can also do the same in Dubai and earn foreign currency which can also serve as an alternate source of revenue for the organization.
Exhibit 1

Mission Statement

“At Waterlink, we pledge to provide distinctive quality and unparalleled customer service as we strive to gain the respect and trust of our customers, suppliers and partner vendors.

Our aim is to escalate the shipping business of Pakistan at least at par with other countries of the region as well as going further up, to Europe and USA and be recognized as their competitors.

Pakistan strings with under-developed countries. To make ours a prosperous and developed one, everyone should play his/her due role. To whatever business one belongs to, one must treat him/herself as a member of a team, rather a crowd, where the goal of all is mutual i.e. TO ACHIEVE UTMOST PAYBACK SINCERELY FOR SELF AND FOR THE COUNTRY.
The success of Waterlink is determined by our success in operating as a unified team. We have to earn the trust and respect of our customers every day in order that the customers make the decision to choose our services. We sell service and service is provided by people. There are no magic formulas.

Our success is built by creative, productive employees who are encouraged to make suggestions while thinking "outside the box." Your job, every job, is essential to fulfilling our mission everyday to the people who trust and respect us. The primary goal of Waterlink, and yours, as one of its employees, is to live our mission statement and continue to be an industry leader. We achieve this through dedicated hard work and commitment from every employee. It is the desire of Waterlink to have every employee succeed in their job, and be part of achieving our goals.9

Exhibit 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of Employees</th>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>79</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
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<td>2009</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2011</td>
<td>230</td>
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Exhibit 4

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<th>Departments/ Qualification</th>
<th>MBA</th>
<th>Bachelors</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Matriculation</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
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<td>Export</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Import</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documentation (Import + Export)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Project (Common)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Client Service (Import + Export)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9Waterlink brochure
SISTER COMPANIES

Globex Link (Pvt) Limited  2  1
Fast Track Project & Logistics  2  1
Multimodal Transport Services  3  1  1
Furqan International  2  1

Exhibit 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEARS</th>
<th>TURNOVER</th>
<th>GROSS PROFIT</th>
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<td>June 20 2004</td>
<td>119,676,712</td>
<td>13,866,309</td>
<td>-156,230</td>
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<td>June 20 2005</td>
<td>273,502,157</td>
<td>30,322,515</td>
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<td>June 20 2006</td>
<td>299,367,707</td>
<td>38,754,236</td>
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<td>June 20 2007</td>
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<td>June 20 2008</td>
<td>415,699,158</td>
<td>74,441,947</td>
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<td>June 20 2009</td>
<td>730,070,422</td>
<td>92,577,726</td>
<td>13,297,356</td>
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<td>June 20 2010</td>
<td>635,563,623</td>
<td>119,575,933</td>
<td>28,575,365</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exhibit 6

WATERLINK PAKISTAN (Pvt.) PAMPHLET
**Exhibit 7a (Operations Process Flow – Imports)**

1. Contact the client for requirement
2. Space booking with the shipping line
3. Do the X work (including custom clearance, transportation) to ensure that cargo is ready for loading on the ship
4. Confirmation of loading on the board
5. Issuing of required document (bill of lading)
6. Continuously watch arrival of vessel and communicate to consignee
7. Serve arrival notice with firm ETA of vessel
8. Lodge custom manifest and issue the deliver order to consignee
9. If required custom clearance and transport to the consignee door
Exhibit 7b (Operations Process Flow – Exports)

1. Contact client for requirement
2. Space booking with the shipping line
3. Do the X work (including custom clearance, transportation) to ensure that cargo is ready for loading on the ship
4. Confirmation of loading on board
5. Issuing of required document – Bill of Lading
6. ETA of vessel at destination and inform the discharged port agent
7. Arrival notice to the consignee at destination
8. Issue of deliver of order
9. If required custom clearance to the consignee door
Exhibit 7c (Operations Process Flow – Logistics)

1. To source client and ask for requirement
2. Raise quotation for logistic services
3. Approval of quotation
4. Availability of required document (Bill of Lading, Packing list, Commercial Invoice, Tariff Memo)
5. After arrival of goods file the general deceleration
6. Take No Objection Certificate from National Logistic Cell
7. To make arrangement for transportation
8. Do custom clearance at border
9. On arrival at destination inform consignee and ask for Tax exemption or payment of Taxes or duties
10. Delivery of cargo to consignee
Exhibit 7d – (Operations Process Flow – Afghan Transit)

- Custom clearance
- Taking delivery form shipping lines
- Obtaining NOC from NLC
- Arranging suitable trailer for the type of
- Escalation of trafficking dives
- Deployment of security personnel along with scot cars
- Cross border formality
- Completion of arrival formalities in destination
References

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Dynamic Shipping http://www.dynamicshipping.com/
E2E http://www.e2escm.com/overview.php
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Sibghatullah, Siddiqui, & Siddiqui (2016). Repositioning Virtual University of Pakistan, Developing Country Studies 5 (6), 98-108
Waterlink http://www.waterlinkpak.com/
Waterlink Pakistan Employee handbook