

A.R. Savage & Son: ship agent profile

Arthur Savage, president and CEO of A.R. Savage & Son — the largest ship agency, ocean freight forwarding and advisory services company on Florida's west coast — gives his responses to questions relating to ship agency services.

What do you consider the role of a ship agent to be?

AR: A ship agent co-ordinates all compliance and logistical arrangements to get a ship into port, discharged and/or loaded, documented, and out of port. This may include working with USCG, CBP, and Port Authorities, taking care of the crew and required paperwork — such as the shipping manifest, stowage plan, bill of lading, and the like — and working with the captain to get his needs lined up.

Upon arrival and departure, the ship agent also coordinates services with vendors such as tugboats, pilots, line handlers, stevedores and others to get the ships into and out of the port.

These services vary depending on the ship's origin and type of cargo, as well as the capabilities of the staff on board. For instance, for foreign arrivals, ship agents must also co-ordinate with government officials who have to check the ship, crew and cargo.

A.R. Savage & Son is also bonded and insured to work with importers and exporters as well as government agencies, port authorities, and terminals in the shipment of their products in ocean-going vessels, meaning that we can arrange for the ship to be loaded or unloaded and document cargo shipments.

Because of this, it's important for a ship agent to understand the many facets of the port, the cargo, and the vessel. For instance, we work with a great deal of phosphate in Tampa, so understanding how this cargo is loaded and unloaded, which berths are suited to accept dry bulk phosphate, and any intricacies about the vessel in terms of docking or loading are absolutely necessary to effectively serve our clients.

At what ports are you represented?

AR: We are Tampa-based. The majority but not all of the ships we work with are located at Port Tampa Bay, Port Manatee and The Port of St. Petersburg. When our customer wants us to handle ships at other ports, we will co-ordinate with other

ASBA-quality certified agents who are particularly knowledgeable about that port and cargo.

Who are your major clients?

AR: We represent ship owners and charterers carrying the cargoes, as well as the cargo interests themselves. Because we have extensive knowledge of maritime services, as well as the Tampa Bay ports, we also offer advisory services to terminals, cargo shippers, receivers, carriers, maritime attorneys and other interested parties that are in need of guidance.

Who are your major competitors?

AR: While there are certainly a number of other ship agents out there today, we were the first agency in the United States to receive the ASBA quality certification almost ten years ago. This sets us apart from other agencies in Tampa Bay, as does our long-standing history in the maritime community.

A.R. Savage & Son has been providing exceptional service for 70 years, and our team has a deep knowledge and understanding of the industry and Tampa Bay's ports. We are intimately experienced with both the vessels and the cargo that goes through the ports, and have long-standing relationships with the many vendors with which ships may contract.

Because of this, we create cost efficiencies that our clients may not have otherwise realized.

For instance, because we understand the local ports we can ensure timely entry and departure for the ship and help to avoid steep cancellation fees and costly delays. Our relationships with the many vendors a ship may use also allows our clients to take advantage of the volume pricing that these vendors offer us.

So while a ship agency does have a fee, this fee is nominal compared to the savings that we enable our clients to realize.

How much of your business relates to dry bulk?

AR: Roughly 50% of our business relates to dry bulk cargoes such as coal, granite, limestone, phosphates, fertilizers (DAP, MAP, MESZ, ammonium nitrates, potash, and urea), salt, cement, scrap metal, and bauxite. The other 48% is liquid cargo, with the balance being breakbulk and cruise.

