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The shipping industry isn't built on logic; it's built on centuries of experience and expertise. But it hasn't adopted technology to the fullest. Ryan Petersen, CEO and founder of Flexport, recognized this opportunity to put technology to work to streamline the process. "A lot of the world's problems you can't deduce from first principles," he says. In order to truly understand how you can make an impact with your customers, you have to meet them face to face – you can't build your product alone and hope it will work.

Transcript

- So tech helps a lot but tech is not enough, at least in this business because there's a huge amount of infrastructure required.. We're talking about real infrastructure.. Warehouses, trucks, planes, ocean carriers, ocean ships, trains, we ship by all modes of transport.. And how do you connect that in? Some of it we own, we lease.. We now have four warehouses and one 747 that has the FlexFORCE logo on the side, it's pretty cool.. But a lot of it we don't lease.. A lot of this is business development.. It's going out and finding the owners of those assets, of that infrastructure and understanding their needs.. And treating them as a customer and saying, okay, how do you make money? You make money when your ship is full.. And how do you fill your ship? Having predictable customers who will show up with the freight that they booked..

And so we've had to go out and make those partnerships.. I think this is something that a lot of technologists are afraid to do.. That's part of why this opportunity was still available, is still available.. Because technologists think that you can sit in a room and build technology and change the world.. A lot of the world's problems you can't deduce from first principals at a whiteboard in a room.. You actually have to go out there and talk to people and learn how it works...