

# OPERATIONS AND SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT CAREER PATHS AND PATTERNS

Employment trends and professional paths you can put to work



## ABOUT THIS REPORT

In the Supply Chain and Operations Management Career Paths and Patterns report, APICS provides a collection of more than 6,000 supply chain and operations management professionals' experiences, career directions and educational achievements in one document to help you compare your path, consider your next steps and establish milestones.

Included in this report is data on supply chain and operations management professionals from a variety of job functions and career levels. Supply Chain and Operations Management Career Paths and Patterns provides information on length of time in each job role, education level and certification status, primary skills responsible for promotions and more.

For more information on how you can define, plan and execute your career path, visit [apics.org](https://apics.org).

# OPERATIONS AND SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT CAREER PATHS AND PATTERNS

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## EMPLOYMENT TRENDS AND PROFESSIONAL PATHS

Professionals use many resources to plan their next career moves, establish long-term professional goals or get started in new disciplines. These range from peers and mentors to networking events, educational institutions and professional associations. A successful career path is not developed independently.

It became clear that it is important to identify the training, skills and knowledge supply chain and operations management professionals should develop to advance in these professions. This report is the result of a previously unstudied area—a survey that provides a direct assessment of supply chain and operations management professionals' career paths.

## THE SURVEY METHOD

APICS invited members and customers to participate in a survey about their supply chain and operations management careers. Respondents reported their first, second, third and current positions in supply chain and operations management fields, as well as the factors that influenced their career trajectories.

Respondents selected from supplied roles and hierarchies. They combined role and level selections to create the closest matches to their job titles.

### ROLE

- Buyer/Planner
- Capacity Planner
- Demand
- Distribution
- Lean Operations
- Master Planning
- Master Scheduling
- Materials
- Purchasing
- Supply Chain
- Supply Chain Analyst
- Warehousing
- Academic/Professor
- Consultant
- Other

### LEVEL

- Assistant
- Associate
- Coordinator
- Director
- Manager
- Specialist
- Supervisor
- Other

Following each job title, respondents selected the skills, traits or accomplishments that were most responsible for each promotion. Additionally, respondents indicated which career tools, steps or resources were most valuable to their supply chain and operations management careers.

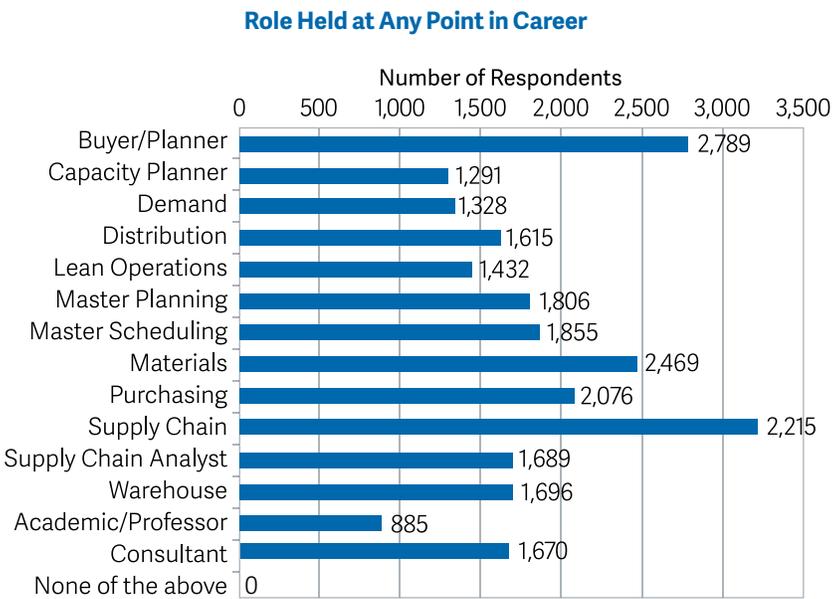
## FINDINGS

### ROLES

More than 6,000 members and customers completed the survey. Supply chain, buyer/planner and materials positions were the most common roles selected among respondents. Those who selected “none of the above” frequently held positions that support supply chain and operations management, such as transportation, systems engineering and accounting roles.

Figure 1 displays the total counts for respondents who have held each role as a first, second, third or current position.

**FIGURE 1**



## CAREER PATHS

The average respondent has held two to three supply chain and/or operations management positions. Figures 2 and 3 display the counts for roles held at any point in respondents' careers and roles maintained across respondents' careers, respectively. The counts in Figure 3 compared to Figure 2 suggest that many respondents do not always stay in the same job roles across their careers; rather, their career paths include positions in different supply chain and operations management roles.

Figure 2 indicates respondents who have held each job role in a first, second, third or current position.

**FIGURE 2**

**Role Held at Any Point in Career**

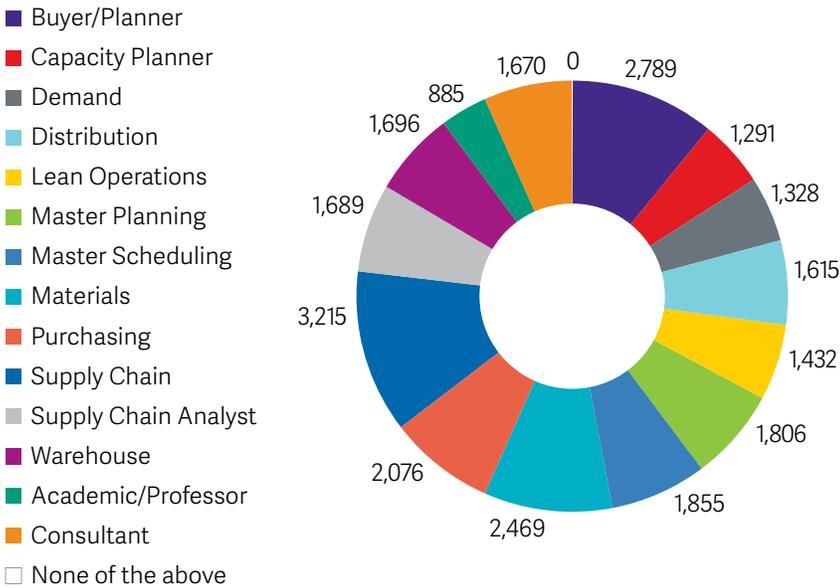


Figure 3 indicates respondents who have held the same job role throughout their careers.

**FIGURE 3**

**Role Held Across Career**

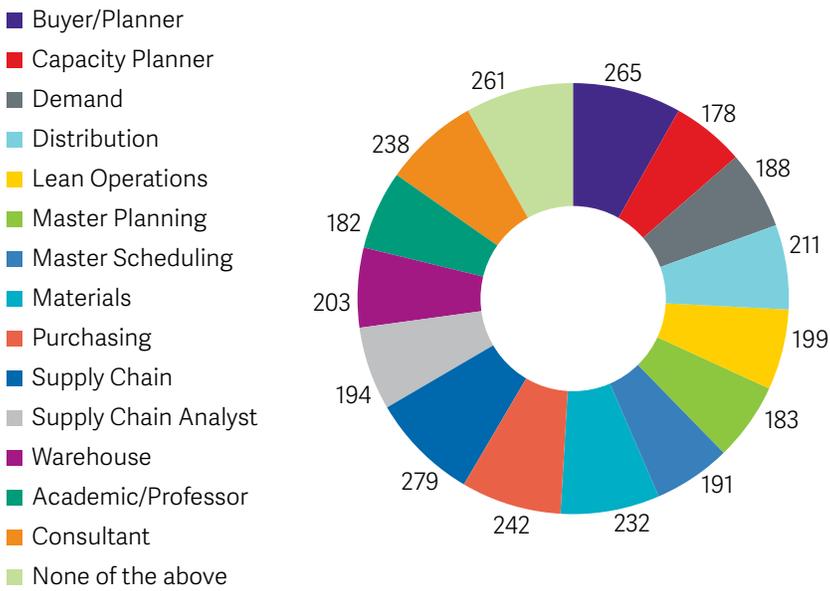


Figure 4 displays the percentage of respondents working in supply chain and operations management for less than one year by job role; these roles are their first positions in the industry. In most categories, approximately one-quarter of respondents are at the assistant or associate level. Nearly half of respondents in each job role were unable to match their job level with the categories provided—a limitation of this study. Supply chain and buyer/planner roles were most frequent among respondents starting their supply chain and operations management careers.

**FIGURE 4**

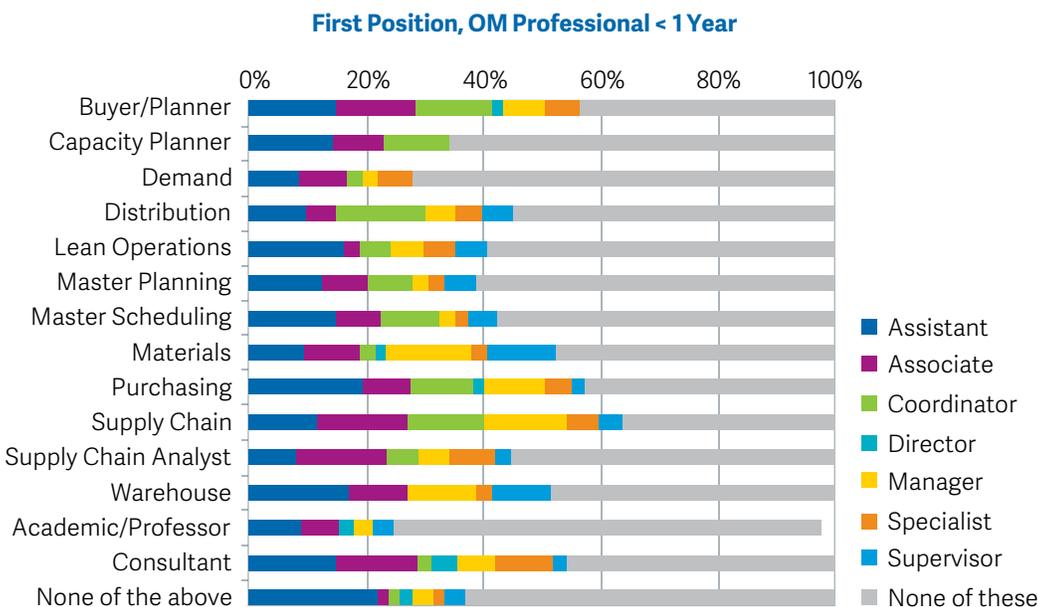
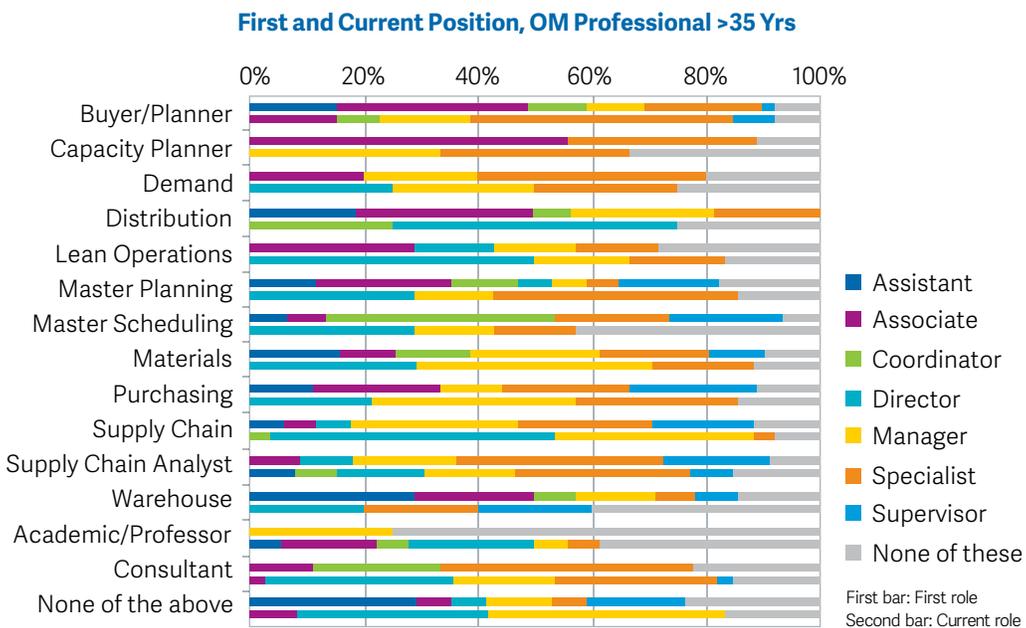


Figure 5 displays the first and current supply chain and operations management positions held by respondents who have been employed in these fields for over 35 years. Two bars are associated with each job role listed along the y-axis. The top bar represents the first supply chain and operations management position and the second bar represents the current position. Between the first and current positions, respondents have advanced from primarily assistant and associate levels to management positions.

The career-path data suggests that supply chain and operations management career paths are more complex than a linear advancement in one job role. Many supply chain and operations management professionals gain work experience in multiple roles as they advance through management positions.

**FIGURE 5**



## PROMOTIONS

Respondents reported promotions at one- to two-year or three- to five-year intervals between their first, second and third supply chain and operations management positions. Interestingly, the average respondent has been employed at only one organization in his or her career to date; thus, for many respondents, this movement describes their paths with a single employer.

Respondents indicated that the top five skills, traits and accomplishments responsible for promotion are:

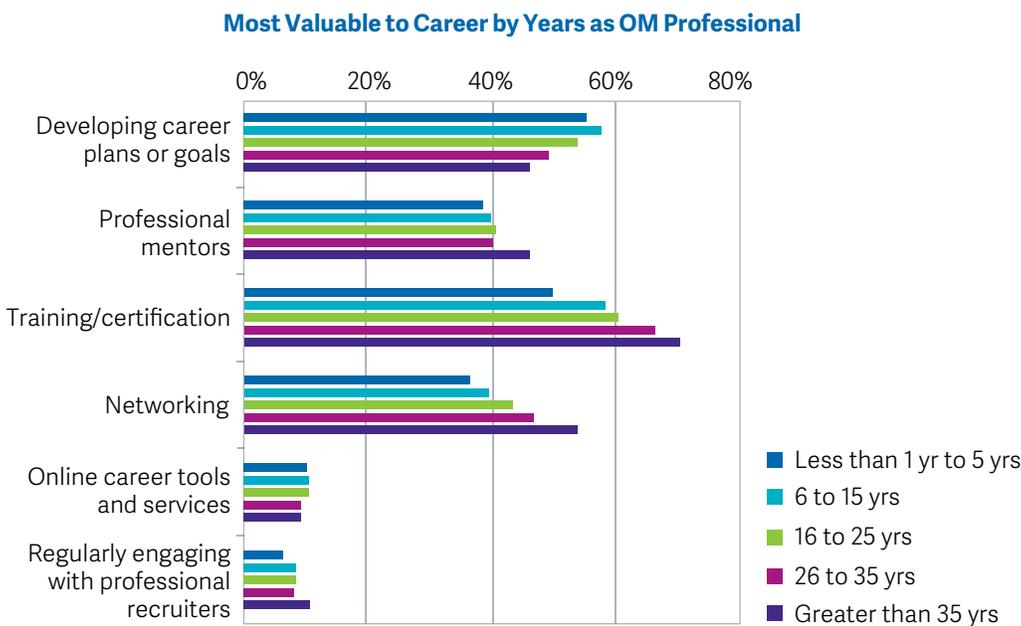
- General level of experience
- Track record of performance or accomplishments
- Demonstrated proficiency in a specific area
- High professional standards in all work areas maintained
- Commitment to the organization and the customer

## MOST VALUABLE CAREER TOOLS, STEPS OR RESOURCES

Respondents selected the resources and career tools that were most valuable to their careers to date. Across job roles, respondents identified training/certification and developing personal career plans or goals as the most valuable means for advancement in their careers. The importance of training was underscored by over half of respondents who indicated that they received formal, structured training in their first supply chain or operations management job. The highest-reported incidence of training was among respondents who held buyer/planner roles.

Figure 6 depicts the different perspectives of “most valuable” among groups at different stages in their operations management careers. Developing career plans or goals is most valuable to respondents who are 15 years or less into their supply chain and operations management careers. Among respondents with more experience, training/certification and networking have more value. Specifically, respondents with over 35 years of experience identified training/certification, networking and professional mentors as most valued.

**FIGURE 6**

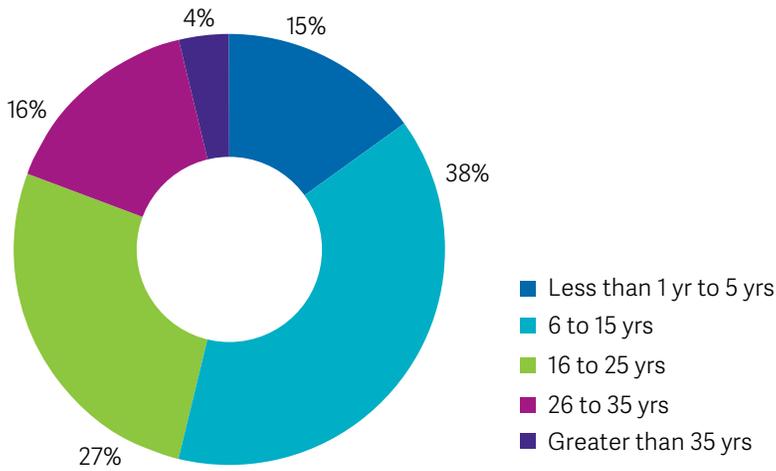


## INCREASE IN CERTIFICATION

Achieving a certification was more common among respondents who had been in supply chain and operations management for more than 15 years. Figures 7 and 8 compare certified and non-certified professionals segmented by years of experience. As years in supply chain and operations management increase, the percentage of respondents who report holding an industry certification from APICS or other organizations increases.

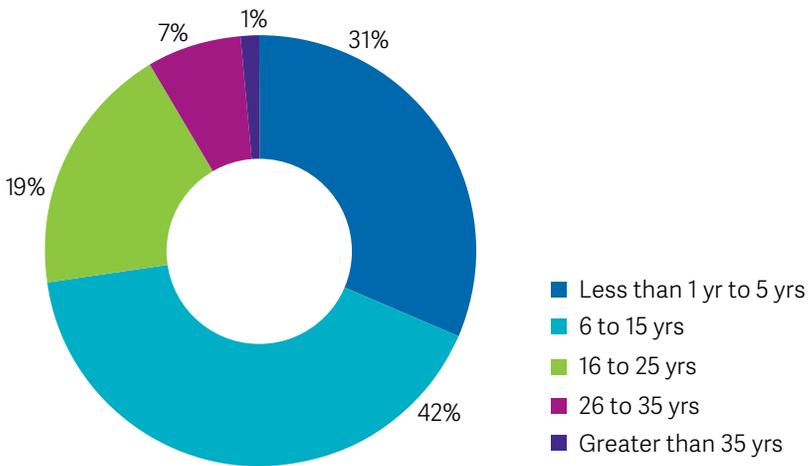
**FIGURE 7**

**Certified and Years as an OM Professional**



**FIGURE 8**

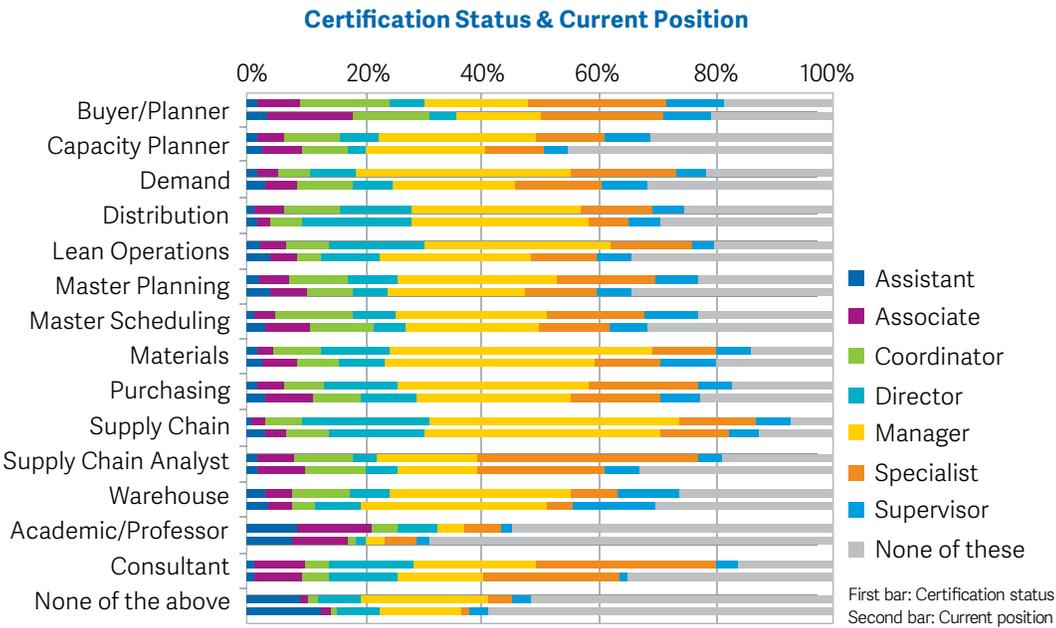
**Non-Certified and Years as an OM Professional**



## CERTIFICATION STATUS AND CURRENT POSITION

Survey respondents indicating that they hold a certification are more highly represented in management-level positions. Figure 9 displays certified and non-certified respondents by current job title. Two bars are associated with each job role listed along the y-axis. The first bar represents the job titles of certified respondents and the second bar represents the job titles of non-certified respondents.

**FIGURE 9**



## CONCLUSION

The greatest lesson learned from this report is that there is not one easy path to career advancement. Professionals experienced the most advancement and career success through a combination of education, certification and work experience. In supply chain and operations management professions, dedication to one's career goals and hard work often lead to advancement.

Career mobility is a trend for operations management and supply chain professionals. Data shows that there is no set linear path or place in the supply chain for each job title. Many professionals shifted throughout the supply chain as their careers progressed. This demonstrates the importance of acquiring knowledge and competencies throughout the end-to-end supply chain. One way to accomplish this is through a combination of education and certification.

While there is not a set path for supply chain and operations management professionals, defining career goals and obtaining training, education and certifications are important milestones that help accelerate any career path.

## ADDITIONAL CAREER RESOURCES

APICS Competency Models (link)

<http://www.apics.org/careers-education-professional-development/careers/competency-models>

Operations Management Employment Outlook (link)

<http://www.apics.org/careers-education-professional-development/careers/career-data/OMEEO>

APICS Operations Management Body of Knowledge Framework (link)

<http://www.apics.org/industry-content-research/publications/ombok>

## ABOUT THE APICS FOUNDATION

APICS Foundation, the research arm of APICS, advances supply chain and operations management innovation through research, educational programs and workforce development. Business leaders, academia and global enterprises gain valuable insights, information and actionable data through the foundation's unrivaled supply chain network and resources.