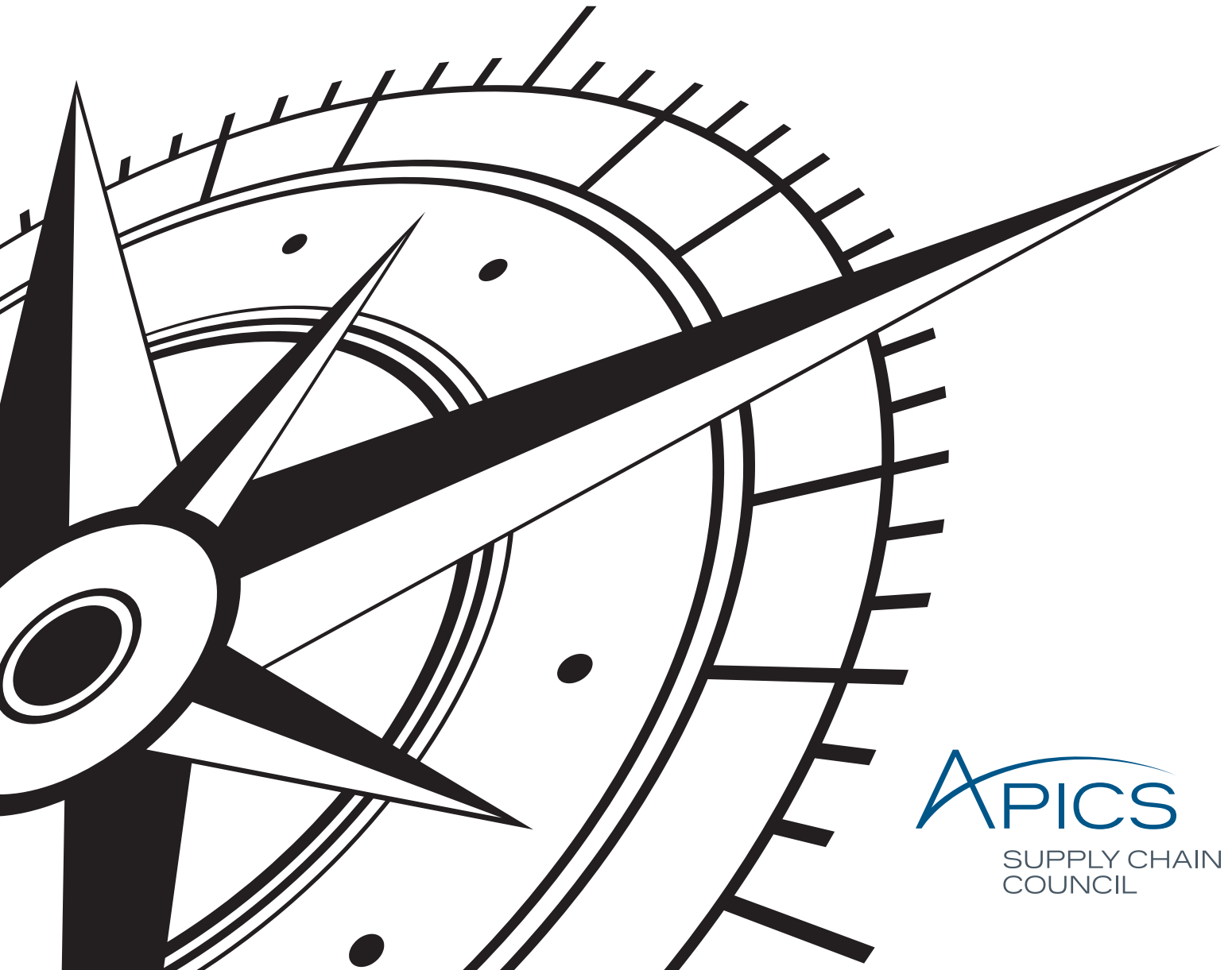


APICS INSIGHTS AND INNOVATIONS

SUPPLY CHAIN STRATEGY REPORT

MAKE THE MOST OF SUPPLY CHAIN STRATEGY



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COUNCIL

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This APICS report is your guide to understanding, developing and advancing supply chain strategy. It includes groundbreaking research, a case study and practical how-to tips, as well as pertinent articles reprinted from the APICS magazine.

APICS sought to examine the role that supply chain strategy plays in organizations, and in 2011, the APICS research department conducted a survey of more than 9,000 operations management professionals on the topic of supply chain strategy. The survey was designed to reveal challenges and identify ways senior management and operations management can better work together to achieve their goals. The survey results reflect an approximately 5 percent margin of error at a 95 percent confidence level.

This report was developed by APICS Supply Chain Council, an organization that advances supply chain and operations management and innovation through research, education and publications. APICS SCC maintains the Supply Chain Operations Reference (SCOR) model, the supply chain management community's most widely accepted framework for evaluating and comparing supply chain activities and performance. For more information, visit apicsscc.org.

APICS SCC research reports are based on practitioner surveys that explore trending topics in supply chain and operations management. They include survey results, analysis, tips and best practices to keep you and your organization informed of insights and innovations in supply chain and operations management.



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Strategy:

According to the *APICS Dictionary*, 14th Edition, "The strategy of an enterprise identifies how a company will function in its environment. The strategy specifies how to satisfy customers, how to grow the business, how to compete in its environment, how to manage the organization and develop capabilities within the business, and how to achieve financial objectives."

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In June and July 2011, the APICS research department conducted a survey of more than 9,000 operations management professionals on the topic of supply chain strategy. The results revealed several significant insights.

Maturity in supply chain strategy remains relatively low:

- Current supply chain strategies are still fairly new. Most respondents report that their current supply chain strategy was adopted within the last two years (33 percent), or within the past three to five years (30 percent)
- Most people do not perceive a difference between supply chain strategy and supply chain management (58 percent)
- Managers often fail to explain major changes to the supply chain in terms of either supply chain strategy or tactics (30 percent responded sometimes, 23 percent said rarely, and 7.4 percent said never)
- Many professionals don't view the supply chain as a genuine competitive advantage (52 responded "no" or "not sure")

Operations Managers are Essential for Advancing Maturity

The majority of operations management professionals taking part in the survey are aware of the organizational strategy and mission statement of their organizations (73 percent).

The majority of operations management professionals surveyed have confidence in their skill and experience. On a scale of one to 10, with 10 noting very high confidence, respondents indicated confidence levels between seven and eight (44 percent) and confidence levels between nine and 10 (18 percent). However, 38 percent of survey respondents rated themselves between one and six.

Operations managers know where the supply chain is more aligned, less aligned, or neutral with respect to organizational or business unit strategy. For example, respondents indicated that customer service (71 percent) and product quality (72 percent) are relatively more aligned with strategy. However, the degree of asset utilization (66 percent), IT systems and platforms (64 percent) and cycle time (59 percent) were neutral or relatively less aligned with strategy. As supply chain strategy maturity increases, all aspects of the business need to become increasingly aligned. But achieving such alignment requires diligent effort.

A Baseline for Maturity in Supply Chain Strategy

The majority of respondents (40 percent) indicated they usually refer to organizational or business unit supply chain strategy when making supply chain recommendations or working with supply chain partners (14 percent responded “always,” 27 percent said “sometimes”, and 13 percent replied “rarely”).

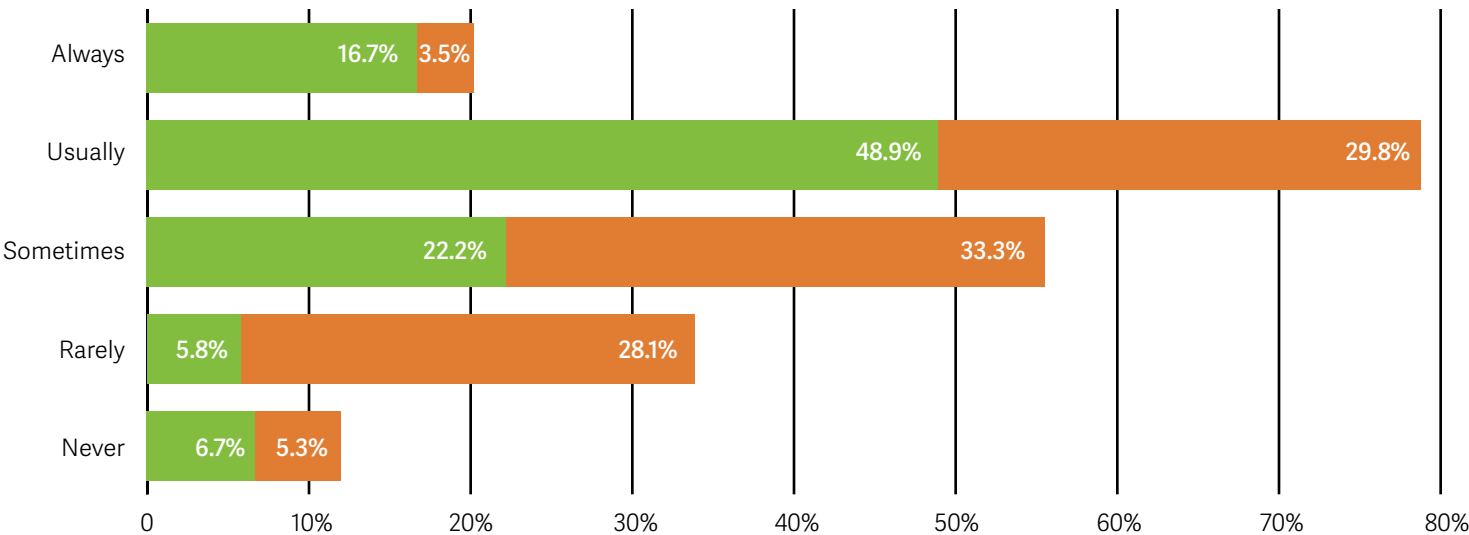
Organizations with job roles specifically related to supply chain strategy refer to organizational or business unit supply chain strategy when making supply chain recommendations or working with partners. Organizations with such job roles tend to show a higher degree of supply chain strategy maturity. While larger organizations are more likely to have jobs related to strategy, this trend is not yet overwhelming.

Given the pressing needs of tactical supply chain operation, organizations may require the creation of a job function dedicated to the execution of supply chain strategy, rather than a role devoted to it.

As supply chain strategy continues to evolve, the choices operations management professionals need to make to implement it at the tactical level will become more and more important.

How often do you refer to organizational or business unit supply chain strategy when making supply chain recommendations or working with supply chain partners?

- Yes, we have the same or similar job role or title at my organization
- No, we don't have any specific supply chain job role or title



Excellent Supply Chain Strategy Requires Excellent Tactical Execution

The operations manager needs to work collectively with senior managers to advance maturity in a three-prong approach:

1. Map out your supply chain against a standard model, determine its ideal state according to organizational strategy, and compare the differences. Most survey respondents noted they had not mapped their supply chains against models, such as SCOR (58 percent replied “no” and 17.3 percent said they were not sure).
2. Develop metrics and information flow across the supply chain to equal that of inventory level. Respondents were asked if their organizations regularly measure performance metrics and if so, in what specific areas. The top responses included inventory level (71 percent), materials flow (52 percent) and information flow (24 percent).
3. Increase development of trust relationships with supply chain partners. This enables strategic change, particularly with critical partners (53 percent of respondents indicated their organizations do not spend enough time developing trust relationships with supply chain partners, while 12 percent indicated they were not sure).

Each of these tactics requires a long-term effort. Senior management should sponsor operations managers to ensure continued support and alignment with organizational strategy and initiatives, such as sales and operations planning (S&OP), integrated business planning, sustainability and risk management. Refer to the APICS S&OP folio for additional information.

The Elements of Supply Chain Strategy

Because supply chain strategy influences virtually all aspects of supply chain tactics, management and decision making, it’s a wonder that more organization leaders aren’t emphasizing it.

Consider operations strategy as it is described in the APICS Operations Management Body of Knowledge (OMBOK) framework: “The focus of operations strategy in an organization is to understand and achieve the ability to consistently deliver products and services to meet the customer’s needs and the business’s overall plans.”

The APICS OMBOK Framework provides a detailed description of the specific elements of supply chain strategy. A summary of these elements follows:

Strategic partnership: Communications, rules of engagement, expectations, trust and risk sharing.

Make-buy: Insourcing or outsourcing optimization, and tradeoffs of cost, speed, quality and trade secrets.

Drivers of supply chain performance: Drivers include quality, speed, delivery fidelity, flexibility, pre and post service and cost, as well as facilities, inventory, transportation, information, sourcing and pricing.

Synchronization: The end-to-end speed and flow of information, funds and goods and services that support balanced supply and demand across the supply chain.

Integration: The integration of suppliers, internal supply chains and customer systems are essential to an effective supply chain. The structure and quality of relationships, networks and alliances among all supply chain partners to ensure communication, trust and collaboration that sustain supply chain as a strategic advantage.

Scope: The breadth and depth of all activities (including designing, planning and controlling), capabilities and expectations required of the supply chain.

Reverse logistics: Reverse logistical functions that may include remanufacturing, recycling, warranty, recall and similar capabilities.

Project sustainability: the ability to produce and distribute products over time that minimizes impact on the environment.

Regulatory compliance: governmental regulations and required compliance.

Global: Trade open to global sources and customers and the many considerations needed to cover a wider array of possibilities in customer requirement.

Management Hierarchy as Part of Supply Chain Strategy

Supply chain strategy does not exist in isolation but rather throughout an organization in a management responsibility hierarchy, because it serves all levels of operations. It is important that every operations management professional understand how supply chain strategy underscores the organization's strategy and mission—from the C-suite to the shop floor. To illustrate this idea, imagine supply chain responsibility in three traditional hierarchical layers:

1. Layer one is senior managers: development of overall supply chain design or strategy
2. Layer two is middle managers: supply chain planning
3. Layer three is lower to middle managers and practitioners: supply chain operations.

Each layer is responsible for creating its own plans to execute strategic or planning requirements and to ensure such plans flow properly. Plans must be implemented tactically in the lower levels of operations management, such as production, engineering and distribution and logistics. When combined, supply chain strategy and management directly influence every major business department, including information technology (IT), finance and sales and marketing.

Within a business, all individuals need to ensure that the organization gains the ongoing margin to invest and prepare for future IT and customer needs. Along with an organization's management hierarchy, there are also layers in the supply chain.

Supply Chain Scope

Supply chain layer one: Supply chain strategy and design typically are long term and altered every few years. The expense and complexity of making strategic changes necessitate careful attention to strategy and design at the organizational or business unit level. Strategy and planning tasks configure the supply chain's processes and use of resources at each major stage of sourcing, production and distribution. Common strategic design elements include decisions about insourcing, outsourcing and optimal location of facilities, as well as distribution and logistics. Strategy at this level requires adjustment when there are changes to an organization's strategic mission or when the existing supply chain strategy no longer effectively executes the mission.

Supply chain layer two: Supply chain planning, at the tactical level, occurs regularly but is not a daily task. Most organizations are short term in nature and plan along a timeline of one quarter to one year. The overall purpose is to develop plans that it here to supply chain strategy well achieving maximum benefit from supply chain resources. Planning starts with forecast analysis of demand from different markets or customer segments, and finishes with specific plans outlining how the supply chain will meet that demand during the planning horizon. Planning includes policy setting on inventory levels, matching specific facilities to regions of demand, local sourcing, pricing and promotions, along with targets, goals and measurements to ensure ongoing success. Plans may allow for a series of ranges of demand and supply within the time period as a way to account for uncertainty in, for example, competitive pressures, customer demand or seasonal variation.

Supply chain layer three: Supply chain operations are the constant execution of the supply chain plan. Supply chain operations typically have a daily or weekly timeline depending on the nature of the product, production, marketing and customer need. The scope revolves around satisfying customer orders within the planning requirements. The specific allocation of materials, scheduling of resources, logistical testing tasking, inventory management and related tasks fall into this area.

Create a Competitive Supply Chain

Competitive supply chains combine strategy, implementation and management to harmonize long-term supply and demand by:

- Making trade-offs to address customer needs in levels of supply chain responsiveness, efficiency, flexibility and complexity
- Addressing current weaknesses that inhibit business development
- Supporting a range of supply and demand levels while maintaining profit and margin performance

Supply chain strategy and management increasingly combine to create competitive advantage. In the past, supply chain strategy was too complex a topic to fully grasp. The large number of variables (partners, functions, roles, priorities, orders and materials flow) permitted only limited understanding of a vast domain. However, the arrival of the Internet and advanced IT made it possible to integrate the entire supply chain strategically down to tactical execution. This ability enabled designing, planning and executing supply chain operations based on strategic and tactical direction from all levels of stakeholder management.

With this new ability came the theory that supply chains compete against each other in the marketplace, just like individual organizations do. This competitive advantage is founded on the theory that integrated supply chain strategy, planning and operations can be difficult to imitate. Integration tends to create a broad collection of opportunities, relationships, markets and partnerships that take time to nurture. However, once this collection reaches maturity, it can contribute to the overall organizational strategy or mission of an organization.

Successful alignment of supply chain strategy with organizational or business unit strategy marks the value of an organization's supply chain strategy. Hierarchy helps define this. Therefore, supply chain planning creates worth from the ability to align with supply chain strategy. Finally, supply chain operations—or execution of supply chain management—must adhere to supply chain planning, thus creating seamless integration and focus at each level. When fully integrated, the entire supply chain serves the overall organization's strategy and mission.

In actual practice, many organizations have good supply chain strategy, but their leaders cannot successfully implement that strategy. The ability to implement good supply chain strategy becomes a crucially important competitive advantage.

Strategy Alignment

Supply chain strategy must align with organizational strategy and mission. This alignment helps organizations decision-makers answer fundamental, strategic questions such as:

- How to satisfy customers
- How to grow the business
- How to compete in a competitive marketplace
- How to manage the organization and develop capabilities within the business
- How to achieve financial objectives

The strategic mission of an organization or business unit also defines the scope of future business. It outlines the range and extent of:

- Customer needs
- Customer groups
- Value creation

Supply chain strategy must deliberately ensure a good ongoing fit exists with organizational strategy and the markets it serves. This means maintaining focus on the organizations unique, ongoing strategic competitive advantages and abilities.

The following table compares the various organizational and supply chain strategies a company might consider. It reveals how strategy helps shape priorities, choices, designs and goals in the supply chain. The table illustrates the scope and the concepts of strategy as it applies to supply chains across different kinds of companies.

Type of organization	Organizational strategic competitive advantage	Strategic market elements	Supply chain strategic design elements	Supply chain strategic partnership focus
Energy utility company	High availability	Margin must ensure long-term investment for reliable delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Modern asset utilization ■ High service levels ■ Overlapping facilities and capabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Rapid response ■ Proactive risk ■ High information sharing
Computer hardware manufacturer	Constant innovation and new products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Price and demand unstable ■ Unexpected competitive pressures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ High flexibility ■ Capable of rapid capacity growth and reduction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ High responsiveness ■ High trust ■ Risk sharing ■ Quick learning
Commodity provider	Lowest price	Price to market essentially determines market share	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Maximum efficiency ■ Locations close to customers to minimize distribution cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ High innovation and constantly reducing waste
Luxury goods manufacturer	High customer service	Highly customized designs see highest demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Facilitates highest quality value-add service before and after product sale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Highest skill ■ Highest quality provider ■ Precision, detail oriented

Default Supply Chain Strategy

Organizations may pursue undesirable supply chain strategy and not realize it. Without deliberate, comprehensive development, supply chain strategy may end up serving a changing array of tactical needs that come from organizational silos, individual manager perspectives or reactive firefighting pressures. If not carefully developed, supply chain strategy may reflect a default position—tolerated by the organization but not positively influencing organizational strategy.

Typical causes of “default” supply chain strategy or the lack of development of an optional supply chain strategy are related to the following elements:

- An inadequate understanding of an organization’s overall strategy or business unit strategy exists among some operations management professionals
- Supply chain strategy is sometimes confused with supply chain management
- There is low supply chain visibility among supply chain stakeholders, such as senior management, demand-related positions (sales and marketing) or finance. For example, recommendations to management about poorly performing suppliers or supply chain partners do not always account for supply chain strategy.
- An outdated, incomplete or simplistic understanding of the supply chain as it actually exists. This can be common among organizations that have seen rapid and sustained changes in demand and supply, market and customer needs, or supply chain partner performance.

Supply chain strategy and management depends not only on organizational strategy and mission from leadership, but also on the foundational realities of the organization’s IT, finance and human resources strategies. Alongside supply chain strategy are product development strategy and sales and marketing strategy.

Supply Chain Co-Destiny

Supply chain strategy must expressly serve the organization that develops it, but its scope might not stop at the organization. Supply chain strategy can employ the concept of co-destiny. The *APICS Dictionary*, 14th Edition, defines co-destiny as “The evolution of a supply chain from intraorganizational management to interorganizational management.” Over time, well developed and implemented supply chain strategies may fuel deep interorganizational strategies and business planning.

Successful development or redevelopment of a supply chain strategy includes a deep understanding of:

- The organizational or business unit strategy and strategic mission
- The operations of the organization’s strategic process functions and supporting capabilities
- The current, anticipated and desired competitive position in the market
- Existing supply chain functions, and operations strengths and weaknesses

An optimal supply chain strategy means that it:

- Executes operational or business unit strategy
- Leverages strong organizational processes, functions and capabilities
- Delivers sustained, competitive marketplace positioning via the supply chain itself
- Ensures a strategy that remains realistic, practical and probable of success in the face of a range of changing tactical, market, partner and management pressures.

Actual implementation of supply chain strategy typically passes through initial strategy development; supply chain model analysis, refinement and stakeholder acceptance; and supply chain change management implementation.

When developing supply chain strategy, decision makers should consider a number of metrics and measures:

- **Strategic drivers:** Factors that influence business unit and manufacturing strategies.
- **Strategic variables:** The most important variables that affect the business environment and business strategy. Strategic variables include the economic situations, population demographics, and changes in technology and government policies.
- **Strategic benchmarking and performance measurements:** Data showing how others compete across industries.
- **Strategic performance measurements:** The long-term goals of a business, such as profitability, market share, growth and productivity.

Supply chain strategy developers must account for strategic alliances (relationships formed by two or more organizations that share proprietary information), participate in joint investments, and develop linked and common processes to increase the performance of both companies.

Many organizations form strategic alliances to increase the performance of their shared supply chain. Consider the following questions:

- Does your supply chain strategy call for the advantages of forming strategic alliances?
- Which supply chain partners, if any, or suitable candidates?
- What are the desired attributes of a supply chain partner within a valuable strategic alliance?

Also consider strategic sourcing, a comprehensive approach for locating and sourcing key material suppliers. This often includes the business process of analyzing total spend for material spend categories. There is a focus on the development of long-term relationships with trading partners who can help the purchaser meet profitability and customer satisfaction goals. From an IT perspective, strategic sourcing can include automation of request for quotes, request for proposals, electronic auctioning (e-auctions or reverse auctions), and contract management processes.

Supply Chain Strategy Contrasts

In high income, low growth nations, mature distribution systems exist with high volume and rapid movement; high information flow concerning demand; supply; logistics; and relatively few and the customer locations, such as big box stores or online fulfillment centers. In environments like these, business integration and good relationships help to ensure responsiveness. To make more money without selling more, professionals have to maintain or increase price levels. Better service and more innovative products enable companies to charge a premium price. To that end, companies must be able to move quickly, work with the best suppliers developing the right products, and get the products to market faster than the competition.

By contrast, in low income, high-growth nations, there are characteristically long fragmented distribution systems, smaller order quantities, and slower speed to the customer. Delivery is a small business with numerous delivery points. Therefore, a low-cost supply chain will capitalize on more labor-intensive processes and reduced complexity, rather than capital-intensive automation. Processes must minimize use of scarce infrastructure, local currency, or difficult to obtain roll materials. Forecasting, demand planning and sales and operations planning must work with patchy supply and demand information.

Supply Chain Strategy Case Study: Fast-Fill Valve Company

The hypothetical Fast-Fill Valve Company is a midsize manufacturer of commercial and industrial water valves. While not a rapidly growing industry, the company has expanded over the years by purchasing several smaller competitors. Fast-Fill primarily serves a domestic customer base. Exports have been a modest but growing component of sales and demand. The company's business strategy and corporate mission statement call for the company to grow and gain market share by offering high-quality valves and by seeking to satisfy every customer by producing high-quality custom valves with market-leading speed and price.

After surviving a recent economic downturn, the Fast-Fill board of directors seeks to improve the long-term viability of the organization. The board made changes to the organizational strategy with the following actions:

- Created a broader, more diversified global customer base by better serving growing international demand.
- Enabled the organization to endure and benefit from long-term market volatility in the water valve industry.

You have been asked to participate in a supply chain strategy and planning review task force led by Fast-Fill vice president of supply chain. The task force must compare current strategy to the changes and operational strategy to identify the gaps. New supply chain tactical planning must address those gaps.

The Fast-Fill supply chain relies on a slow and inexpensive supply chain of offshore suppliers focused on commodity items such as brass and iron alloys as well as the valve component subassemblies used in most products. Fast-Fill also relies on a fast but expensive supply chain of domestic suppliers of precision valve components ordered and scheduled in a just-in-time process designed to reduce inventory.

The production department assembles these components to manufacture make-to-order and make-to-stock valves. Demand mainly comes from new construction and maintenance-repair-overhaul (MRO) service providers. Fast-Fill operates one large distribution center serving several commercial plumbing distributors and some large, direct sale customers.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis

Fast-Fill Valve Company order winners usually demonstrate good customer service, excellent product quality, and the ability for speedy custom production over larger valve manufacturers. However, while Fast-Fill is generally competitive in the overall market, it is rarely the lowest price producer of commodity valves. That market is dominated by large manufacturers of valves. Orders that include commodity valves represent 50 percent of Fast-Fill's orders. Fast-Fill is threatened by the increasing quality and custom valve production ability by two overseas producers that gradually are gaining market share in Fast-Fill's domestic market. Fast-Fill is neither large enough to buy one or more of these growing competitors, nor is it small enough to remain unthreatened by them.

In response, the Fast-Fill board of directors is considering a new strategy of directly partnering with an international valve manufacturer in order to boost its international sales. Selection and development of a contractual, profit sharing relationship with a potential overseas competitor that complements Fast-Fill's organizational strategy and mission and delivers exceptional international production, sales, distribution opportunity is ideal.

A task force is examining the potential impact at the supply chain level. Specifically, what would a new chain strategy and related tactics look like under this new organizational strategy?

Supply Chain Tactical Planning

A new supply chain strategy is essential. The current supply chain and its strategy anticipate serving primarily a domestic market. Serving more international customers and projects is expensive and not competitive, given the current supply chain configuration when compared to Fast-Fill's competitors.

In terms of agility and flexibility, the Fast-Fill supply chain is not well configured to endure international marketplace volatility. It doesn't share and integrate enough supply, demand and inventory information with its supply chain partners. Fast-Fill's current IT system is designed to rapidly capture and produce each customer's technical product requirements without an emphasis on the third-party sharing of data. There is limited inventory control of commodity subcomponents, and relationships with suppliers and distributors are weak. Volatility or rapid changes in price or demand would place unsustainable burdens on the entire supply chain. In order to maintain rapid production and customer delivery domestically, Fast-Fill frequently carries excess commodity subcomponent inventory due to its slow overseas suppliers.

The task force develops the following proposed strategic and tactical plan to begin design and implementation over the next several quarters:

- Select and develop a profit-sharing partnership with a potential overseas competitor to outsource the supply commodity valves in domestic and overseas markets, in return for distribution of Fast-Fill custom valves through that potential competitor's distribution channels. Reduce domestic production and inventory of the least competitive make-to-stock commodity valves in favor of partner production and supply.
- Improve the use of information in all aspects of supply chain business operation, with focus on customer demand, levels of inventory and rates of supply. The goal is to enable more rapid response to changes in demand and marketplace pricing while retaining profit and product margin with optimal production and inventory globally.

Tactical Plans: Tasks, Metrics and Measurements

The task force recognizes that working with an international partner requires improved supply chain partner relationship and information sharing. Some existing suppliers may not suit the new strategy, while others will become more important.

Hold at least one high-level and two middle management-level face-to-face meetings with key suppliers and distributors in order to:

- Discover advantages and disadvantages they see in Fast-Fill when compared to competitors
- Create a foundation of permanently improved relationships
- Improve access and use of demand, supply and inventory levels
- Capture ongoing competitive insights and trend perspectives, and incorporate those in Fast-Fill's supply and demand management practices with its supply chain partners
- Perform a SWOT analysis of Fast-Fill against its global competitors with the goal of identifying potential partner or merger opportunities

Begin to develop, test and implement IT systems across suppliers and distributors to provide timely demand, inventory and supply information suited to an internal market. This will support optimal ordering, scheduling, inventory and production processes.

- Strategically evaluate current suppliers and distributors to capture their capabilities and perspectives on supporting a new partner, international sales, information sharing and related areas.
- Create the budget, personal, measurements, goals, schedules and incentive plans necessary to carry out supply chain-related strategic and tactical plans. Present them to appropriate management for approval, support and execution.
- Create and maintain an implementation team that carries out these tactical plans and projects across all stakeholders and departments including finance, legal, sales and marketing and senior management.
- Periodically report progress and recommend next steps needed to complete all supply chain strategic and tactical plans.

These tactical plans now flow to all levels of supply chain management for daily and weekly execution over the next three quarters.



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