

FEATURE

Is supply chain management a 'big company' game?

By **Kate Patrick** • Oct. 23, 2017

The following article is part of a weekly series, where Supply Chain Dive asks five industry influencers to comment on a recent news item, trend or skill set. To read more about the participants, please [click here](#).

I once heard supply chain management is a big company game; that it takes large networks and capital resources to have a modern, technology-based supply chain. Do you agree?



Abe EshkenaziCEO, APICS

“ There are steps that business of all sizes can take to make a significant impact on their supply chains. Start with strategies like benchmarking, setting achievable goals for inventory turns and on-time delivery, conducting root cause analysis, collaborating across departments and educating employees. Without basic best practices in place, supply chains, large or small, will not reach their full potential, so it’s important for supply chain professionals and their employers to lay the groundwork for success.

Then, to stay competitive in an era of lean, optimized, end-to-end supply chains, businesses should also think holistically, and integrate the essential elements of their operations and supply chain. APICS’s Supply Chain

Operations Reference (SCOR) model combines business processes, metrics, leading practices and people into one structure, and is continuously updated to address the latest industry developments, including the digital supply chain. It's a framework that *any* business can use to help support organizational learning goals, improve inventory turns and increase the speed of system implementations.



Cathy Morrow
Roberson Founder and
Head Analyst, Logistics
Trends & Insights

“ Supply chain management use to be a big company game but no longer. Software as a Service (SaaS) allows third-party providers to host applications and make them available to customers over the Internet. Think about it. Companies no longer have to spend days upgrading applications, making sure there are no bugs or even having to pay for these upgrades.

Instead, companies pay as they go and as a result, it helps to level the playing field by allowing smaller companies to compete against the larger ones. In addition, users are no longer chained to their desks in order to access these solutions. Instead, users are able to use their smartphones and tablets 24/7 anywhere that they have internet access and also enjoy real-time visibility.

We've seen the spread of SaaS-based startups in the forms of freight booking platforms, warehousing on demand and more. As more companies move to the web to conduct business, these types of technology solutions will only grow and thus encourage competition, benefiting all supply chain partners including the end-customer.



Jon Slangerup President and CEO, American Global Logistics



The complexities and proportional costs of managing supply chains are not the domain of big companies, but are core to meeting customer expectations and profitability targets for almost every business. Often the smaller the company, the more critical it is to control costs related to the sourcing and fulfillment of raw goods and finished products that are essential to the business.

Unfortunately, smaller business often lack the capital or organizational infrastructure needed to develop sophisticated tools and processes needed to optimize their supply chains. The disproportionate growth of third-party logistics service providers (3PLs) – particularly those who are technology enabled – continues to increase because of demand from small to medium companies who must find new ways remain competitive with the massive big box players that continue to disrupt the rules of commerce.

Those companies who partner with 3PLs capable of building unique and customized solutions for optimizing

complex supply chains are the same companies that develop the agility and discipline to compete and even thrive in the new world of commerce.



Tania Seary **Founding Chairman, Procurious**

“ No, I don't agree at all. Smaller companies have the distinct advantage of being more nimble (I tried to avoid using the world agile here). They can quickly respond to market changes and adopt technologies that can help them gain competitive advantage.

The good news is, there are SO many supply chain technology providers in the market who offer very workable and interoperable solutions that are also affordable. Smaller organizations just have to do the research and be prepared to take some calculated risks.

Last week I tweeted, "Companies don't compete, supply chains compete," from a quote I heard at a conference in Berlin last week. This is becoming increasingly true. Smaller organizations can adapt technologies that will enable them to compete with the big guys and actually win. This is an exciting time to be in business.