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Boost the Power of Your Trading-Partner Network

How to improve visibility, collaboration, and customer experience

End-to-end supply chain visibility is becoming more challenging even as it becomes more critical, making increased connectivity between trading partners essential.

Two trends explain the situation:

The increasingly digital nature of commerce, which changes the terms of competition. Companies are more competitive as part of network of partners than when they try to compete on their own. No one company can deliver everything a customer needs, let alone wants. Having access to information (data) within your trading-partner network is essential to effective logistics planning and orchestration.

A shift in thinking about brand differentiation. Supply chain and logistics leaders now view enhanced customer experience (CX) — and not cost-cutting — as their differentiator and value driver, according to a recent survey of professionals. Building long-lasting, loyalty-building customer experiences requires new capabilities that are strengthened by data-sharing and visibility among trading partners.

This new environment is challenging supply chain leaders to take a fresh look at their partnerships in the context of newly emerged best practices for frictionless, high-performance operations. **This guide elaborates on survey findings that paint a picture of how CX-focused supply chains are working with partners in dedicated networks to stay competitive.**

How Does Your Supply Chain Compare?

Top three supply chain capabilities most critical to CX success:

Real-time visibility into orders, shipments, inventory

Time-definite deliveries

Proactive notifications about orders and shipments

About the Survey

Adelante SCM and BluJay Solutions, in partnership with the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals, conducted an online global survey of supply chain and logistics professionals in March 2019. The findings from 438 valid responses were reported in **Focus on Customer Experience, 2019 Supply Chain Market Research.**

No. 1: Let CX Drive Your Supply Chain Strategy

One reason networks are growing in importance is that they provide end-to-end visibility of order and shipment activity, which is essential to meeting the changing demands of customers. In Focus on Customer Experience, 2019 Supply Chain Market Research, delivering enhanced customer service edged ahead of reducing costs for the first time.

When it comes to enhanced CX:

32% of Above-Average Performers say CX drives supply chain innovation

28% of Average or Below Performers say CX drives supply chain innovation

When it comes to cost reduction:

25% of Above-Average Performers say they still focus on cost reduction

34% of Average or Below Performers say they still focus on cost reduction

The survey also reveals these four best practices and investments for enhancing customer experience:

Break through the barriers to innovation

Increase electronic connectivity with trading partners

Improve data quality

Invest in data analytics and visibility

No. 2: Eliminate Siloed Systems and Data

Before you can achieve transparency with your trading partners, you need to do so within your organization. Siloed systems and processes are the top barrier to supply chain and logistics innovation, according to the research. That's not surprising considering these factors work against visibility because data is not easily shareable.

Are Your Leaders Blocking Innovation?

Lack of upper management support for funding and resources hindered innovation at Average or Below Performers (20%) more than at Innovators/Early Adopters (10%). Developing and communicating a strong business case for supply chain investments to leaders is one way to overcome this barrier, according to the research report. In fact, the research report itself could be part of the case for change.

No. 3: Move Toward EDI and APIs; Away From Email and Fax

Reliable connectivity to partners is essential for a partner network to provide value to its members. Results show that 45% of Above Average Performers are electronically connected with 80% to 100% of their trading partners, compared with 30% of Average or Below Performers connected to that many.

Being electronically connected means the transmission and receipt of data among partners requires no manual data entry.

Above Average Performers rank EDI as the top method, while Average or Below Performers ranked email first. This makes sense when you consider that high-performing companies in general are more data-driven. Emails and faxes are not easily translated into actionable data points.

Who Connects via EDI?

**45%** of Large Companies
(> $1Billion in Revenue)

31% of Small Companies
(< $1 Billion)

No. 4: Improve Data Quality

Data is the lifeblood of frictionless hand-offs among partners. Data quality rankings separate Above Average Performers from the pack. Nearly 55% of these higher performers rated the data they receive from their trading partners as Good or Very Good, compared with 21% of Average or Below Performers.

55% of higher performers rated the data they receive Good or Very Good

21% of lower performers rated the data they receive as Good or Very Good

Room For Improvement

40%
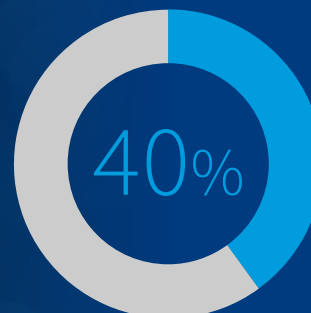
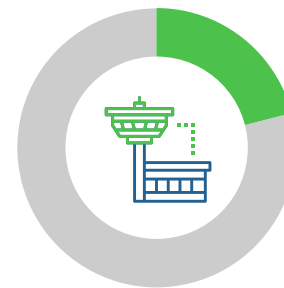Only 40% of respondents overall rated trading partner data quality as Good or Very Good.

No. 5: Invest in Data Analysis and Visibility

Research shows that companies are aware of the growing importance of quality data and transaction visibility. The top two supply chain investments companies are making today:

22%
Business intelligence (BI)/
Analytics

21%
Visibility/Control Tower
Functionality

Data and visibility are key to providing enhanced CX, so use these criteria to evaluate current and new applications and systems. Does the technology:

☑ Improve supply chain visibility

☑ Deliver accurate and reliable predicted estimated times of arrival (ETA)

☑ Proactively notify parties of delays

☑ Answer customers' most common questions

- Where's my order?
- Where's my shipment?
- When will it arrive?

Harness the collective power of a network.

Don't go it alone: Think of solution providers that automate interconnectivity among supply chain partners as part of your trading partner network.

Is it Time to Redirect Your Supply Chain Priorities and Investments?

As enhancing CX drives the future of supply chain innovation in an increasingly fragmented, global marketplace, trading partner connectivity will determine winners and losers.

Increasing visibility and transparency across supply networks requires coordinated efforts among trading partners. Supply chain companies must break down internal silos and work with their partners to strengthen electronic connectivity—EDI and APIs—and improve data quality. Investing in foundational technologies that provide analytics and visibility is key to supporting these efforts.

Learn how to leverage your network to improve visibility and collaboration.

Get Started

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