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ISSUES AND TRENDS CHANGING SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Until the dawn of 20th century business as well as distribution channel used the traditional delivery process for the experience and expertise dating back to the industrial revolution era. But the introduction of supply chain management brought up a new dimension to the whole delivery process. Supply chain management is a means through which the firms are engaged in creating, distributing, selling products, and can join forces to establish a supply network with an unbeatable competitive advantage and has emerged as one of the most powerful business improvement tools around. Supply chain finds its place in both services as well and manufacturing industry. The driver behind Supply Chain Management is to remove inefficiencies, excess costs and excess inventories from the supply pipeline. The present paper discusses the key issues responsible for effective Supply Chain Management and how to achieve maximum level of customer satisfaction. It also presents the recent trends changing Supply Chain Management process.

KEYWORDS

customer, issues, process, satisfaction, supply chain management (SCM).

INTRODUCTION

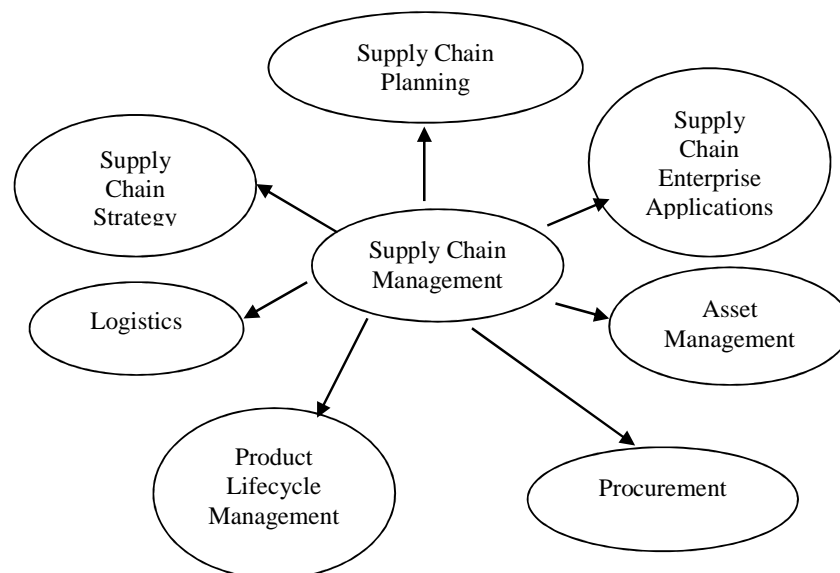
The term supply chain management was first coined by an American industry consultant in the early 1980s. However, the concept of supply chain in management, was of great importance long before in the early 20th century, especially by the creation of the assembly line. Supply chain management (SCM) is the management of a network of interconnected businesses involved in the provision of product and service packages required by the end customers in a supply chain. This concept is appearing in various firms and is moving into smaller organisations also. Supply chain management spans all movement and storage of raw materials, work-in-process inventory, and finished goods from point of origin to point of consumption. In the wider view of supply chain thinking, these additional activities are now seen as part of the work needed to fulfill customer requests. It brings a systems approach to understanding and managing the different activities needed to coordinate the flow of products and services to best serve the ultimate customer.

Lambert, Stock, and Ellram defined "A supply chain is the alignment of firms that bring products or services to market". Chopra and Meindl defined "A supply chain consists of all stages involved, directly or indirectly, in fulfilling a customer request. The supply chain not only includes the manufacturer and suppliers, but also transporters, warehouses, retailers, and customers themselves". Supply chain management is the coordination of production, inventory, location, and transportation among the participants in a supply chain to achieve the best mix of responsiveness and efficiency for the market being served.

Supply chain management should be an integral part of the company's drive and direction. SCM represents the way to customer retention and growth, competitive advantage and profitability. Successful supply chains have top management approval and support. Supply chain management can be viewed as a decision making process between strategy and operation. Thus supply chain is like a relay team within each team is more competitive and there needs to coordinate between the entire team for achieving results.

In the current competitive scenario supply chain management assumes a significant importance and calls for serious research attention, as companies are challenged with finding ways to meet ever-rising customer expectations at a manageable cost. To do so, businesses must search out which parts of their supply-chain process are not competitive, understand which customer needs are not being met, establish improvement goals, and rapidly implement necessary improvements.

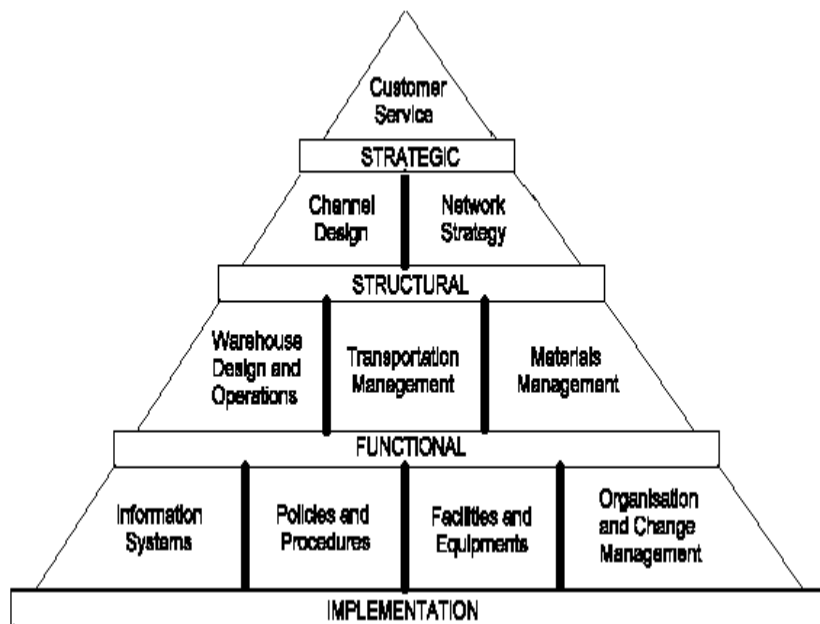
The supply chain management process will help in proper coordination between the supplier and the customer. The process includes Supply chain planning; Supply chain Enterprise applications; Asset management; Procurement; Product lifecycle management; Logistics; and Supply chain strategy. A schematic diagram of the Supply chain management process is as shown in Figure 1:

FIGURE 1: SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT PROCESS

ISSUES RELATED TO SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

A framework to understand the various issues involved in SCM is provided by the pyramid structure for the SCM paradigm in Figure.2. The pyramid allows issues to be analysed on four levels:

FIGURE 2: SCM FRAMEWORK PYRAMID



Source: Based on work done by William C. Copacino

- Strategic Level:** At this level, it is important to know how SCM can contribute to the enterprises' basic value proposition to the customers. Important questions that are addressed at this level include:
 - What are the basic and distinctive service needs of the customers?
 - What can SCM do to meet these needs?
 - Can the SCM capabilities be used to provide unique services to the customers?
- Structural Level:** After the strategic issues are dealt with, the next level question(s) that should be asked are:
 - Should the organization market directly or should it use distributors or other intermediaries to reach the customers?
 - What should the SCM network look like?
 - What products should be sourced from which manufacturing locations?
 - How many warehouses should the company have and where should these be located?
 - What is the mission of each facility? etc.
- Functional Level:** This is the level where operational details are decided upon. Functional excellence requires that the optimal operating practices for transportation management, warehouse operations, and materials management (includes forecasting, inventory management, production scheduling, and purchasing) are designed. These strategies should keep in view the trade-offs that may need to be made for the overall efficiency of the system. Achieving functional excellence also entails development of a process-oriented perspective on replenishment and order fulfillment so that all activities involved in these functions can be well integrated.
- Implementation Level:** Without successful implementation, the development of SCM strategies and plans is meaningless. Supply chain managers must consider their information needs relative to decision support tools, application software's, data capture, and the system's overall structure. The important issues are organizational and information systems:
 - Organizational issues centers on the overall structure, individual roles and responsibilities, and measurement systems needed to build an integrated operation.
 - Information systems are "enablers" for supply chain management operations and therefore must be carefully designed to support the SCM strategy.

RECENT TRENDS CHANGING SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT

Many organisations use their supply chain to compete and gain market share. Technology and process upgrades at forward-thinking organisations clearly show that supply chain excellence is more widely accepted as an element of overall business strategy and that increases the customer's satisfaction. There are six key trends causing significant impact and change to supply chain process and performance.

DEMAND PLANNING

Demand Planning is a key input to the larger Sales and Operations Planning process and can have a significant positive impact on new product introductions, inventory planning and management, customer service, supply planning efficiency and sourcing strategies. Demand focused approach to planning can significantly improve demand planning and management efforts and help overall costs and customer service efforts.

The organisations may conduct an enterprise-wide internal demand review to gather information from all aspects of the organization. Goals are set to gain consensus on what will be sold each month for each product line or category and the resulting revenue. The success of any Demand Plan is having all stakeholders; including sales, marketing, finance, product development and supply chain agree upon a consensus Demand Plan. Organizations that focus part time on demand planning and forecasting efforts yield substandard results.

GLOBALIZATION

The business landscape is rapidly becoming more global due to improvements in communications. Globalization is dramatically impacting the way business is managed and transacted, even on the most local levels. Manufacturing, distribution, sourcing of materials, invoicing and returns have all been significantly impacted by the increased integration of a global customer and supplier base, and many companies find that existing processes and technology are not flexible enough for this new business environment.

The right Supply Chain Design is critical to managing the changes brought about by rapid globalization. A well thought-out Supply Chain Network Design can optimize the network and the flow of materials through the network. In doing so, network design captures the costs of the supply chain with a "total landed cost" perspective, and applies advanced mathematical technology to determine optimal answers to both strategic and tactical questions.

INCREASED COMPETITION AND PRICE PRESSURES

The price, product features and brand recognition were enough to differentiate many products in the marketplace. With the continued commoditization of many products, companies need better ways to distinguish themselves. The organisations can offset the trend to their supply chains in two ways:

- **Firstly**, they may look at ways to reduce cost and are creating a more efficient value chain to remain cost competitive.
- **Secondly**, they may look at ways they can provide value-added services to meet the demands of more sophisticated customers.

The organisations should not only look to their supply chain to drive cost improvement, but should increase capabilities as a means for staying competitive. Streamlining processes with better design, better collaboration across networks and new services will help your company stay competitive and strengthen relationships with your customers.

OUTSOURCING

As many organisations step back and examine their core competencies, some realize that outsourcing parts or all of a supply chain can be advantageous. With marketplace improvements around information media and systems; cost and quality of global manufacturing and distribution; and product design capabilities, companies are gaining additional synergies by outsourcing all or parts of their supply chain. There can be significant economic benefits from outsourcing all or part of your supply chain operation, but without the right systems, processes, or organizational management structure the risk to success can increase to frightening levels. The optimally outsourced supply chain, either in its entirety or just a component, relies heavily on:

- Superior supply chain network design
- Inclusion of that outsource partner in the information chain
- Establishment of control mechanisms to proactively monitor the various components of the supply chain and,
- Information systems to connect and coordinate the supply chain as seamlessly as possible.

SHORTENED AND COMPLEX PRODUCT LIFE CYCLES

Today in order to meet the needs of both customers and consumers, companies need more efficient product lifecycle management processes. This includes heavy emphasis on managing new product introduction, product discontinuation, design for manufacturability and leveraging across their entire product and infrastructure characteristics. When companies begin the process of introducing new products to market, they coordinate marketing, engineering, sales and procurement and develop sales forecasts to plan products in the pipeline. Without a formalized product lifecycle process the end result isn't always predictable. One benefit of PLM processes and technology is helping companies design products that can share common operations, components or materials with other products, thereby reducing risks of obsolescence write offs, increasing cost leverage on the purchasing of key materials and ensuring that infrastructure investments are optimally utilized.

COLLABORATION BETWEEN SUPPLIERS AND CUSTOMERS

As supply chains continue to develop and mature, a move toward more intense collaboration between customers and suppliers has occurred. The level of collaboration goes beyond linking information systems to fully integrating business processes and organization structures across companies that comprise the full value chain. The ultimate goal of collaboration is to increase visibility throughout the value chain in an effort to make better management decisions and to ultimately decrease value chain costs.

With the right tools, processes and organizational structure in place, collaboration provides key people throughout the value chain with the information needed to make business-critical decisions with the best available information. The S&OP activity enables information systems to connect the value chain participants around key demand information, such as customer forecasts, and around key supply information, such as supplier inventories and capacities.

CONCLUSION

Supply chains encompass the companies and the business activities needed to design, make, deliver, and use a product or service. Businesses depend on their supply chains to provide them with what they need to survive and thrive. Assessing supply chain performance leads to identification of problems and opportunities. Having a strategy and measuring key parts are necessary to understand and take control of your supply chain. Put the process, people and technology in place to create competitive advantage, both for today and tomorrow. If you do not, a competitor will.

Supply chain success involves process, people and technology. It enables all participants to know what is required. This in turn provides agility to handle exceptions and to adapt to changes. Having those three elements is important to having metrics, ones that are useful across the organization. All three working together in a company provides coordinated, unified effort to use supply chain management as a driving force in customer satisfaction and in having competitive advantage, with service and productivity.

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