Five Supply-Chain Challenges and How Process, People, and Technology Can Help Overcome Them

Brought to you by

SupplyChainBrain
One Forum | One Focus | Many Minds

Sponsored by

Barcoding
BE EFFICIENT | ACCURATE | CONNECTED

Five Supply-Chain Challenges and How Process, People, and Technology Can Help Overcome Them

SPONSORED BY BARCODING, INC.

With business norms shifting in the face of world events, changing consumer behaviors and more assertive workforces, supply chains are challenged to operate accurately and efficiently while retaining employees and implementing the right technologies. Here are five challenges facing supply chain managers today, with guidance on how a partnership approach that combines process, people, and technology can help.

1 Accurate inventory data from across the enterprise is hard to come by.

Many companies still manage inventory using outdated processes and legacy software like Excel spreadsheets, making true inventory visibility next to impossible. Without accurate visibility into available inventory, companies find themselves facing a dilemma: They can risk losing customers by over-promising and under-delivering, or they can spend more on extra inventory. Neither alternative is very attractive.

Poor visibility makes accurate forecasting difficult and places a financial burden on companies. Insight into accurate inventory information is important to successful planning in a fluctuating demand environment.

Without a single asset-management platform, each facility within an organization may be entering and reporting on data differently. C-suite executives need systems that allow them to view inventory positions throughout their companies on a single screen, so they can make enterprise-wide decisions. With solutions that consolidate inventory positions across an enterprise, supply chains have the ability to adjust to unexpected developments by drawing from alternative sources.

How organizations collect and use data and how they manage enabling technologies can make the difference between growth and stagnation. By replacing static spreadsheets with systems that provide dynamic dashboarding and online analytics, supply chain managers get access to data they can actually use.

2 Employee retention has become a problem.

The pandemic-spurred Great Resignation has left industries with a shortage of frontline workers. Employers need to make tasks easier, more efficient and more satisfying if they expect to retain employees and grow their workforces.

Employee retention is not an isolated issue; it's also important to making money. Labor challenges make it difficult for companies to meet customer expectations.

Employee dissatisfaction often stems from being sidetracked from their jobs to deal with technology issues. Retail store managers, for example, need to be focused on customer experiences, not troubleshooting system outages.

Too many businesses don't provide the opportunity for employees to voice their perspectives and pain points to company decision makers. Part of the solution is to build a culture in which end users are provided a pipeline to higher-ups and are given feedback so that employees know their problems are being heard.

By prioritizing strategies that drive retention and productivity,

companies can reallocate people to more high-value tasks. Improving employees' experiences will also have a beneficial impact on customer experiences, improving a company's top and bottom lines.

3 Communications over tech issues frustrate workers.

Related to the overall employee work experience is the issue of internal company communications over technology and process issues. Workers find it difficult to perform their assigned tasks if they spend too much time hassling with IT over technology problems.

A retail employee's performance, for example, may be measured on the basis of sales. That metric will be adversely affected if the employee is bogged down complaining about their issues to IT. The employee's frustration level will rise, and their manager's evaluation as well as their self-perception will plummet.

User experience is important to employee satisfaction with technology implementations. Conducting reviews by bringing together IT, operations, leadership and end-users improves user experiences and employee satisfaction. Enhancing communications

goes hand in hand with improving employee experiences and employee retention.

All of this suggests the need to focus on people and processes — not just technology. Companies can go a long way toward addressing these issues by forming a relationship with a partner that provides resources for effective communications, allowing for rapid identification of issues and efficient problem-solving.

4 Poor application usage and adoption slow supply chain progress.

It's impossible to build systems and applications that improve business-process effectiveness without knowing the problems they're supposed to be resolving. Worker surveys are often much too superficial to gain any meaningful insights.

IT folks tend not to want to slow down at the beginning of a project to gather detailed requirements and have exhaustive conversations with end users. But the alternative is to spend money on an application that no one wants to use. The result of such a debacle is that the process will have to be redone, with lots of time and money gone to waste in the interim. It's better to get the process right the first time.

When companies do deep dives on employee experiences, thoughts and feelings about the applications and devices they're asked to use at work, they often find that workers aren't properly trained on the technologies, and that these training flaws are passed down from one generation of users to the next. In order to get to the bottom of things, the employer needs to ask the right questions, gathering specific information about workers' actual experiences.

That process will likely yield information that will point toward potential solutions. Sometimes installing an app somewhat differently, or tweaking a business process or workflow, will yield better acceptance by employees. Employees, for their part, experience satisfaction when they know that they have contributed to improving company operations and their work lives.

5 IT resources are overworked.

The flip side of the fraught relationship between frontline workers and the devices and apps they use at work is the burden often placed by companies on their IT departments. Tech folks tend to be overworked, and there was a shortage of IT human

resources nationwide even before the pandemic struck. The growth in IT openings continues to outpace the growth in the pool of qualified candidates, leading to higher levels of competition for talent.

Tech people should be put to use implementing company digitization and innovation strategies. But all too often they get caught up in the process of updating data in systems and helping others to do so. This suboptimal use of IT resources results in high opportunity costs for companies. IT can be and should be a strategic asset for their companies — and they can't be expected to do everything.

Outsourcing functions like data management and inventory and asset tracking might make sense for many companies. Instead of getting sidetracked managing data and systems, frontline workers, supply chain managers, IT personnel and company executives alike all simply receive clean and normalized data that establishes a single source of truth and delivers visibility, on platforms that harness the power of artificial intelligence and automation and leverage the cloud for agility and responsiveness.

That's how outsourcing data management and access to inventory and asset tracking platforms can drive operational excellence, eliminate waste and optimize budgets. Outsourcing, in short, allows businesses to concentrate on business.

Resource link:
Barcoding Intellitrack,
https://www.intellitrack.com/

Barcoding Inc.: Delivering Custom Automation Solutions Focused on Process, People, and Technology

Barcoding is a supply chain automation and innovation company specializing in helping organizations be more efficient, accurate, and connected. The company operates on a philosophy that connects process, people, and technology (PPT) to build technology-based solutions that are custom-fit for clients.

"Our PPT approach focuses on talking to customers about their challenges," says Keri Corbin, the company's vice president for client solutions. "Our customers use our expertise to build strategies and processes to meet their pain points."

Companies spend too much time and money merging data across separate asset-management systems for facilities, devices and inventories. That's why Barcoding recently launched their enterprise cloud platform IntelliTrack®.

"With a single login, users know where assets, devices and inventory are located, within a facility or a geographical area," says Corbin. "The cloud infrastructure makes it easy to integrate, and the microservices architecture enables fast development and deployment of services."

Besides delivering a consolidated technology platform, Barcoding provides a single contact point for any data issue. "There's one person to call when you have a problem," says Corbin.