



SUPPLY CHAIN MADE EASY

Supply Chain should be easy. In many undertakings in life the adage “If it is hard you are doing it wrong” applies. In many sports the corollary goes ‘Train hard, play easy’. The very best footballers look as if they have more time than others. The best cricket batsmen and golfers have an easy grace that not only looks good but is the foundation of their skill. They seem to just naturally get the fundamentals right. But is it natural talent or planning, training, understanding the fundamentals that is the difference. Talent will take you just so far.

The academic corollary is the student, un-blessed with superior IQ advantage, who achieves success often superior to their more gifted peers, through diligent application of good study techniques and time spent on the books.

In supply chain and logistics management the same applies. We now understand that we operate in apparently complex ecosystems. But are they complex or merely consisting of many simplex relationships to be understood and harnessed. And indeed managed effectively with the right time and volume capable techniques.

In lieu of time, that most valuable commodity, spent, the provision of time-sensitive data in the right form to the right people at the right time to sustain the right decision processes can deliver performance competitive with peers blessed with superior advantage in other areas.

The right data systems that recognise:

- the time value of data,
- the sensitivities of what is truly proprietary data and, importantly, what is not,
- the power of collaboration, and
- the continuum from data, to information, to knowledge, to understanding, to decisions to performance

are the supply chain equivalent of the fundamental techniques that underpin the grace and smooth and efficient performance of our most admired sportspeople.

Unlike study or golf but consistent with cricket, supply chain and logistics is a team sport. Supply chain management is first about who you choose for your team but then, most importantly, how you run a team plan, harnessing the skills and motivation of your members, to achieve a team goal. In team sports each individual player shares the rewards of team success. Many Brownlow and Dally M Medalists say they would swap the individual reward for a premierships medallion any day. For, as they say, a champion team will defeat a team of champions every time.

The very concept of supply chain is a model and like all models it is a simplification of reality. Just like the idea of a team. Supply chain is business and just as in our sporting analogy, business has many rules: Porters five forces, laws of supply and demand, statutory rules, etc. etc. etc. It can be daunting. The concept of supply chain can feel so vast and complex that it is difficult to know where to start and on what to focus. On whom do you rely who knows all of the rules?

Does your supply chain team have a team plan, a coach? Does your coach have a mentor? Someone who understands the rules and can devise a team plan to show how easy it can be?

Clarity from complexity: Who does the hard work to condense complex issues into simple, straightforward solutions that really work in your business?

Who tells it like it is, is straightforward and direct? Who expresses ideas in plain English and provides advice that everyone in your business can make sense of?

Not just the right answer, but the right answer for you. Who understands the academically perfect solution but can describe the best solution that is simply the one that works for you?

Do they have the support of your team because they have been there done that?

Supply chain – If it's hard: you are doing it wrong.

