

Delivering Customer Experience in the Supply Chain



By Phil Britt | Sep 26, 2019

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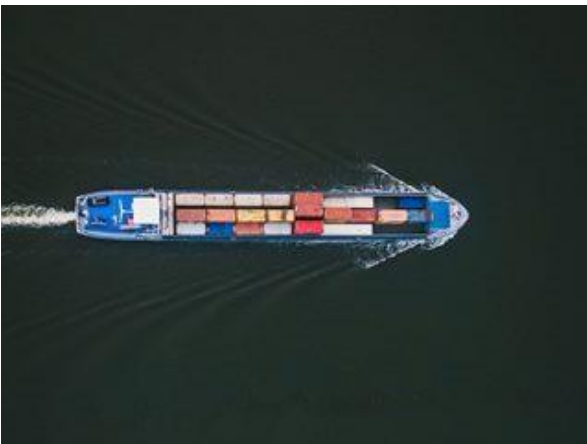


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Supply chain manager's main focus is on keeping costs low — or at least, that's what many assume. Yet according to [research](#) commissioned by BluJay Solutions in partnership with the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals (CSCMP), that's not the case. According to more than 400 supply-chain professionals from across manufacturing, retail and logistics service providers (LSPs), impact on customer experience (CX) is their primary concern.

However, depending on the exact business, the supply chain could have several steps between the acquisition of the raw materials and the delivery of the end product. So delivering CX throughout the process is more complex than simple communications with an end customer.

Importance of Data Quality

As more products are purchased online and delivered directly to consumers, the entire series of transactions requires a new set of capabilities with unprecedented information exchange between trading partners, according to Susan Pichoff, [GS1 US](#) senior director, industry engagement. Additionally, “last mile” performance is now visible to the end customer — failures such as late delivery or damaged product directly impact customer satisfaction and brand loyalty. Their disappointments are magnified by the power of social media, too. Any margin for error has evaporated.

As a result, data quality is fundamental to success, Pichoff said. “Beginning with the online shopping experience, customers’ ability to search, find, select, purchase and receive what they want depends upon complete, accurate product data. Consumer loyalty is earned or lost in this exchange, so prioritizing product data quality programs is essential.”

By adhering to supply chain data standards, trading partners can trust the data they exchange and use it to manage supply chain logistics and fuel sales growth, according to Pichoff. Leveraging standards-based data management systems allows them to consolidate efforts and also use one universal way to communicate master product data throughout the supply chain.

“Siloed data sources is a customer experience challenge presented by the supply chain,” added Ajay Khanna, [Reltio](#) vice president marketing. “In the experience economy, the whole organization has to collaborate and connect to deliver exceptional customer experiences. It’s not just a sales and marketing mandate anymore.”

For example, without having visibility into the supply chain, marketing can’t run a successful campaign, Khanna points out. Fragmented supplier data across business units not only prohibits you from taking advantage of economies of scale but also limits your understanding about the exposure to a single supplier or even your ability to monitor compliance at the supplier end.

Related Article: [7 Critical Elements of a Successful Supply Chain](#)

Supply Chain Transparency Is Key

“Keeping customers informed about where their goods are in the pipeline and when they can be expected in real time is one of the core tenets of providing a great customer experience, and the best way to achieve this is to integrate the appropriate tech,” said John Moss, CEO of [English Blinds](#).

The more efficiently you can automate your warehousing and logistics tracking to enable customers to monitor their goods at every stage of the supply chain, the better the CX you can provide, Moss explained. If a shipment is running late or an inventory problem means an order will be delayed, this is going to negatively impact the CX. However, enabling customers to find out about this asap (and therefore take steps to mitigate it on their end) is far preferable to keeping them in the dark.

Moss recommended using warehouse management systems to speed up order processing and reduce errors, as well as to provide greater visibility on both the client side and within a company’s own operations.

“All of this naturally contributes to a slick service and improved CX,” Moss said. “Pair your warehouse management system with delivery tracking, and your customer can follow their delivery from start to finish, once more enabling you to offer a better service.”

“The key components to drive and maintain the needed customer experience are visibility and communication,” agreed Todd Trompeter, vice president of enterprise client performance at [BlueGrace Logistics](#). “With the right technology, today’s logistics service providers can proactively manage performance, react when service starts to decline. The cost of a shipment not leaving a dock can be exponential to the price paid to the carrier for delivery — if there is communication that allows for alternate planning, vendors can recover.”

Related Article: [How Supply Chains Deliver the Ultimate Customer Experience](#)

Customers Look for Speed, Quality and Consistency

“Consumer demand is insatiable and driving increased pressure on global supply chains to react accordingly if businesses wish to succeed. In today’s world, supply chain professionals can no longer afford to simply look at cost reduction as the primary lever by which to drive value. Rather, they need to focus on speed, quality and consistency,” said Oren Zaslansky, CEO of [Flock Freight](#).

With businesses able to select from more suppliers than ever before, outcompeting and providing better CX throughout the supply chain means using technology to help drive constant innovation to continue to meet the ever-faster delivery times that customers demand, according to Zaslansky.

Finding alternatives like shipping less than truckload options may cost more, but delivering frictionless experiences will empower businesses to outpace competition given the new industry expectations, Zaslansky adds.

