

The supply chain of the future is purpose-driven and supported by intelligent technology



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The retail supply chain is large and complex, and constantly needs to adapt to meet changing demand from end consumers. The need for multi-channel fulfilment across online and in store adds to this complexity. Accurate demand forecasting is critical to every part of the chain, from manufacture to distribution to sales. However, this area is also hugely challenging, because a lack of visibility and siloed data inhibits insight and also negatively impacts operational efficiency. For retailers to maximise their bottom line, the supply chain needs to be fast, efficient and responsive, which requires the use of intelligent, integrated technology.

Lack of visibility, lack of insight

Many retail enterprises struggle with data siloes from disparate systems and applications, which means that they have no single version of the truth from which to draw insight. Lack of integration between various technologies and numerous manual processes exacerbate this issue and accurate analytics and forecasting are challenging. Without visibility across the chain, manufacturing



and delivery are inefficient, which increases operating costs. This ultimately results in a negative customer experience, which impacts on customer satisfaction.

An intelligent solution

Supply chain management software can help to resolve these challenges by managing transactions

end to end, from planning and sourcing to manufacturing, delivery and return. However, for a supply chain management solution to be effective, it needs to be purpose-driven. In other words, it should focus on improving processes to eliminate unproductive practices, as well as controlling production and delivering goods or services more efficiently.



Integration is a critical component of this, as it is essential to integrate data and processes across all supply chain functions, from beginning to end. This single source of truth can then be analysed to form the basis for demand forecasting and effective job scheduling, by providing a real-time view of resources being consumed as well as customer demand.

It also assists with sourcing, procurement management and supply of products and services across the value chain. Communication can be improved between vendors and suppliers with communication portals that offer real-time insight into purchase orders, payment, manufacturing status and more.

On the manufacturing side, an integrated solution delivers a complete picture of production output and productivity for more effective resource planning. From a delivery perspective, an integrated system assists retailers with a central repository of all delivery details for on-time services. Reverse logistics processes manage returns and rejections.

Transformation is the key

The Covid-19 pandemic acted as a catalyst, demonstrating just how fast the landscape can shift, and the ability to improve efficiency and leverage real-time insight from a single source of truth is critical. Digital transformation lies at the heart of intelligent supply chain solutions,

and integration is essential, because supply chain processes do not function in isolation. Improving visibility and unifying and streamlining business process, empowers faster and more accurate decision making.

This will enable retailers to take advantage of real-time supply chain planning, accurate forecasting and enhanced visibility into all areas for on time delivery. Visibility into transactions in real time improves both response time and efficiency. Greater accessibility and intelligent software offer a platform for automation, tightly integrated with other business functions to reduce errors. The end result is enhanced customer service and improved business relations with customers and suppliers. **SR**

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