

Mobile Data Collection Drives Advances in Supply Chain Software

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The role of mobile devices to collect, capture and generate advanced reports is seen by some industry experts as a key driver toward the adoption of integrated data collection methods and the future of manufacturing and distribution. With the ability of these new systems to provide advanced analytical tools, suppliers will be able to better mitigate risk throughout the global supply chain, provide manufacturers and distributors information for improved decision making capabilities and streamline processes.

One of the behavioral drivers suggested to have spurred advances in integrated supply chain solutions is the consumerization of IT. Since people now have instant access personal information from anywhere, its immediate benefits in manufacturing and distribution also makes sense from an operational standpoint for managers seeking real time information.

"This [always-connected] lifestyle has spilled over into the business world as well, as developers determine new ways to make data accessible across channels and locations," said supply chain expert Chuck Fuerst in Logistics Viewpoints. "The need for a manager to access reports...from work, home or on the road, has made this expectation a business necessity and one that will be a constant theme in supply chain innovation in the foreseeable future."

Software Vendors Respond with Sophisticated Reporting Features

As mobile technology and integrated data systems drive the demand for wireless data gathering devices, supply chain software vendors have responded by offering advanced reporting tools with analytics solutions. Some cutting-edge features identified by Steve Banker in another Logistics Viewpoints article include analysis tools capable of short term forecasting, data visualization, feedback predictors that use data deviation to identify the source of a problem and resolution automation, plus shared communications tools that increase supply chain workflows and logistics through improved transmission of information to all parties involved.

With the vertically-integrated manufacturing model moving beyond the reach of most suppliers and the global supply chain continuing its reach in new corners throughout the world, technological innovations in supply chain management have become necessary in order to manage the host of variables and relative risks that emerge among disparate global sources for components. Moreover, the new tools need to go beyond simple data extraction and provide a level of analysis beyond the scope of a human mind. Given the level of global competition, suppliers cannot afford to ignore the reality of technology becoming the cornerstone upon which manufacturing will soon be based upon.

"Supply chain technology must be able to make intelligent decisions about how and where orders are filled based on geography, product, delivery dates and more," said Fuerst. "Warehouse management systems that can take into account an increasing number of variables and route the order accordingly – and then work with a transportation management system to ship those goods – will be the backbone of a modern warehouse."