3 Key Trends Affecting the Life Sciences and Healthcare Supply Chain

Written by **Babette DuPriest**
Wed, Dec 11, 2013

For the life sciences and healthcare supply chain, an increase of new business challenges highlights the need for improved supply chain management. According to the white paper, "The Resilience Imperative: Reinventing Healthcare Supply Chains" by Exel, a supply chain and logistics solution company, a number of key trends are changing logistics. Among the largest contributors to more complex supply chains were:

1. Growth in emerging markets
2. Regulatory and compliance issues
3. Changing product characteristics

"Providing life-saving products is a big responsibility, one with risks that far outweigh those in a typical supply chain environment," Jonathan Blamey, vice president of life sciences healthcare for DHL Supply Chain said in a press release. "LSH companies have to configure their business for each market, meeting the regulatory requirements and operational constraints of each healthcare system. Add in manufacturing constraints, compliance, temperature control and other factors, and you get a highly complex supply chain."

All Supply Chains are Feeling the Pressure of New Challenges
While LSH supply chains have some specific challenges, manufacturers and

distributors of all goods are being forced to deal with an increasingly complex supply chain. The white paper discusses the demands of regulation and compliance and how they have called for stringent and diverse integrity control. This has led to increased pressure to improve data collection points, which adds pressure through the supply chain.

All supply chains are realizing the need for increased data collection to improve product recalls, inventory control and efficiency. Increasing the amount of data collection required at different touch points also intensifies the need for mobile data collection solutions that allow for real-time tracking of individual units.

Better Data Collection Call For Implementation of Advanced Solutions
According to RFgen's white paper, "The Data Collection Software Buyer's Guide," the two largest consequences of ineffective data collection are inefficient processes and inaccurate data. The need to keep pace with increasing consumer demand and more rigorous regulatory requirements means these obstacles can be costly.

For instance, like LSH, organizations in the food supply chain need accurate data to handle possible recalls of products that have been infected or otherwise compromised. Advanced data collection software can help track this information so that it can be located and reduce the amount of food that is susceptible to spoilage. Identifying kinks in the supply chain that place food in danger, like factors such as temperature, can prevent future litigation and harm to the brand's reputation.