

Empowering excellence in supply chain talent



Reimagining supply chain talent in a changing landscape

There's never been a more exciting time to be in supply chain.

The past decade has seen global supply chains elevated in complexity and importance, garnering unprecedented attention at the board level and in the media. With ongoing advances in technology, the role of supply chain professionals continues to evolve, resulting in changing employer expectations. We need talent that not only understands the science of supply chain but also how to partner effectively with peers, finance and marketing teams, suppliers, and consumers – up and downstream.

Having a skilled and agile supply chain team is crucial to business success in today's global economy. Ironically, the supply chain for talent is broken.

According to Gartner, employee turnover is 33% higher in supply chain organizations compared to pre-pandemic levels.¹ Given this reality, how can you set strategies that will put your people first and advance your organization?

Whether your talent strategy includes upskilling your existing employee base or attracting new hires (or, hopefully, both), the time to act is now. I challenge you to set your organization on a path that will differentiate itself as a top and highly sought-after employer.

If you need to spark innovation, this eBook is a great jumping off point. Here, you'll find insights into the evolving role of supply chain practitioners, strategies for attracting and retaining talent, and skills needed for future supply chain leaders.

Dr. Anne Robinson

Chief Strategy Officer

Kinaxis

Elevating the role of the supply chain practitioner in the Age of AI

BY POLLY MITCHELL-GUTHRIE

VP, INDUSTRY OUTREACH & THOUGHT LEADERSHIP, KINAXIS

In the fast-paced world of today's global supply chains, volatility is a constant and agility is an essential. Planning in silos wastes time we can't afford to lose. The supply chain practitioner of today needs yesterday's tactical operational skills. However, they also need business acumen to inform their domain expertise; analytical skills to leverage artificial intelligence and machine learning (AI/ML) models; and the ability to work in teams through times of change to get things done.

Augment humans, don't replace them

While some talk of a "lights out supply chain," we should instead keep the lights on and augment humans, not replace them. Machine intelligence can complement human intelligence to accelerate intuition. For example, keeping supply lead times up to date in a planning system is harder than ever, and the more complicated the bill of materials,

01

86%

According to Accenture, 86% of C-Level executives said that they are making moderate to significant investments in AI.²



the less likely a planner will be able to do more than spread outdated assumptions across parts.

Not every adjustment is worth a planner's time to update, but AI/ML can predict lead times, based on historical patterns, and update changes automatically, flagging for intervention only those changes outside parameters set by the planner. A "[self-healing supply chain](#)" allows planners to use current skills and abilities better by focusing time on more complex exceptions instead of tedious manual updates. They also learn new skills as they understand how to "consume" results from AI/ML to make better decisions.

Turn the discussion around

While discussions of an autonomous supply chain can feed fear, turn the discussion around by emphasizing that AI/ML works best when it complements human intelligence. AI/ML models literally learn from data, but when data is disrupted by black swan events, learning is interrupted. In these times, we must rely on human intelligence to make decisions, just as we did early in the pandemic.

For this reason, humans are more important than ever, because modern technology still can't replace domain expertise. Ben-Marvin Egel, Director of Supply Chain Planning at Lippert Components emphasizes this shift in direction: "It takes an incredible amount of understanding of the inputs and outputs, as well as a basic understanding of what is happening within that technology, to really understand what data is telling us."



Break planners out of spreadsheet prison

Giving planners better, integrated tools will break them out of spreadsheet prison and make it easier to collaborate, working together in teams to make the impact they desire.

Egel speaks to the value of this adoption: "It has shortened the amount of time we have to make decisions, and how quickly we need to 're-run' or 'adapt' certain inputs and recalculate outputs. I see our teams spending more time deciphering data, telling stories with that data, creating visualizations, or running multiple scenarios to better understand trade-offs than we ever were able to before."

Egel adds: "As I reflect on the past few years, the most important aspects of our supply chain team members continue to be their intangibles: skills like communication, hard work and an unwavering attitude are what makes the biggest difference at the end of the day."



Attracting, retaining and growing supply chain talent

BY POLLY MITCHELL-GUTHRIE
VP, INDUSTRY OUTREACH & THOUGHT LEADERSHIP, KINAXIS

A recent [boom! Global Network survey](#) revealed what thriving supply chain practitioners need to succeed – support for their ambition; the right tools; and leadership with vision, clarity, and compassion.³

Recognize and support their ambition

Supply chain professionals love a challenge, teamwork and the impact they have on the core of their business. In a recent boom! survey, 28% reported plans to change jobs in the coming year – a higher rate than before the pandemic. The top two reasons for leaving were an inability to achieve career goals fast enough (31%) and a desire to better use their skills and current abilities (20%), factors that grow even stronger as they advance in their careers, trumping the search for better pay and benefits. What happens if that ambition is not fulfilled?

02

35%

Three of the top four areas listed as topics of interest for professional development: Advanced analytics (35%), digital transformation (33%) and artificial intelligence and machine learning (AI/ML, 32%).⁶



You lose your most mature talent, with the greatest knowledge and institutional memory.

How can you get supply chain talent to stay and even to grow? By investing in their professional development, the second highest priority boom! survey respondents ranked. Give them opportunities to learn, expanding their scope and abilities as well as that of your organization. And give them opportunities to work together and learn from the best. A Center of Excellence plays a crucial role in this by standardizing best practices, promoting innovation, and aligning the supply chain to the goals of the wider organization.

Give them the right tools to succeed

[MHI argues](#) that digital transformation is creating paths to give employees new skills and attracting talent who want to work on modern systems.⁴ And modern matters. When supply chain professionals were offered a magic wand in the boom! survey, what was their #1 wish for boosting their work performance? Better, integrated tools – and no wonder. When asked to describe their world, 59% said they use legacy systems that are fragmented, uncoordinated, and siloed. In spite of their well-known limitations, a [survey by consulting firm McKinsey](#)

found spreadsheets remain the top software for supply chain planning, in use by 73%.⁵ Ongoing use of [spreadsheets can even put your supply chain at risk](#).

Inspire with strong leadership

Leadership also matters. More than half of the boom! respondents ranked “visible, empowering senior leadership with a clear, well-communicated strategic vision” as the most important resource needed to help them in their role. Another 35% wished for leaders willing to support and implement change. Because moving from spreadsheets to digitally integrated tools won’t happen on its own – it requires leaders who can lead a digital transformation across the organization.



Investing in tomorrow's supply chain leaders



BY MINDI LEVINSON

SENIOR MANAGER, ACADEMIC ALLIANCES & INDUSTRY THOUGHT LEADERSHIP, KINAXIS

It's a well-known fact. There's a shortage of supply chain professionals in the job market today.⁷ To help address this issue and build a pipeline of talent for the future, it's critical for companies to foster a close relationship between academia and industry through experiential learning opportunities. Some companies like Kinaxis are currently implementing this approach to engage the next generation of supply chain leaders and build a career-ready pipeline.

[The Kinaxis Academic Program](#) sponsored the Texas Christian University's (TCU) annual supply chain case competition, culminating in teams presenting their findings to a panel of academic and industry judges and representing hands-on training in action. By partnering with one of our customers (TrinityRail) and TCU faculty, we were able to provide a real-world supply chain case

that allowed students to experience a day in the life of a supply chain planner.

Cases tackled real-world challenges related to time-sensitive decision-making, customer expectations, uncertainty and variability. For many students, including those who may be pivoting in their careers, it provided the opportunity to apply what they're learning in the classroom in a practical way. Participating in a case competition can also imply many positive attributes about a student as a job candidate. Their participation is voluntary, signaling someone who takes initiative, is highly motivated, and possesses a keen interest in a career in the field of supply chain.

Live case challenges have also grown in popularity. At the University of Ottawa's Telfer School of Management, over 65 teams consisting of more than 300 third-year students

from the school's commerce program took part in a live case competition. Students were given 72 hours to come up with a strategy for a current business problem and present innovative ideas, potential opportunities and corroborate a hypothesis for the company.

Yes, it does take work to implement such programs, but the benefits greatly outweigh the costs. Students without work experience in their field of interest now have a substantive project to talk about during their interviews, gaining a competitive advantage among their peers. For career changers who attend graduate school to shift their focus, these programs provide real-world exposure to their new field of interest.

Companies are given the opportunity to build brand awareness and credibility and identify future employees. In addition, industry professionals can develop relationships with professors doing cutting-edge research in supply chain and expose them to new ways of thinking. Overall, experiential learning is a win-win for industry and academia.



Start empowering talent excellence today

In a global market filled with ongoing change and disruption, it's more important now than ever to attract and retain the best talent to keep supply chains moving. But competition for supply chain professionals is fierce, causing many organizations to revisit talent strategies. Research highlights the need for investments in professional development and in the tools planners need to work and thrive in modern times.

Advancements in new technologies and the rise of AI/ML mean the role of supply chain practitioners is changing – not disappearing. Going forward, companies that leverage AI/ML to elevate human intangibles like communication, collaboration and relationships will be more satisfied, productive and equipped for whatever comes next.

If you're ready to start shaping the future of supply chain talent while establishing your company as an employer of choice, Kinaxis can help. We revolutionize planning by delivering the agility your team needs to make fast, confident decisions in an unpredictable world for your integrated business planning and digital supply chain. We combine human intelligence with AI and our unique concurrent planning technique so you can plan better, live better and change the world.

Advice for future supply chain leaders

When Kinaxis turned to leading brands for advice on what it takes to be a supply chain leader, here's what they shared:



"Be a leader today! As a supply chain professional, you orchestrate a communication chain to engage your counterparts, contextualize, provide feedback, bring a sense of urgency, and drive results. By exercising the gift of being a leader, you will be ready for another level of complexities across the organization in the future."

ANDRE TEIXEIRA

VP GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN, JAMIESON WELLNESS INC.



"Healthy supply chains live on relationships and the ability to build stable material value streams. It is easy to mistake a 'hard-won' negotiation purely based on unit costs as a win. Look for the win-win that stabilizes the supply stream and lowers total cost for both sides."

KELLIE WINEBRENNER

SR. DIRECTOR OPERATIONS, LEONARDO DRS



"Be open minded to collaboration and not always knowing the answers. Work together as a team to find them."

KRISTI MEYER

DIRECTOR OF GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN PLANNING, MITEK

About Kinaxis Inc.

Everyday volatility and uncertainty demand quick action. Kinaxis delivers the agility to make fast, confident decisions across integrated business planning and the digital supply chain. People can plan better, live better and change the world. Trusted by innovative brands, we combine human intelligence with AI and concurrent planning to help companies plan for any future, monitor risks and opportunities and respond at the pace of change. Powered by an extensible, cloud-based platform, Kinaxis delivers industry-proven applications so everyone can know sooner, act faster and remove waste.

Don't believe us? Ask us to prove it.

Learn more at [Kinaxis.com](https://www.kinaxis.com).



This publication is accurate as of the date published and may be updated by Kinaxis from time to time at its discretion. Copyright © 2023 Kinaxis Inc. All rights reserved. Kinaxis, the Kinaxis logo and RapidResponse are registered trademarks of Kinaxis Inc and its affiliates. All other brands and product names are trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective holders, and use of them does not imply any affiliation with or endorsement by them. 05.23

Endnotes

- 1 Gartner. (2023, May 8), Gartner Says Labor Productivity Declines Endanger Critical Supply Chain Objectives [Press release]. [Gartner Says Labor Productivity Declines Endanger Critical Supply Chain Objectives](#)
- 2 Inge Oosterhuis and Kristine Renker, “ Skilling the future supply chain workforce is easier than you think,” Accenture, 2022. [Digital Supply Chain Workforce Future | Accenture](#)
- 3 Beth Morgan and Melanie Salter, “What the Thriving Supply Professional Needs to Succeed, Survey Results 2022,” boom! Global Network, 2022. [What the Thriving Supply Chain Professional Needs to Succeed \(kinaxis.com\)](#)
- 4 “2023 MHI Annual Industry Report – The Responsible Supply Chain,” MHI, Deloitte, 2023. [2020 MHI Annual Industry Report - Embracing the Digital Mindset](#)
- 5 Marilú Destino, Julian Fischer, Daniel Müllerklein, and Vera Trautwein, “To improve your supply chain, modernize your supply-chain IT,” McKinsey & Company, February 9, 2023. [Demand forecasting in supply chain technology | McKinsey](#)
- 6 Morgan and Salter, “What the Thriving Supply Professional Needs to Succeed, Survey Results 2022.” [What the Thriving Supply Chain Professional Needs to Succeed \(kinaxis.com\)](#)
- 7 “2023 MHI Annual Industry Report – The Responsible Supply Chain.” [2020 MHI Annual Industry Report - Embracing the Digital Mindset](#)