

## Beyond the trendy Job-Title

By Hugh Williams of Hughenden

Am I being unreasonable to think that the title of Supply Chain Manager (or Director), implies that the person in this position looks after the whole Supply Chain? How is it that in many cases, *it does not do what it says on the tin*?

Whether there is a Supply Chain Manager per division, per country or just one for the business, many companies now feature such a role. Look closer though, and you find that they usually only manage one part of the Supply Chain. They may just look after Logistics, in the same way that slogans on the side of trucks tell you that the haulier company is a *Supply Chain Expert*. Have we actually given these people the responsibility that the job suggests, or have we just renamed the job, to keep up with the trend?

You do not achieve an effective Supply Chain just by appointing people with the job title. I know that is true from all the companies we see. In one case, we found well-established Supply Chain jobs, yet the main business issue was that inventory levels were too high. Either their Supply Chain people did not understand Supply Chain Best Practice, or the company did not understand it, so it did not allow its Supply Chain professionals the responsibility to do their jobs! In another case, we saw a Supply Chain Manager in charge of Planning, Forecasting and Inventory. His battle was to reduce stocks, yet Purchasing was not considered part of Supply Chain so he had no control over the waves of material that they were pumping into his chain.

Look at the number of people in your business who make decisions that affect the performance of your Supply Chain. How many of them have had formal education in the science of Supply Chain Management or Planning? Investment in people's knowledge and understanding is still woefully low. It is the first area of spend that gets cut when life gets tough, but that is precisely when you need the skill of these people.

Some forward thinking companies now have a Supply Chain Director on the Board. Yet still they are seen as junior to Sales or Operations, and they do not hold the Key Performance *levers* to enable them to make the Supply Chain as effective as possible. If the business is run on local optimization measures instead of global Supply Chain KPIs, it does not matter how many Supply Chain people you hire, you will not compete with the best.



Hughenden specialises in Supply Chain Planning and helps companies develop their Supply Chain Practitioners' skills and knowledge, whilst improving the Planning Processes. The Hughenden team offers focussed consultancy and interactive education. Its customers include Marks & Spencer, Kraft Foods, Johnson & Johnson, Nestlé, and Hallmark Cards. For more details, visit [www.hughenden.net](http://www.hughenden.net)