DURABLESCONNECT 2024

forms the bedrock of triumph for supply chain stakeholders

2nd EDITION

DURABLES 2024 CONNECT

Durables Supply Chain Conference

HIGHLIGHTS

CARGOCONNECT continues to establish new benchmarks in supply chain excellence by hosting exceptional gatherings of industry leaders. Featuring insightful panel discussions, cutting-edge presentations, and a platform for thought leaders to converge and discuss the forefront of logistics and supply chain advancements, **DURABLESCONNECT 2024** reaffirmed its status as a benchmarking industry conclave, fostering knowledge exchange and strategic discourse, all while serving as an exclusive platform for networking and collaboration among industry leaders.

The 3rd edition of this premier annual event, hosted at the vibrant Pride Plaza Hotel Aerocity in New Delhi, brought together a constellation of sector leaders, who collectively forecasted innovations and strategies poised to shape the future of the Durable Goods and Consumer Electronics Manufacturing, from assembly to final product delivery. The Speakers, recognised THOUGHT LEADERS converged to take a deeper look into planning, forecasting, procurement, and logistics, examining how these elements influence production, shipping, distribution, and delivery processes that significantly impact the broader industry landscape. Their discussions underscored the necessity for effective strategies to synchronise sourcing and stocking with modern supply chain practices and best approaches, while also exploring ways to enhance supply chain diversification and trade growth through strengthened connections and by fostering collaboration within the value chain and logistics ecosystems. The dialogues emphasised the critical role of integrated development in driving future advancements and efficiencies in the sector.

With over 150 professionals representing every facet of the supply chain landscape, DURABLESCONNECT 2024 exceeded expectations, solidifying its status as a landmark event in India's supply chain and logistics industry. The distinguished line-up of more than 35 speakers, recognised visionaries in their respective fields, provided attendees with a deep dive into the key issues impacting the value chain system. Participants, in alignment with the speakers, shared valuable insights into innovative solutions and competitive advancements, collaboratively charting a path towards operational excellence and profitability in the evolving landscape of supply chain and logistics management.

The conference featured a meticulously curated agenda with six high-impact panel discussions, each designed to explore critical aspects of the durables industry and the supply chain ecosystem. The focus was on strengthening operational resilience and leveraging the transformative potential of advanced analytics and intelligent, data-driven logistics, all propelled by technological advancements and further underscored by sustainability trends in today's landscape. Discussions centered on strategies for harnessing technology tools for improved efficiency, productivity, and agility. A key theme was the need to adapt to shifting conditions and localise sourcing, highlighting India's potential as a rapidly growing manufacturing destination for multinationals and a self-sufficient sourcing hub. Panellists also addressed the importance of developing physical infrastructure with a focus on inventory efficiency, ensuring accessibility to warehouses and distribution centres, and ultimately facilitating seamless delivery to the final customer. Additional topics included implementing a future-forward transport mix to optimise resource utilisation and create value-driven solutions, as well as aligning operations with low-carbon goals to gain a competitive edge and support critical climate targets, paving the way for a smarter, more efficient future.

The venue, **Pride Plaza Hotel Aerocity, New Delhi**, provided an ideal setting for insightful and strategic dialogues. Attendees benefited from a well-curated environment, where the ambiance and interactive sessions combined to offer a highly enriching and transformative experience.

The conference kicked-off with the opening remarks of **Surecom Media**'s **Marketing Director Ajeet Kumar**, who noted the organisation's commitment to delivering top-rated conferences to the entire industry, providing a definite context of the idea that the event was devoted to stand for the issues that would be discussed throughout the day with active contestations from the industry players, exploring avenues for collaboration, exchanging ideas, and fostering dialogue to shape up a competitive future for India's renewable energy, urban infrastructure and oil and gas projects.

Succeeding his remarks, industry leaders **Praveen Sharma**, Head– Logistics and Distribution, Godrej & Boyce Mfg. Co.; **Megha Bansal**, VP– Network Governance, Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), Dept. for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT); **Neil Dsouza**, Head of Supply Chain, Orient Electric; **Anup Shrivastava**, VP– Supply Chain Planning/Logistics and Procurement (Luminous), Schneider Electric; **Kaushik Lakshminarayanan**, Head– Logistics, Distribution and Order Fulfilment (South Asia), Kohler Co.; **Shaik Asad Parwez**, Head– Logistics and Warehousing, V-Guard Industries; **Rajesh Bhatia**, Chief Commercial Officer – India Business Development, TVS Supply Chain Solutions; **Sunil Arora**, CEO, One World One Network; **Neeraj Saini**, Supply Chain Transformation/ Project Lead– Emerging Markets, Signify Innovations India (Philips Lighting); and **Smiti Suri**, Editor and Publisher, CARGOCONNECT, gathered around to mark the auspicious beginning of the event by lighting the lamp, following the ages-old Indian tradition of showing gratitude and pleading for success.

PANEL 1

LEADING FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW: CAPABILITIES FOR A CHANGING WORLD

TAKEAWAYS

"It is vital to establish an environmental management system focussing on air and water quality, especially in industries where these resources are impacted. As supply chain professionals, we bear the moral responsibility to educate stakeholders—from management to government—about ESG, a relatively new field. Currently, only 1.25% of companies in ROC registers actively measure ESG, highlighting the need for broader awareness and implementation. We should focus on Scope 1 emissions, which are within our immediate control, and lead by example. In our organisation, we support our strategic suppliers with ESG initiatives, process control, and digitisation, resulting in significant benefits within just 24 months. Many companies in India still view compliance as merely meeting government requirements. However, with the impending implementation of the European Union Deforestation Regulation (EUDR) in July 2025, we must adapt or risk losing export opportunities. It's crucial for supply chain professionals to prioritise this issue and advocate for proactive measures."

DIPAK SUBUDHY, Head– Procurement and ISCM, Business Transformation and P&L, RR Kabel (MODERATOR)

"Operational excellence is crucial for organisations, especially regarding consumer deliverables, due to intense competition and narrow margins. It provides two main benefits: enhancing the bottom line and boosting the top line. Key aspects of operational excellence include creating dynamic capabilities that allow organisations to adapt to changing customer demands. Understanding the overall landscape is essential for designing an agile supply chain that can respond effectively to seasonal fluctuations in demand. Additionally, focussing on variability is vital, as CEOs increasingly seek flexible operations to align with sales. For instance, during recent stock shortages in the AC business, we developed dynamic capabilities to address the issue. Sustainable practices are also critical for achieving operational efficiency. Lastly, leveraging technology simplifies scalability and complexity management. Over 125 years, we have adapted our network through greenfield studies, resulting in improved service levels and reduced costs, demonstrating the effectiveness of these principles in achieving operational excellence."

PRAVEEN SHARMA, Head– Logistics and Distribution, Godrej & Boyce Mfg. Co.

"Disruption can arise from anywhere and at any time, necessitating an agile operating model supported by strong governance processes. Without effective governance, achieving agility becomes challenging. An agile operating model emphasises flexibility, allowing processes to swiftly adapt to changes in business modalities or disruptions. A key component of this model is the formation of cross-functional teams. Collaboration among different departments enhances decision-making and accelerates response times. Additionally, leveraging technology such as AI, real-time data analytics, and automation is crucial. These tools facilitate monitoring and predicting changes, enabling rapid strategic adjustments. However, agility is incomplete without a robust governance framework. Good governance ensures that changes can be rapidly defined and translated into actionable steps. In summary, effective SOPs and work instructions must be strong enough to handle anomalies promptly, ensuring organisational resilience in the face of disruption."

RITESH SRIVASTAVA, VP– Logistics, Eastman Auto & Power

"The metrics an organisation focusses on depend significantly on its stage of growth. In a startup environment, the primary emphasis should be on defining the organisation's mission and vision. Initially, growth metrics may take precedence, even at the expense of customer experience or cost efficiency. As the organisation matures, SCM functions evolve, allowing for a shift in focus towards unit economics and cost reduction. This transition necessitates clear differentiation of metrics for management and operational staff. Effective dashboards should display relevant metrics tailored to each audience; management metrics may not be useful for operators and vice versa. It's essential to understand the shop floor dynamics and segment operations for accurate measurement. For instance, at ONDC, our focus has shifted from growth metrics to fill rates and cancellation rates, both from logistics and sellers. Metrics must continually evolve alongside organisational growth to avoid confusion and ensure clarity among teams. This adaptive approach is critical for building an effective metrics framework from the ground up."

MEGHA BANSAL, VP– Network Governance, Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), DPIIT

"The competitiveness of the FMCD industry makes standardisation a game-changer. Organisations engaging with front-end customers must implement robust standardisation processes across procurement, manufacturing, warehousing, and sales. A product should be error-free upon leaving the assembly line, contributing to economies of scale and operational efficiency. In supply chain and distribution, standardisation is crucial from order processing to delivery. It involves aligning with suppliers' standardisation processes and ensuring the quality of raw materials to enhance our products. Standardisation also fosters innovation by minimising defects, allowing resources to focus on research and development. To ensure continuity and resilience, companies must implement comprehensive contingency plans. This includes diversifying suppliers, maintaining strong relationships with them, and preparing for unforeseen challenges in logistics. Additionally, cross-training employees enhances flexibility, enabling them to adapt during peak workloads or staff shortages."

ANIL PADHI, Sr Supply Chain Manager, Inalsa Home Appliances

PANEL 2 MANAGING CHANGE: A MINDSET OF CONTINUOUS EVOLUTION

TAKEAWAYS

"I represent Philips Lighting, now known as Signify, a company with over 100 years of history that became an independent entity listed on the stock exchange in 2016. This transformation has allowed us to blend the energy of a young organisation with our rich legacy, enabling us to focus specifically on lighting as our core competency. Since our independence, we have actively acquired companies, including Cooper Lighting in the US and Peer Light. During these mergers, we assess potential synergies in product portfolios and individual competencies. I'm pleased to note that one of the first areas where we realised synergies was in the supply chain function. However, I acknowledge the challenges that come with cultural integration after acquisitions. Different cultures often require some aspects to remain independent, while we emphasise consistent metrics across the organisation. Although the working styles of acquired companies may vary, our focus on unified performance metrics helps drive success in our combined efforts."

NEERAJ SAINI, Supply Chain Transformation/Project Lead– Emerging Markets, Signify Innovations India (Philips Lighting) (MODERATOR)

"Discussing change without addressing technology would be incomplete, as technology profoundly impacts our daily lives. In my organisation, we recognise the need for real-time updates in logistics, especially in our cold chain business, which ensures the safe shipping of fresh food, medicines, and critical vaccines globally. This requires precise controls and careful orchestration. To achieve this, we partnered with Amazon Web Services to develop a digital ecosystem called Linux. This platform connects trucks and shipping ports to the cloud, automating processes and monitoring internal temperatures through a specialised unit, SensiTech. This system benefits not just shippers but the entire supply chain, providing transparency and consistency. While technology may seem complex, it simplifies operations and enhances customer awareness. It's essential to leverage advanced IoT and AI solutions to solve everyday challenges, ultimately driving innovation that impacts lives. In this rapidly evolving landscape, technology remains a constant force for change."

SOMALI J SHARAN, GM– Global Supply Chain, Carrier HVAC

"The challenge is not to replace people but to inspire change within them. Importantly, as supply chain leaders, we have got to understand our team's needs better than HR or L&D. In my organisation, we emphasise continuous learning. We provide extensive training, starting from basic Excel for shop floor employees to advanced courses from institutions like IIM for top performers, which contribute to their recognition and rewards. Additionally, we run internal training programmes led by Master Black Belts, fostering participation across functions. Our Central Apply Learning Academy hosts daily knowledge-sharing sessions on Zoom, allowing senior staff to share expertise without impacting their schedules. This approach not only enhances our system but also builds a supportive environment that promotes internal advancement, resulting in the lowest attrition rate in supply chain functions over the past three years. By preparing employees for market demands and offering growth opportunities, we create a culture that values learning and development, making our organisation a talent exporter rather than a talent sink."

ANIRBAN SANYAL, Head of Supply Chain and National Logistics, Century Plyboards India

"I have been with Schneider since 18 years, during which we have acquired over 12 companies in India. Initially, we attempted to impose Schneider's culture on these organisations. However, we realised that this approach was ineffective, and we decided to preserve the existing culture rather than alter the company's DNA. A key learning from our first significant acquisition, American Power Conversion, was that we cannot simply convert an American culture into a French one. Instead, we recognised our identity as a global entity, blending influences. For our recent acquisition of L&T's panel division, we aim to retain its culture while enhancing efficiency through the Schneider Performance System (SPS), which emphasises empowering people and fostering confidence. Our approach includes guidelines rather than rigid mandates, promoting practices like employee health and safety, standard operating procedures, and inventory management. Ultimately, our goal is to enhance customer satisfaction by integrating consistent metrics that resonate with each company's unique culture."

ANUP SHRIVASTAVA, VP– Supply Chain Planning/Logistics and Procurement (Luminous), Schneider Electric

"In today's landscape, technology is crucial, but selecting the right technology for your operations remains a significant challenge. It's essential to choose a solution that is fully adopted by your team and organisation to reap the benefits. For instance, at Finolex Cables, we faced challenges with inventory management and cross-border geographical issues. To address these, we recently implemented the Theory of Constraints (TOC) across our processes—from procurement to production, and from supply to demand forecasting and inventory planning to route optimisation. This implementation has yielded remarkable results; our finished goods inventory has decreased from 72 days to 50 days, and we now have enhanced visibility across our supply chain. This means we can anticipate disruptions and take proactive measures before they escalate. Operating amidst constant disruption, it is vital for all organisations to choose the right technology to navigate these challenges effectively."

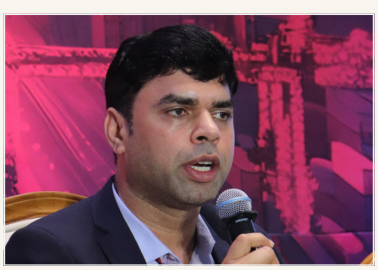
RAM NIWAS NOKHWAL, Head– Supply Chain, Finolex Cables

"Let's discuss the changing demand landscape this year, particularly in refrigeration, air conditioning, coolers, and fans. The extended heat conditions have made it a bumper year for durables. The key term here is variability; changes in demand are a business reality. Those who effectively managed these shifts gained market share. To adapt, companies need both tactical and structural changes. From a tactical perspective, it's crucial to be ready to meet customer availability. On the disruption front, recent US tariff cases have led to container shortages, highlighting the importance of proactive decision-making. Don't wait for conditions to worsen; start making tactical adjustments immediately, then move towards structural changes. Historically, supply chain professionals relied on fixed models, but disruptions have prompted a shift toward variable models. Companies are now experimenting with these models, which have always been available but underutilised. Adapting to frequent changes will require continued exploration and flexibility."

NEIL DSOUZA, Head of Supply Chain, Orient Electric

PANEL 3 BUILDING A FLEXIBLE SUPPLY CHAIN IN LOW VOLUME, HIGH MIX INDUSTRIES

TAKEAWAYS



"In a low-volume, high-mix industry, the supply chain operates on a different trajectory. Attempting to replicate models like Zepto or Swiggy Instamart, which promise delivery in 5-10 minutes, is unrealistic. Logistic costs in India remain high, accounting for double-digit percentages of GDP, unlike developed countries where these costs are in single digits. With India's nominal GDP at around US$4 trillion, logistics costs exceed US$600 billion, a significant burden. To address these challenges, we must consider strategies across all supply chain domains—planning, sourcing, manufacturing, and distribution. Optimising these areas is essential to meet customisation demands and minimum order quantity challenges while ensuring that the supply chain remains manageable and cost-effective. This approach is crucial for maintaining the sustainability of businesses. Other key takeaways include prioritising transparency, scalability, and technological support when choosing third-party warehouses. Also, it's vital to implement solutions that minimise stock-outs without accumulating excess inventory."

RAHUL GUPTA, Sr. GM and Head Purchase – Multiple Business Units (MODERATOR)

"Clear visibility of partners, orders, and forecasts is vital for timely fulfilment, especially in complex supply chains with numerous SKUs. For instance, managing 20,000 SKUs for Vatsala diesel engines demonstrated that transparency in data sharing significantly enhances efficiency and speed to market. Additionally, 3D printing is an emerging technology in India, still in its nascent stages. In mature markets, such as the aircraft industry—which uses around 100,000 parts—3D printing is becoming increasingly relevant. This technology is revolutionising logistics and fulfilment, and now being integrated into warehouses for value-added services. However, a major challenge is the lack of real-time data sharing among manufacturers and their partners, which is critical for success. As products become more complex, embracing technology and opening APIs to stakeholders is essential. While international companies often trust their partners with data sharing, many Indian firms have yet to do so. Ultimately, pure data and transparency across the supply chain are vital for success in today's complex landscape."

MANU RAJ BHALLA, Global Head– Contract Logistics and Supply Chain, Freight Systems

"We face two main challenges: high range, low volume, and demand variability. Whether in FMCD, paints, or tire industries, there are several strategies to reduce inventory and optimise service levels. First, segmenting the entire SKU base is crucial. Utilising methods like ABC classification or a 6-box/9-box model based on contribution, gross margin, and velocity can significantly enhance inventory management. Although this may seem basic, effective segmentation can drive processes from forecasting to production and replenishment strategies. Second, adapting to the nature of demand, particularly with the rise of fast delivery, complicates inventory placement. Instead of a straightforward factory, DC, and depot model, we need to differentiate inventory placement. Implementing principles like delayed differentiation and centralising storage instead of distributing it across all warehouses is essential. By employing these strategies—segmentation and effective network management—we can achieve a balance between cost and service, addressing the core challenges in our supply chains."

ANIRUDHA KARNATAKI, Head– Supply Chain and Procurement, Eureka Forbes

"Supply chain involves the interplay of demand and supply, where demand is often unconstrained, and supply is constrained. Understanding this dynamic is essential for businesses, whether they are solution providers, service providers, or manufacturers. In my role, I collaborate with various contract manufacturers. A key focus is digitalisation to manage complex supply chain flows, particularly for low-volume products. When selecting partners, it's vital they adopt a solution-oriented mind-set rather than merely acting as service providers. This approach prioritises flexibility and fosters long-term sustainability in the partnership. For example, when partnering for warehousing, I look for multi-client facilities that can adapt to seasonal demands, allowing for space optimisation. Transportation logistics also need to be synchronised with warehousing to enhance efficiency. With diverse consumer product lines—ranging from large appliances to small electrical items—each requires tailored distribution strategies. Besides, addressing reverse logistics, such as returning faulty products, is crucial."

SURYA KANTA DASH, VP– Supply Chain Head- PBG, Reliance Retail

"Segmentation is crucial for effective inventory management. Understanding the nature of customer orders—whether high volume with high average selling price (ASP) or low volume with high ASP—dictates distinct inventory strategies. First, segment your customer orders to tailor your inventory approach. From my experience at Flipkart, I learned that in scenarios with low volume and high volatility, relying solely on personnel is insufficient; investing in technology is essential. This means ensuring real-time visibility of data, including customer insights through demand management systems and robust demand planning processes that leverage AI. Moreover, all supply chain functions—sourcing, planning, and delivery—must maintain real-time visibility to prevent delays and manage lead times effectively. At Flipkart, with over 500 to 1,000 last-mile distribution centres, technology is vital for accessing inventory data across warehouses. Investing in sophisticated, system-driven processes helps define safety stock levels, reorder points, and replenishment cycles."

MEGHA PANT, Head– SNOP, Orient Electric

"Optimisation and flexibility are commonly used terms that have a profound impact on our industry. The critical challenge lies in balancing production and acquisition to ensure inventory levels are optimised, preventing excessive working capital from being tied up, while also maintaining customer satisfaction to outpace competitors. To achieve this balance, businesses can adopt two primary strategies: make-to-order and make-to-stock. It's essential to identify which components should be made to order and which can be produced in advance, ensuring that inventory remains at optimal levels. Additionally, the industry relies heavily on two key factors: customer demand, which is often unpredictable and requires customisation, and supplier relationships. Effective procurement strategies and strong supplier loyalty are crucial, as they directly influence timely deliveries and the overall satisfaction of customers. Therefore, understanding when and how much to reorder is vital in managing operations successfully."

DIPANKAR BHATTACHARYA, National Head– Logistics, VIP Industries

"To address demand variability, we can examine three fundamental structures: planning, sourcing, and delivery. At the planning level, particularly in industries like automotive spare parts, it's crucial to correlate failure rates with spare parts demand rather than relying solely on past trends or seasonality. For example, when introducing a new product, it's important to consider the potential need for spare parts due to warranty requirements. In sourcing, collaboration between sourcing and engineering teams is essential for creating modular products. This modularisation facilitates late-stage customisations, which are vital for meeting consumer expectations—especially the increasingly common demand for quick delivery, often within ten minutes. Finally, in delivery, agility encompasses more than just speed. It involves risk management and having backup plans, a lesson reinforced by the COVID-19 pandemic. To enhance agility, businesses should differentiate their delivery channels, ensuring transparency with customers regarding order expectations."

KAUSHIK LAKSHMINARAYANAN, Head– Logistics, Distribution and Order Fulfilment (South Asia), Kohler Co.

PANEL 4 TECHNOLOGY PROWESS: FROM CONCEPT TO GAME CHANGER

TAKEAWAYS

"Technological progress is not just a concept; it is a transformative force in supply chain management. Today, successful supply chain professionals must evolve from traditional roles into strategic business partners, actively contributing to business value. Embracing technology is essential for this evolution, as it enhances efficiency, improves accuracy, and accelerates speed, ultimately fostering greater business success and adaptability. Key technologies such as the Internet of Things (IoT), artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), cloud computing, automation, and robotic process automation (RPA) have become integral to modern supply chains. Many organisations have already begun implementing RPA, recognising its potential to streamline operations. Additionally, tools like big data analytics, robotics, and 3D printing are reshaping how we approach cybersecurity and procurement automation. To harness these technologies effectively, it is crucial to focus on key performance indicators (KPIs), particularly cost, quality, and delivery (QCD)."

KEYUR KOTECHA, AVP– SCM, Jio Mart Digital Reliance Retail (MODERATOR)

"Lowering costs remains a persistent challenge for procurement teams, managing 60-70% of overall expenses. To address this, organisations must shift from a transactional approach to strategic supplier relationships. Treating suppliers as business partners fosters collaboration to reduce costs and leverage technological advancements, creating products that are future-ready. Key principles for establishing strategic relationships include clear supplier segmentation. Suppliers should be classified into categories such as strategic, challenger, and transactional, allowing for tailored governance models. This ensures alignment on priorities and deliverables related to quality and lead time. Regular engagement through a steering committee facilitates accountability, while supplier reviews and joint management discussions ensure execution of agreed plans. In the face of erratic climate changes impacting demand, a strategic supplier base can adapt through just-in-time practices and vendor-managed inventories, enabling both parties to invest in technologies that enhance efficiency and responsiveness."

SAURABH GARG, Head– Logistics Planning, LG Electronics India

"The supply chain landscape is increasingly digital and tech-savvy, heavily influenced by IoT-based functions. Today, the complexity of supply chains demands digital transformation to effectively meet evolving customer demands, which have shifted from months to weeks for lead times. In the context of India's manufacturing growth, the focus is on an "India plus" strategy rather than just "China plus". IT plays a crucial role in providing visibility across the supply chain, impacting metrics like order fulfilment rates and inventory turns. From a procurement perspective, the traditional Procurement-to-Pay (P2P) cycle is evolving. Many organisations now use vendor portals for demand scheduling, deliveries, and payments, but there is still a reliance on email for aspects of sourcing. Transitioning to a source-to-contract model is essential for improving efficiency, transparency, and information sharing. Moreover, different procurement strategies can be developed through IT, enabling automation and enhancing the total cost of ownership concept, which considers price, service, payment terms, and quality."

ROHIT SOOD, Procurement and Supplier Management Leader for ECD Category, Havells India

"Consumers can be categorised into B2B and B2C segments, each requiring different approaches. When an order is placed, managing logistics effectively becomes crucial. High consumer anxiety levels necessitate clear communication throughout the ordering process, including warehousing, shipping, and delivery schedules. To meet evolving customer expectations, businesses must focus on three key areas: personalisation, ongoing communication, and timely updates. Many consumers are willing to pay higher prices for faster deliveries, highlighting the urgency in today's market. Supply chain management (SCM) is now strategic, influencing sales revenue. It's essential to understand product details and manage inventory effectively across various SKUs. Choosing the right partners is critical for efficient operations, particularly in project-based deliveries. Companies should establish solid agreements and seek partners with API integration capabilities to streamline processes and enhance delivery performance. This strategic alignment will optimise supply chains and improve overall customer satisfaction."

RAJEEV TAPARIA, AVP– SCM, Johnson Controls – Hitachi Air Conditioning India

"We currently manage over 10,000 SKUs, with approximately 6,000 related to switches. Our journey began during the pandemic, when we launched our warehouses and recognised the need for a demand forecasting system. We partnered with SS Solution to implement this. Currently, we collect and analyse historical data, including outlier events such as promotions and discounts, to inform our forecasts. We incorporate new elements like schemes and product phase-ins/outs into our forecasting process. We ensure comprehensive coverage by deploying all SKUs across various channels, including trade and projects, rather than focusing solely on A and B class SKUs. Our approach encompasses multiple business units, yielding significant benefits in inventory management. As a result, our inventory days have improved, maintaining our warehouse space at 1 million sq ft since 2018 while enhancing operational efficiency. This strategic initiative has streamlined our processes and strengthened our responsiveness to market demands."

VRIJENDRA PAL, Head of Logistics, Lead Digital Supply Chain Transformation, Panasonic Life Solutions India

PANEL 5 ELEVATING LAST-MILE DELIVERY AND WAREHOUSING TO FIRST PRIORITY

TAKEAWAYS

"Achieving supply chain efficiency, customer satisfaction, and profitability is crucial for our organisation. We aim to drive growth while managing costs, as expectations from our leadership demand high-quality service at low expenses. Technology now plays a vital role in this landscape. The emergence of data scientists allows us to analyse vast amounts of data, shifting our decision-making from intuition to data-driven insights. Automation in transport and warehouse management enhances transparency and efficiency. Sustainability is imperative; we must take immediate actions rather than waiting for distant goals. Our warehouses are designed to be sustainable, and local fulfilment centres are adapting to meet the rising demand for rapid deliveries, like those offered by e-commerce. Flexibility in delivery options is essential, catering to customers' needs for convenience. Finally, optimal warehouse sizing and the concept of pay-per-pallet positions help us manage demand fluctuations effectively, ensuring we can respond quickly to market changes."

SHAIK ASAD PARWEZ, Head– Logistics and Warehousing, V-Guard Industries (MODERATOR)

"I have 18 years of experience at HP, starting as an engineering manager, then moving to supply chain planning, and joining logistics in March 2020, a date significant for the disruptions that followed. Key logistics disruptions include natural disasters, transportation strikes, and pandemics. Effective management requires resilience, flexibility, and strong partnerships with logistics providers. For example, the 2011 flooding in Thailand disrupted hard disk production, affecting global supply. Similarly, transportation strikes in Australia stranded thousands of containers. The COVID-19 pandemic further strained supply chains, highlighting the importance of robust business continuity plans. Organisations have adopted strategies like supply chain diversification and multi-sourcing to mitigate risks. Engaging with global trade providers enhances access to networks and tracking capabilities, allowing for proactive measures during disruptions. Ultimately, cost should not be the sole criterion when negotiating with freight providers; flexibility and support are equally important."

ASHISH GUPTA, Country Head– Logistics, HP

"Today, advancements such as Warehouse Management Systems (WMS), Transportation Management Systems (TMS), and tracking technologies have transformed the supply chain landscape. With the onset of the pandemic crisis, the significance of supply chains has been amplified, prompting a greater focus on efficiency and responsiveness. For example, the concept of dark stores—strategically placed facilities for fast-moving consumer goods—has emerged. These stores rely on data collection about local consumption patterns, further demonstrating the power of AI in managing supply chains. We now understand consumer behaviour in real-time, enabling us to optimise delivery processes. Companies like Daikin have embraced technology to enhance their logistics. Our websites are integrated with Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) systems, allowing orders to reflect in warehouses instantly. This real-time visibility facilitates swift processing and delivery. As soon as an order is placed, it is marked for fulfilment within a specified timeframe, and the information is relayed to our last-mile delivery partners."

HITESH MADAAN, Associate VP and Head– SCM, Daikin Airconditioning India

"Sustainability has become a mandate for both multinational and Indian companies, driven by top management and government regulations. There's a growing need for sustainable, compliant Grade A fulfillment centres, particularly in urban areas, where redevelopment has primarily focussed on commercial and residential properties, leaving fulfilment centres behind. Historically, industrial zones in cities like Delhi and Mumbai lack modern compliance. Quick commerce has accelerated the demand for efficient urban logistics. At Horizon, we are acquiring multiple city-centric sites, investing over 800 crores to develop around 3 million sq ft of space. Key challenges include optimising small sites for efficient goods movement while accommodating diverse tenants beyond quick commerce. We aim for modular designs to ensure scalability and flexibility. Sustainability is central to our operations, involving life cycle analysis and energy-efficient practices, such as LED lighting and solar power. We also focus on waste management and tenant education to minimise environmental impact."

RK NARAYAN, President– Strategy and Business Development, Horizon Industrial Parks

"Recently, we have transitioned from conventional CFA models to 3PL models. When selecting a 3PL partner, it's essential to conduct thorough due diligence by consulting with counterparts in other industries and assessing various factors. First, evaluate the 3PL's capability to handle your specific volume requirements. As noted, many companies conduct over 50% of their business in the last week of the month, particularly in the final days. Their ability to manage such demand is crucial. Secondly, technology adaptability is vital. Modern logistics require robust systems like WMS and TMS. Relying on outdated methods, such as manual inventory checks, is no longer feasible. Flexibility is another key consideration. For instance, during month-end peaks, it's essential that the 3PL can extend operational hours to meet demands. Cost impact must also be balanced with service quality. While low prices are appealing, we must ensure that customer service remains a differentiator. Compliance with legal standards is paramount, as is maintaining safety and security measures to protect valuable inventory."

VIJAY PARIHAR, Head of Logistics, Signify Innovations India (Philips lighting)

"In the context of warehousing operations, strengthening third-party and last-mile deliveries requires eliminating unnecessary delays in processes. This involves selecting the right delivery partners based on data analysis. For example, determining which delivery partner excels in a particular geographic area is crucial. Such insights are derived from a robust flow of information, enhanced through software advancements and API integrations. These tools empower teams to analyse potential partners and assess delivery timelines. Additionally, conducting a network study is important for understanding our supply sources, warehouse locations, and customer distributions. By analysing this data, we can make informed decisions about where to establish warehouses, depots, and partnerships. With comprehensive analysis, we can strengthen our third-party delivery capabilities. It's also critical to maintain effective communication; if we experience delays, timely updates must be shared with our partners and customers. Today, the flow of information is as crucial as the flow of products."

MOHAN KANDPAL, DGM– SCM, Singer India

"Last-mile delivery is the final stage of the supply chain, akin to the last leg of a relay race, where the product reaches the customer. It represents a crucial point in the value chain, delivering the end result to the consumer. Consider the journey of a simple bottle: petroleum is sourced from the Gulf, processed into plastic granules in Jamnagar, molded into bottles, filled, and finally delivered to the customer. This extensive supply chain underscores the importance of effective last-mile delivery. In today's competitive landscape, technology plays a vital role. Businesses must leverage delivery tech to meet rising customer expectations for same-day or next-day delivery. Real-time tracking, automation, AI, and potentially drones and autonomous vehicles are essential for enhancing delivery efficiency and sustainability. Additionally, investing in the skill development of frontline workers—such as delivery personnel—is crucial for improving customer interaction and service quality. Focusing on training in this area can significantly impact overall delivery success."

KARAN SINGH, Managing Partner and Operations Head, APL Group

PANEL 6 ADAPTING FOR A GREEN ECONOMY: ADEQUATE, PREDICTABLE AND SUSTAINABLE

TAKEAWAYS

"In the past, sustainability focussed primarily on product lifecycle management. However, today, green practices are integral to sustainability, especially in light of international agreements like the Paris Agreement, which emphasises reducing carbon emissions. My previous role was with Jindal Steel and Power, where I managed an extensive end-to-end supply chain, encompassing road, rail, and maritime logistics. Meanwhile, having worked in the automotive sector, specifically at LML, I gained insights into world-class manufacturing processes. Despite my experience in steel production, I found it surprising that companies in that sector often lack the sophisticated logistics processes seen in other industries. While at LML, I managed 19,500 components for scooters and motorcycles, maintaining a just-in-time inventory system that required goods to arrive and be processed within four to five hours. As we continue to develop our industries, there is a significant opportunity for growth in consumer durable products in India. To achieve this, we must embrace advanced manufacturing techniques and enhance our supply chain strategies to support sustainability effectively."

ANIMESH GUPTA, Decision Scientist – Strategic Supply Chain Movements (MODERATOR)

"In the context of sustainability, every factory and brand has begun implementing various strategies. A significant focus is on investing in technology and innovation. Many manufacturers are upgrading to energy-efficient machinery, such as motors and blowers, to reduce energy consumption. On the supply chain side, sustainability efforts involve collaboration with suppliers and consumers. Supply chain managers are working to adopt sustainable practices not only within their own factories but also at the supplier level. This engagement is crucial for addressing Scope 3 emissions—those that occur outside of direct operational control, including emissions from suppliers and product use by customers. In terms of new product development and research and development, there is a growing emphasis on circular economy principles. Engineers are designing products with longevity, repairability, and recyclability in mind. This approach encourages reuse and reduces landfill waste, as products are designed to be maintained and refurbished rather than discarded."

HARPREET SUKHIJA, President, PICL India

"Sustainability is a broad concept typically associated with reducing carbon emissions, using clean fuels, and adopting green practices. We are also seeing the rise of electric vehicles and multimodal transportation systems that optimise logistics, such as utilising rail for long hauls and trucks for short distances. Continuous improvement can be applied universally, whether in enhancing sustainability or boosting productivity and efficiency. For instance, Lean principles focus on waste reduction; by eliminating non-value-added activities, we improve efficiency across the entire value stream, thereby supporting sustainability goals. Similarly, Six Sigma aims to improve processes, which can lead to reduced scrap and waste in manufacturing, further promoting sustainable practices. Regarding brand responsibility in sustainability, it is crucial for brands to engage not only with their factories but also to nurture their sub-suppliers. Providing guidance and incentives to factories is essential, but without equipping sub-suppliers with the necessary knowledge and resources, these efforts can fall short."

VASEEM AHAMAD, Associate Director– Logistics and Warehousing, Perfetti Van Melle

"In the consumer goods sector, I've observed that refurbished products and exchange offers often do not return to the brands but are instead managed by service agencies, which provide discounts to consumers while extracting valuable components from returned products before discarding the rest. Brands need to focus on how to reuse components from old products rather than simply offering exchange incentives. For example, a company in Europe has successfully recycled 70% of mattress waste, saving significant carbon emissions. If similar initiatives were applied in India, we could see substantial environmental benefits. Unfortunately, many brands in India offer exchange programs without committing to the necessary sustainability practices. For instance, damaged PCBs in appliances can be repaired for a fraction of the cost of replacement, yet many consumers are pushed toward unnecessary replacements, contributing to electronic waste. As we move towards a more developed economy, the market for refurbished and reused products will likely grow."

AVDHESH KUMAR PANDEY, DGM– Sourcing and NPD, Hindware Home Innovation

"Now, regarding the recycling of plastic waste: I previously worked with Sriram Chauhan during Diwali and observed a reputed tire company that sold its scrap to a furnace company. This furnace used the scrap as a catalyst for burning, raising significant environmental concerns due to harmful emissions. In Delhi, during the colder months, air quality issues escalate, leading to hazardous AQI levels that can reach alarming heights. This situation often prompts government action; for instance, the Rajasthan government penalised both the tire company and the furnace company for their harmful practices. To tackle these challenges, effective recycling strategies are crucial. Initiatives such as advanced waste segregation, investment in eco-friendly technologies, and community awareness programs can greatly enhance recycling efforts. Collaborations between industries, local governments, and environmental organisations can create comprehensive solutions to reduce pollution and promote a circular economy."

SHASHANK SRIVASTAVA, Asst. Manager– Supply Chain, Maharashtra Seamless

Smiti Suri felicitating Team Vinsum Axpress India

Smiti Suri felicitating Team Express Roadways

DURABLESCONNECT 2024 explores bold supply chain innovations to navigate emerging market dynamics

DURABLESCONNECT 2024, hosted at the Pride Plaza Hotel Aerocity, New Delhi, convened industry leaders and experts to tackle the pressing challenges and transformative opportunities within the consumer durables supply chain. The event focussed on strategies for resilience and adaptation in a rapidly changing landscape marked by disruption and variability.

Discussions highlighted the urgent need for supply chain stakeholders to transcend, emphasising the importance of leveraging big data, ensuring end-to-end visibility, and adopting agile planning. Participants explored how macroeconomic factors, ongoing geopolitical tensions, supply chain disruptions, regulatory changes, and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) mandates significantly impact today's supply chains.

To navigate these challenges, experts advocated for pursuing shorter-range suppliers and forming relevant partnerships to create a more secure network. Conversations also underscored the need for supply chain leaders to adapt to future obstacles, including climate change concerns, increasing regulatory demands, and the imperative for digital transformation.

Central to the discussions was the vital role of ESG commitments in supply chains. The need for investment in advanced robotics and automation was also highlighted as essential for enhancing operational efficiency and minimising risks. As automation plays a greater role, the event addressed the evolving dynamics of the supply chain workforce, prompting discussions about new skills and training to maximise the potential of human resources within supply chains. The conference also explored emerging trends expected to shape the industry over the next three to five years, such as the rise of distributed ledger technologies like Blockchain.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