
Foreword

As a supply management professional have you ever felt a sense of frustration over the pace of progress in your organization? Have you championed a particular initiative that you *know* will improve both operational and cost performance, only to see it wither on the bureaucratic vine? Are incremental improvements in the supply management process the best you've been able to pull off?

If the answer to all or most of these questions is yes, you need to take your actions and attitude to the next level. This book by Robert Rudzki and Robert Trent will help you do that. It lays out the tactics and strategies you can put in place to unlock the potential of supply management excellence in your business. The authors speak authoritatively not just about the existing state of supply management practices, but more importantly about the emerging practices that lead to that next level.

Rudzki and Trent are well qualified and well positioned to tell this story. Together, they bring a background of front-line practitioner expertise, consulting engagements across a range of industries, and an academic rigor to the research that informs the messages conveyed in these pages. Yes, many of the approaches they advocate are challenging and demand an intellectual and operational stretch. But in all cases they are grounded in solid principles that have been tried and tested in the real world.

To get to the next level of proficiency, supply management people need to understand accepted best practices at the current level. That's a great feature of this book—it lays out the details of techniques like strategic sourcing, supplier collaboration, and risk assessment to ensure a basic understanding of these concepts. Then it offers practical steps for elevating performance across each of these best-practice areas to move on to the next, higher level of excellence. That's a rare quality among business books these days.

A great example of this is the discussion around procurement's early involvement in capital expenditure projects. While most managers probably recognize the value of early involvement, relatively few organizations do this successfully and in a structured manner. The authors fill that gap by explaining how it's done—and as a bonus offer an insightful case study on how Alcoa fully integrates its procurement function into the capital expenditure process. The results posted by the industry leader were truly amazing, as you will learn.

In fact, solid case examples add context, color, and depth of understanding throughout the book. These are top-flight companies whose mastery of the art and science of procurement is a model to anyone in an industry. Consider Colgate's successful attack on product complexity throughout its global supply network, or Boston Scientific's supplier-oriented approach to risk management. Just as valuable are the authors' anecdotes and personal experiences drawn from their deep and diverse background.

Next Level Supply Management Excellence can, in fact, get you and your organization to the next level. It has all the information, insights, and instruction needed. But there's one more important element: You, the reader. Achieving the kinds of breakthroughs promised in these pages calls for a certain amount of boldness, courage, and a willingness to persevere. And importantly, real progress depends on breaking out of the comfort zone of doing the same things the same way.

Let's restate this a little more simply: achieving the next level of supply management excellence is all about personal leadership. Bottom line, that's the powerful underlying message of this book.

—Frank J. Quinn, Editorial Director, *Supply Chain Management Review*