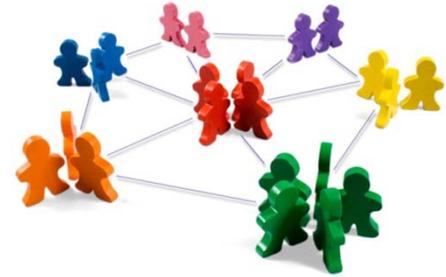


# Size Doesn't Matter: Supply Chain Efficiency is Not an Option

No matter what the size of your supply chain operation is, if you're doing business in today's complex retail ecosystem you know that things aren't "business as usual". After the 2008 economic downturn, retailers came to the realization that the supply chain of the future is not what the norm of yesteryear was.

In order to understand the primary concerns companies are facing, with respect to their supply chains, it is important to understand the key events that caused these concerns to rise. They include:



- ▶ extreme fluctuations in customer orders based on poor economic conditions in major markets and diminished consumer spending
- ▶ volatility in fuel prices and the subsequent shifts in raw material prices
- ▶ natural disasters that resulted in shipment delays and all-out breaks in some supply chains
- ▶ political unrest in countries primarily used for outsourced production

Even if your company isn't a retail giant, the need to take action to fine tune your supply chain is imperative in order to stay competitive and ensure long-term continued existence. Fortunately, there are supply chain technology solutions that can help manage volatility, mitigate risk, and remain agile enough to react to the up-and-down economy. Selecting the right technology solution is an important first step. The solution has to be able to reach down and across the organization but also span the entire length of the lifecycle from development to logistics.

Small-to-medium businesses aren't exempt from the need for technology systems that will keep their heads above water. According to a July 2011 IDC analyst report, "SMB retailers are backing up efficient and effective operations with supply chain excellence — rethinking PLM, sourcing, and distribution." Retailers and suppliers that rely on technology indicate that they have been able to speed up order cycle times, improve the percentage of "perfect orders", and minimize inventory shortages and stock outs. To achieve similar results, there are essential features you need to introduce into your company's long-range strategic plans.



## Visibility

The first quality of an efficient supply chain is visibility. Companies must leverage information across the internal and external teams to ensure seamless data exchange is created.

With the increasing shifts in the retail supply chain environment, comes the need to improve visibility to avoid late production and shipping milestones. Noted by 55% of retailers in a 2010 Aberdeen Group study, B2B data integration is a key need for retail supplier PLMs and supply chains.

ecVision Suite® provides a complete view of the product and suppliers at each stage in the lifecycle, from ideation to receipt. The ability to have all the data in one place – some through integration to external systems like PDM, ERP or TMS applications – provides improved transparency to all of the parties involved. When information—enabled by technology like the ecVision Suite® platform—becomes visible across the organization, costs are lowered, transactions run smoothly, and product flows as planned.



## Collaboration

Whether private label, branded retail or a combination of both, increased collaboration coupled with visibility is imperative. A focus on automating and integrating supplier collaboration (from raw materials procurement, purchase order process, production, and shipping schedules of factories that serve suppliers and retailers) leads to both short-term and long-term success in a multi-tier, multi-enterprise, and multi-channel retail environment. This is especially true in the case of fashion, apparel and footwear brands that depend on quick lead times, delivery schedules and end-to-end product lifecycle coordination.

Likewise, early collaborative activities with suppliers are also critical to ensure downstream activities occur as planned without costly delays in the production and shipping phases. ecVision Suite's collaboration capabilities join together sales, product development, sourcing and quality teams with suppliers. Everyone gains role-based real-time visibility into sales orders, purchase orders, production status and shipping milestones – allowing them to consolidate orders, identify bottlenecks and reduce the work effort through automation.



## Exception Management

By taking a proactive stance by tracking the movement of goods in your supply stream, you can insulate your company from disruptions related to production/shipping delays, natural disasters or other catastrophic events. This is where exception management comes into play.

The goal of exception management is to understand what's happening in the business sooner so you can take action. ecVision Suite<sup>®</sup> has the tools for centralized accountability through issue assignments and notifications. Since all workflow tasks and information are centralized in one platform the time it takes to manage the workflow is reduced. Alerts are automatically generated based on business rules, and include a preset escalation feature to ensure proper managerial oversight – enabling true “management-by-exception”. Furthermore, user-friendly “what-if” analysis tools in the ecVision Suite<sup>®</sup> provide internal teams with the capability to determine if changes are going to be necessary to meet product delivery dates.

## Reporting

Even if your organization is already recording and collecting the data you need, converting that data into knowledge and using it to influence change is difficult. Even more challenging is the ability to gain insight to prevent problems, rather than waiting for them to occur before taking action. Using the robust business intelligence tools in ecVision Suite<sup>®</sup>, companies can effectively monitor issues, measure timelines and react before links in the supply chain break.

Dashboard reports leverage enterprise data resources to present business users with clear, actionable information about current and historical performance in the context of planned or expected performance. The highly graphical, intuitive formats of these reports give users the information they need to make important business decisions gathered from financial and operational data.

## Scorecarding

Successful retailers are continually focused on driving the very best performance from each trading partner; and working collaboratively to improve execution in areas such as on-time delivery, product quality and regulatory compliance.

According to an Aberdeen Group 2011 survey of leaders and laggards in the retail space, companies with formal measurement systems (like scorecards and KPI reports) were able to improve trading partner performance results by 27%, and organizations that shared this data with

trading partners generated 61% greater improvements in performance than those who only used this information internally. This shows the importance of using scorecarding to measure and retain accomplished suppliers, not just to weed out non-performers.

Supplier management tools that are included in ecVision Suite® help companies rate and grade a supplier's ability to meet compliance standards performance across all aspects of its products and services. These tools provide a streamlined process to ensure product quality, order accuracy and production/shipment timeliness.

### **Wrapping it Up**

With more responsive supply chain technology to deal with internal and external process changes, companies can expect to see millions of dollars in savings. ecVision Suite® addresses a latent need for technology that provides the right mix of features that enable positive results. The platform offering is geared towards creating visibility, integration, collaboration and business intelligence involving all processes from product development, sourcing, supplier management, as well as shipment and compliance.

“This B2B portal has the potential to integrate the interests of all these stakeholders. Based on our analysis, this cloud-based offering further strengthens ecVision's combined PLM and supply chain execution solutions”, said Sahir Anand, VP & Principal Analyst with Aberdeen Group. “When considering other enterprise-level and best-of-breed PLM and supply chain solutions for retailers and suppliers, it is typically rare that organizations focus on product development, material management, costing, sourcing, and supply chain execution both for upstream (supplier and trading partners), and downstream (retailers) entities. Since ecVision provides an integrated platform offering covering the needs of upstream and downstream entities with a cloud-based service delivery platform capability, this company is in a pretty unique position to serve the end-to-end source to shelf needs of both retailers and suppliers.”

To explore the full range of offerings ecVision has for brands, retailers and importers of every size please visit <http://www.ecvision.com/Products/MidSizeEnterpriseSolutions.aspx>

If you are interested to learn more about Cloud-based services and the benefit for total cost of ownership, visit our Research Library to access additional information in this area.

### **About ecVision**

ecVision provides supply chain collaboration solutions for manufacturers, retailers and private label brands. ecVision Suite®, a Cloud-based platform, enables cycle time reduction, increased margins and supplier management.

ecVision Suite® differentiates from other supply chain collaboration products in two primary ways; first by focusing on collaboration during product design and development, a strategy outside of the norm for typical PLM; and the ability to reach deeper into the supply network to encompass service providers, vendors, and factories. Both business processes are supported by the platform's functionality that spans each phase of the product lifecycle from design to delivery.

To learn more about this solution, visit <http://www.ecvision.com>.

