



For AX Users:

7 Digital Trends Disrupting Supply Management

For AX Users: 7 Digital Trends **DISRUPTING** Supply Chain Management

The digital revolution is shaking up the status quo of supply chain management just as it is in every other aspect of business. Data collection and connection gives AX users the capacity to track materials and items at a level of detail unimaginable in the past.

Creative thinkers are imagining how to use that data to look deeper into the supply chain. Not only to increase visibility, reduce risk and react quickly to changing market conditions—but even to predict what could happen in order to take preventive measures.

In this eBook, we'll examine the key components of the digital capabilities that are “disrupting” the industry—using data and technology to transform supply chain management. We'll also provide an example to illustrate the potential real-world implications. Read on to glean ideas you can put to work to shake up your supply chain and disrupt your competitors.



Content

- Unified digital platforms
- Escalating customer expectations
- Data-driven supply chain
- Connecting a mobile workforce
- Analytic inventory management
- Intelligent business processes
- Tech-savvy workforce

Unified digital platforms

Managing your supply chain through systems that don't share data is like flying a plane blindfolded. You don't know what is coming next, but you do know it's likely to be disaster. Unified, cloud-based digital platforms support integrated financial and supply chain management systems for seamless data flow.

Connected data and business processes

Hybrid cloud platforms enable organizations to combine the data from on-premises and cloud systems, like Microsoft Dynamics AX and SCM (Supply Chain Management) for insight across operations. Centralized data supports:

- Visibility into supply chain interruptions so production managers can take corrective action to maintain productivity.
- Coordination of geographically dispersed operations and warehouses.
- Efficient production with dynamic scheduling that balances inventory, human and machine resources.
- Improved shipping management, including automated analysis to find the best carrier and packaging configuration for every shipment.

When choosing products and partners for your next stage of growth, look for cloud-based platforms like ERP and next-generation tools that will adapt and grow with your ever-changing business.

Pacejet

Price pressure forces fine tuning

Responding to increased pricing pressure due to global competition, an industrial equipment manufacturer decided to specialize in a higher-margin product line. To meet exacting requirements and tight deadlines, they needed to fine tune materials management and production. Connecting data—from order entry through shipping — on a cloud-based platform, they are now able to:

- Connect directly with suppliers to place orders and track delivery schedules.
- Reschedule production when incoming materials are delayed and notify each customer affected by the change.
- Schedule outbound shipments more accurately, with visibility into production scheduling.

Escalating customer expectations

Amazon has ushered in an entirely new age of customer expectations. And those expectations apply to business buyers just as much as consumers. Distributors and manufacturers looking to keep pace with logistics pacesetters have no choice but to integrate, streamline and automate.

Reach customers on their level

Outdated business management systems lack the responsive convenience that modern buyers demand. To be competitive, you need a system that dynamically integrates order entry, inventory, production and shipping information to:

- Reduce response time and improve resolution rates with centralized customer support and easily accessible self-service options.
- Support distribution partners with secure and scalable online portals to access information ranging from payment and order histories to delivery details and timelines.
- Put information in the hands of every customer-facing employee—from calling center reps to delivery drivers—to improve customer experiences.

E-commerce is still young, but it will grow by billions of dollars in the next few years. Companies have an opportunity, right now, to get in on the ground floor and position their business miles ahead of everyone else.

k-commerce

Collaboration with retail outlets

A bicycle manufacturer was notified their brand was being discontinued by one of their top national retailers. When they asked why, the retailer complained that the manufacturer's processes were outdated—they wanted to work with more collaborative suppliers.

- A centralized parts and service portal where stores could place orders, check on status and get interactive service support.
- A marketing portal which allowed the national retail marketing team to work collaboratively on promotions.
- Proactive alerts sent to stores for upcoming shipments of custom orders and parts shipments.

Data-driven supply chain

A finely tuned, profitable supply chain requires uninterrupted visibility to the data tracking the flow of materials. By bringing together insights from across the distribution network—from suppliers and external partners to customers—you can truly optimize your supply chain's performance. A commitment to harness data links corporate strategy with daily business processes to streamline and improve practices at every level.

Get the drop on disruption

Information silos cost you time and money. Your supply chain needs to operate seamlessly across multiple channels, which means you need a system that centralizes data, bridging the silos of your organization. Centralized data improves supply chain processes with:

- Custom-tailored dashboards that ensure every employee has the role-relevant data they need to make the best decisions quickly.
- More accurate forecasting based on sales and pipelines, to spot upside and downside trends and stock accordingly.
- Trace materials from vendors along to production to comply with regulations and be prepared to respond to recalls.

Don't limit your effort to replacing old tools with new. Instead, amplify your ROI by targeting the benefits of better information. In Supply Chain the opportunities are numerous, ranging from insight on production or transportation delays to improving profitability because quality issues are identified early.

Horizons International

Quick recall response averts disaster

A cosmetics distributor had to react quickly when one of their key suppliers recalled multiple products. The distributor had grown rapidly through acquisitions and recently implemented a cloud-based Microsoft Dynamics system to tie systems and data together. Through analysis of data centralized in their Microsoft Dynamics system, they were able to:

- Identify and quarantine the location of current inventory of recalled products, based on lot numbers.
- Analyze sales data to quantify the impact of the recall.
- Identify similar products and assemble a detailed forecast of the items and quantities they needed to replace.

Connecting a mobile workforce

In the age of cloud-based applications, tablets, and smartphones, your employees can work from anywhere—and your customers know it. “I’ll call you back” just won’t cut it anymore. Customers want the highest level of service without excuses and they want it fast, so you need to unlock the power of your mobile workforce to keep ahead of their needs.

Anywhere, any time

An integrated business management system makes sure your employees—in-office and in the field—have access to the exact right information at the exact right time. With a connected system, your workers can:

- Configure orders proactively for clients, boosting sales value and customer satisfaction.
- Automate manual tasks and cut costs by working across devices and platforms—be it warehouse RFID, tablets or smartphones.
- Access collaborative tools to bring together all critical documents and tap into experts within the company.

To get your products to market on time and maintain a competitive advantage, it's critical to manage documents digitally throughout the value chain, from front-line orders to back office processes.

KwikTag

Incomplete orders lose business

A pet food distributor was losing customers because a high percentage of orders were incomplete. The distributor’s warehouse pickers were using paper orders printed out from the order entry department. Pick lists were sometimes lost in transit and last-minute changes to orders weren’t reflected.

By implementing a cloud-based Microsoft Dynamics ERP system with connected supply chain management, the distributor moved to the digital age. Equipped with mobile devices, warehouse workers were able to fill orders precisely – even for last minute changes.

Analytic inventory management

Tracking inventory from purchase to production to delivery is only the start. The right analytic tools allow organizations to strategically purchase, use and position raw materials and inventory. With in-depth insights into inventory trends and movement, companies can make proactive decisions to cut costs and improve customer satisfaction.

Unlock the full potential of your business

While WMS tools like RFID tracking have become mainstream in managing inventory, the same principals apply to purchasing. Accurate tracking, counting, and labeling of inventory support an optimal balance of items in their warehouse in real time. Centralized, data-driven inventory control and planning eliminates uncertainty, allowing you to:

- Improve forecasts based on sales pipeline and buying trends.
- Optimize for space, accelerate picking or stowing and easily stage orders for pickup.
- Assure regulatory compliance with automated labeling and product-specific guidance.
- Coordinate across multiple locations to accelerate fill rates, reduce lag time and streamline costs.

The Modern Distributor must embrace the cloud and smart applications to beat the competition. Data- based forecasts and item classification are essential to replenishment, and any business that lacks inventory analytics is operating without the required visibility.

NETSTOCK

Sales trend uncovers quality issue

A small kitchen appliance manufacturer had recently implemented new cloud-based Microsoft Dynamics CRM and ERP systems, so they could better use data across the organization.

While analyzing sales pipelines, the manufacturer noted a significant decrease in planned orders of a product line that had long been a top performer. Looking for correlations in other areas, they found there had been an increase in the number of product returns to their retail outlets.

By first addressing the quality issues in production, and then running aggressive promotions with retailers, the manufacturer was able to get the product line back to it's top selling status.

Intelligent business processes

Too many businesses lose time and money to the speedbumps between departments, managers and processes. Fully connected, streamlined supply chain management allows your organization to avoid overlap and redundancies through automation and streamlined business processes.

Working out the kinks

A dynamic, unified technology platform provides all the tools necessary to manage, adapt and evolve your business. And an accessible interface with familiar applications makes it fast and easy to get employees hooked in to the new system.

Your workers can:

- Stay on time and budget with automated workflows, order tracking and predictive metrics to identify exceptions and possible problems.
- Efficiently pick up where the last department or business function handed off.
- Build on new channels like mobile or self-service to tighten relationships with business partners and clients.

Distributors have large fixed costs for Equipment, Facilities, and multiple programs for customer acquisition. Project Cost with DevExpress Integration empowers firms to understand the link between these fixed costs and operations; resulting in lower cost and more accurate pricing.

Project Cost

Automation replaces data entry

Working with hundreds of suppliers, an auto parts distributor was still using paper processes to manage accounts payables. Accounting clerks spent countless hours entering data into spreadsheets.

By using Microsoft Dynamics GP with an accounts payable solution, digital transactions have replaced paper. Streamlined processes allow the company to:

- Take full advantage of vendor discounts.
- Let accounting clerks focus on handling exceptions instead of entering data.
- Reflect accurate outstanding payables on the books.

Tech-savvy workforce

Modern employees know how important it is to work digitally. Whether it's on a call with a customer, developing a fresh proposal or tracking the last round of orders, the next generation wants detailed information with a single click. Collaboration and flexibility are their watchwords—wherever work takes them, they want to be constantly in touch and contributing.

No more grunt work

Manual data entry is a job of the past. Modern employees are looking to zero in on high-value tasks, and retaining those employees means cutting outdated, inefficient processes. By providing them with the newest technology and the fewest barriers possible, you can free your workforce up to focus on disrupting the industry and moving your company forward.

- Use team sites to manage projects across borders and time zones, sharing documents and fostering cross-company collaboration.
- Provide self-serve options like accessible administrative hubs and user-friendly reporting tools.
- Empower employees to proactively upsell, cross-sell and respond to concerns with a 360° view of customers.

Prepare a multi-department punch list of what's working with current systems, main pain points and "big idea" wish list items. Use this list to consult with and take advantage of Sierra's years of labor management experience.
Sierra Workforce

Cheers to the younger generation

To attract a younger generation of sales people, a beer distributor needed to overhaul their outside sales tools. The distributor implemented mobile-friendly SCM systems to allow sales people to:

- Check on order status, inventory and customer history from their tablet or mobile phone.
- Access promotions customers qualify for and schedule special events from the client's office.
- View scheduling, time off requests and collaborate with co-workers anywhere, anytime.

Solutions to streamline your supply chain:



Manufacturing and Quality Management software for industries that transition from process to discrete outputs in their production environments. Quality can be integrated with or independent of your source ERP and includes COA and SPC functionality.

hzs.com



k-eCommerce offers retailers, manufacturers, wholesalers and distributors a scalable, feature-rich eCommerce solution fully integrated with the Microsoft Dynamics ERP suite.

k-ecommerce.com



KwikTag leads the digital transformation market, helping organizations go paperless and gain efficiency with enterprise-wide document management and process automation directly integrated with your Dynamics ERP system.

kwiktag.com



Cut excess stock, avoid stock-outs, and create smarter purchase orders in minutes with NETSTOCK, the must-have demand planning app for Dynamics ERPs.

netstock.co



The Pacejet shipping software platform helps Dynamics 365 users grow beyond the limits of yesterday's parcel-only shipping software through a truly cloud-based solution with real-time connectivity for parcel, LTL, 3PL and other shipping services.

pacejet.com/microsoft



Project Cost is a full-featured project costing and cost accounting solution for Microsoft Dynamics AX designed to simplify workflow through intuitive cost management.

projectcost.net



Sierra is your source for bi-directional integration of Time and Attendance with labor management solutions for your Dynamics ERP. Time entry, job costing, scheduling, enhanced HR modules, access control and more!

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