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Learn from the strategies of successful supply chain leaders. Leadership, ownership and accountability



By John Hill, principal, ESYNC

October 23, 2006 (Modern Material Handling) - Winning strategies often come down to people and leadership. Here are some of the characteristics from true supply chain winners.

Visionary leadership: In the early 1970s, the bar code industry was just getting started in manufacturing and distribution. The early leaders – Computer Identics, Accu-Sort, Intermec and Symbol Technologies – were fiercely competitive. Yet executives from those four companies collaboratively supported the development of the standards that launched the automatic identification and data capture technologies so many of us take for granted. Though times were tough, their resolve never wavered.

Building ownership: One day in the mid-1980s, I was walking to lunch with the man who was about to become CEO of Rockwell when he noticed a piece of trash that had been kicked into a hallway corner. Obviously perturbed, he tossed it into a receptacle and said, "That reflects on all of us." To this day, I can't walk through a warehouse without using housekeeping as a measure of the quality of management and the organization's commitment to excellence.

Recognizing the folly of silver bullets: When you're passionate about a technology, it's hard to accept that the timing for deployment may not be right. Convinced that bar coding was the secret to improving throughput, Schurman Fine Papers was moving ahead quickly when the vice president of operations suggested stepping back and rethinking the company's approach to order picking before implementation. Two months later, with a newly configured forward pick area, he nearly doubled throughput with no increase in labor. Following further layout changes and process fine-tuning, the company's introduction of bar coding and a WMS took throughput to even higher levels.

Proactive trading partner collaboration: In the late 1980s, Intel implemented a bar code system to streamline receiving and distribution of inbound components from the Far East. While the concept worked on paper, in reality the system was faltering because of the sub-par quality of the bar code labels printed by their suppliers. Solution? Rather than scuttle the program, Intel took the initiative by producing and sending verified bar code labels with purchase orders to the suppliers.

Accountability: Finally, each of these companies share a willingness to accept responsibility and hold themselves accountable for results.

About Auto ID Solutions

Auto ID Solutions is a leading provider of linear and 2D bar code quality tools, providing in-house and on-site NIST traceable calibration and repairs, ISO/ANSI standards interpretation, staff training, and auto identification/bar code quality seminars. They are the only company offering NIST calibration and who tests every verifier to ensure conformance with ISO15426-1 (Bar Code Verifier Conformance Specifications). Headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Auto ID Solutions offers outstanding technical support with dependable delivery and quality. For more information, visit the Auto ID Solutions website at www.autoidsolutions.net.

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