

UT global supply chain institute finding: Talented managers are companies' key competitive advantage

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The recruitment and development of talented supply chain managers is key to creating a long-term competitive advantage, according to the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Global Supply Chain Institute advisory board.

Senior supply chain executives from twenty-one leading global companies recently met in Atlanta for the board's first face-to-face meeting to discuss key supply chain issues. Previous meetings were conducted virtually.

The executives agreed that, when hiring, they look for supply chain professionals with the following skill sets and competencies:

- Strong critical thinking and data analysis skills
- The ability to translate process improvements into the financial language of the executive suite, the boardroom, and the balance sheet
- Six-sigma green belt training, which is highly valued
- An understanding of how to apply lean to the entire supply chain and use value stream mapping
- An ability to interact appropriately with customers

While they seek to hire people with these skills sets, often they must train them either through internal or university-based programs.

“Many supply chain managers don’t know how to speak the language of the financial community,” said Paul Trueax, vice president, North America customer service and logistics, for Colgate-Palmolive. “It’s important to know how to translate process improvements to the financial statements.”

Other board member observations included:

-- The supply chain involves all activities from getting the order to making the sale, including the flow of information and materials, manufacturing, cash flow, etc. To be successful, supply chain talent must be proficient in all of these areas.

-- The war for talent is being fought on a global scale, with companies in Asia and Latin America now competing on an equal if not superior footing to US companies. This creates a need for supply chain managers with a broader, more global skill set.

“Tremendous growth opportunities in Asia are fueling companies to move more of their leadership to Asia, including their headquarter operations,” said Daniel Myers, executive vice president of supply chain for Kraft Foods.

The unique curriculum of UT’s new [global supply chain](#) executive MBA, which includes two residence periods in Europe and Asia, was seen as a potential resource for the development of this group’s high-potential supply chain managers.

More information: www.globalsupplychaininstitute.utk.edu/

Provided by University of Tennessee, Knoxville

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