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IMPLEMENTATION: A LEADER'S GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTING SUPPLY CHAIN
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DAWN GROSSENBACHER

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Abstract

This research paper examines customer relationship management in supply chains, and the role leadership has to encourage productive behavior. While other studies focus on traditional productivity factors, this paper places emphasis on existing productivity factors such as time and cost, but this study emphasizes the need for establishing trust, building relationships, and encouraging open communications so that effective change management techniques will transpire in conjunction with CRM implementation. The behavioral aspect of this research paper helps researchers get a better understanding of essential interactions during collaborative exercises that will enhance customer relationships and improve organizational effectiveness for supply chains.

Introduction Statement of the Problem

The topic of this paper will focus on leadership as it relates to customer relationship management (CRM) and its role in technology. Leadership within organizations comprise of employees from cross-functional departmental areas in various hierarchical levels. A major problem concerning CRM implementation is that management needs to understand it is not a standalone resolution that solves problems. Instead, CRM is an instrument that requires a strategy to implement. In addition, considerable follow-up is crucial for successful results.

As supply chain management becomes more complex globally, supply chain leaders must focus on activities that establish trust, encourage open communication, and promote knowledge sharing. Customer relationship management involves cross-functional processes, continuous dialogue with customers, extensive communication, along with increasing customer retention and effectiveness of marketing initiatives (Chun-Hsien, Tasi, & Chu-Ling, 2010). The problem is that many companies implement CRM without a strategic plan and adequate communication involving personnel. Risks in customer relationship management can evolve if supply chain leaders do not adequately plan to address supply network design, customer integration implementation, or any other large organizational changes (Danese & Romano, 2013). Reducing the possibility of nervousness in customer integration can result in amplified positive effects on efficiency through communication and involvement with stakeholders (Danese & Romano, 2013).

According to Bag (2014), sustainable supply chain literature discloses links between different concepts such as ethics, culture, and trust, but does not include much

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information about organizational experiences. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to add to the research that explores the crossing point between leadership and supply chain management. As the global economy changes rapidly, leaders need to focus on multiple factors that contribute to performance. Task oriented metrics is only one component of supply chain performance. Leaders also must pay attention to behavior involving clarification of needs, effective planning techniques, monitoring operations, and problem solving (Bag, 2014). Communication, training, and follow-up become crucial elements for leaders who want to adapt to change by taking the customers and employees' perspectives into consideration throughout every supply chain activity.

Empowering employees offers limitless opportunities for people to learn and grow professionally and personally. Communication and networking are essential practices in a global economy, which is why encouraging innovation is ideal in the supply chain context (Bag, 2014). Bag's (2014) sustainability research supports the theory that empowering junior managers and employees will facilitate supply chain management practices. When leaders understand behaviors, they can influence people and teams within the supply chain, which is critical to favorable performance outcomes (Bag, 2014).

Throughout this paper, readers will have the opportunity to evaluate the importance of communication and relevance of leadership as they relate to supply chain management. Establishing trust amongst people within supply chains improves the likeliness of communication and knowledge sharing, which is essential in a global economy that technology is driving with rapid changes and numerous innovations. If one link fails within a supply chain, the problem jeopardizes the entire organizational structure and reputation of the business and

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people within its affiliation. Therefore, recognizing the importance of customer relationship management and understanding techniques to solidify connections is necessary for fundamental everyday business activities as well as long-term growth and sustainability.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to revisit the importance of effective change management practices when implementing CRM. Successful CRM implementation depends more on strategy than the amount companies spend on technology (Rigby et al., 2002, p. 106). Many managers overlook valid reasons for CRM or fail to implement a strategy thinking the technology itself will solve the workplace problems. Exploring various examples of CRM implementation will allow readers to become more familiar with common procedures to acquire a better understanding of why a strategy does not always accompany CRM technology. Furthermore, readers will also increase their awareness of the importance of strategy and communication when implementing CRM to encourage positive change whenever opportunities surface to make use of this information.

Rigby and Ledingham (2004) suggest determining the following key criteria when developing a strategy for new CRM technology:

- How good is the information?
- How is this information useful?
- What are the costs with respect to training, information dissemination, and implementation?
- What results matter most?
- Where do we go from here (p. 127-128)?

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This study will place the most emphasis on determining how to make CRM useful, challenge readers to think about implementation methods, and reiterate the significance of communication, training, and follow-up conversations throughout the process. As organizational changes become necessary, acknowledging the relevance of communication, training, and follow-up remain useful steps to effective change management for many if not all situations.

Evaluating Communication in Supply Chain Management

The thought process behind evaluating communication is simple, but becomes complex when incorporating aspects of task uncertainty, various risks, and ensuring interaction gaps do not exist within the supply chain structure. When solid relationships exist within the supply chain structure, cross-functional personnel offer information concerning customer attitudes, purchasing activity patterns, and consumer trends (Agarwal, & Singh, 2014). Communication leads to collaboration for effective decision making, because employees are more likely to take ownership of performance outcomes when empowered to voice their perspectives and make choices. In an Indian Automobile sector, results from exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses illustrate that five essential performance factors are satisfaction, trust, relational communication, collaboration, and environmental factors (Agarwal, & Singh, 2014). All of these factors are interrelated and applicable to supply chain performance.

For the purpose of this paper, trust and communication will be the primary focal points, because they enhance collaboration and provide employees the ammunition to manage environmental factors and overall satisfaction within the supply chain. According to Agarwal and Singh (2014), trust involves expression of confidence, presence of trust to become responsible and accountable towards everyday practices, and reliance for responsiveness. Human

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nature appreciates trust and reliance in common interactions. Hence, it makes sense that these are critical factors that become valuable when establishing professional partnerships and collaborating towards achieving long-term sustainability.

Relevance of Leadership in Supply Chain Management

Acknowledging the relevance of leadership in CRM practices in supply chain management is necessary due to the integration of cross-functional activities. Leaders must establish relationships and trust within the supply chain for successful interactions when carrying out everyday activities. This behavior includes being responsive to the needs of others and adapting to change. Thomas, Defee, et al. (2011) asked managers what they would do with a “magic wand” in attempt to get meaningful answers to relevant supply chain issues from practitioners. The top five themes resulting from the research done by Thomas, Defee, et al. (2011) are as follows:

1. Supply chain structure: Define roles and responsibilities.
2. Communication and information exchange
3. Information technology is imperative to obtain accurate and timely data.
4. Forecasting, Sales and Operations (S&OP) planning is important to integrate supply and demand.
5. Leadership and strategy: Need effective leaders with a plan to execute strategy.

CRM is the solution to help reconcile supply chain structure, because communication is necessary to define roles and responsibilities. More specifically, communication and information exchange enhance relationships, which is useful when working towards establishing and maintaining supply chain connections. Exchanging information is crucial in supply chain

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interactions where changes happen quickly, which makes knowledge sharing an important aspect of CRM. Information technology assists in obtaining accurate and timely data to share throughout the supply chain. Forecasting and S&OP planning is necessary to integrate supply and demand. Establishing trust, communicating, networking, and sharing knowledge are elements within CRM that enable successful supply chain strategy. Leaders within supply chains need to collaborate with cross-functional teams to develop a plan and execute it successfully.

There is a clear disconnect between what managers find relevant and academics provide through research (Thomas, Defee, et al., 2011). Organizations that develop efficient and effective supply chains will have a distinct advantage over competitors that lack the ability to recognize needs for effective CRM and work through issues (Thomas, Defee, et al., 2011). Additional insight to the impact of sales and operation planning and interdisciplinary departments such as human resources may shed light to various CRM problems. Furthermore, learning more about shared contributors to success and problems in CRM will also help uncover opportunities for improvement. This theory also promotes the importance of collaboration in supply chains. Working together is critical to successful supply chain activities, because communicating will only help to an extent when employees function with the silo mentality and place too much emphasis on their departmental contribution to a situation. Establishing and implementing a CRM strategy in supply chains benefits personnel, because the objective is to improve relationships.

Another area worth emphasizing in supply chain communications and collaboration is the favorable impact of information communication technology (ICT) in CRM. According to Deraman, Salleh, et al., 2012), ICT infrastructure is a double-edged sword that facilitates and

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impedes CRM implementation within a supply chain system in the construction industry.

Although ICT is an enabler, having effective leaders is necessary to facilitate communications, encourage collaboration, teach participants new practices, and follow-up with them accordingly to ensure everyone understands the changes. Deraman, Salleh, et al. (2012) relate that previous research indicates coordination of business process improve productivity and reduce problematic conditions such as high cycle times and the bullwhip effect. Scholars and industry practitioners perceive ICT systems as a key driver for multiple process improvements within the construction industry (Deraman, Salleh, et al., 2012). The results of their research can be applied other industries based on existing perception that technology can fix anything. Even though technology can enable better processes and improve various supply chain activities, leaders need to facilitate the process. More specifically, leaders must establish trust, build relationships, make use of change management, communicate, and be observant of individual requests and situational variations.

When exploring the positive aspects of a theory, it becomes necessary to research potential obstacles to understand the likeliness of them happening, and to strategize plans to minimize risk. Deraman, Saleh, et al., (2012) suggest numerous barriers of ICT as follows: High Intra-organizational IT maturity; network stability; standardized project management process; need to reengineer business practices; knowledge capability; recognized quantifiable methods to measure time and cost of information systems; people issues (education & training); legal and contractual issues (p. 2407). Their findings reiterate the theme of this paper, which is the importance of communication, effective leadership, knowledge sharing, teaching employees, and following up to ensure needs are met. CRM and ICT are enablers for successful supply chain

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management, but both require leaders to promote productive practices (Deraman, Saleh, et al., 2012). In other words, neither CRM nor ICT are magical solutions to existing problems. They require successful implementation and follow through driven by a strategy and adhering to plans.

The concept of incorporating technology captures the interest of people, because society teaches us to believe that technological advancements will make our lives better regardless of a learning curve. In many instances, this statement is true. However, there is a time and place for everything. Besides that, purpose is necessary to fulfill the results that management anticipates for effective CRM in supply chains. Defining a CRM strategy and adhering to plans become essential as time goes on, because when one part of the supply chain fails, everyone else affiliated with the situation feels an impact too. Integrating processes and practices makes sense in supply chain activities due to the cross-functional nature of them.

In the next section, readers will investigate the significance and implication by this paper by learning more about customer relationship management in the workplace. Trial and error reiterates the importance of trust, open communication, and knowledge sharing. There are always lessons to learn through practice, because even failure brings an opportunity to acquire new knowledge. The concept of standardized practices is useful in supply chain activities, but leaders must be ready for change, willing to adapt, and responsive to all participants' needs within the supply chain. Everyone serves a purpose and has specialized insight to share, which helps processes improve. Long-term growth and sustainability require several adjustments and improvement to strategy. Communication and collaboration enhances the outlook of change and adaptation when the corporate culture embraces such practices.

Significance and Implication of the Study

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Implementing new technology or any other change can be devastating for a company that does not incorporate a strategic plan into the process. Focusing on communication, training, and follow-up discussions highlight key steps to successful change implementation. The significance of this study is to address CRM implementation in supply chains. Management needs to create trust in supply chain communications by creating an open environment that encourages team members to share ideas and provide constructive feedback. Openness enhances communication with respect to tasks and relationships (Verma, 1996). If people feel “in” on activities, they are likely to become more involved and productive (Evans & Lindsay, 2008). Acquiring employee buy-in is crucial to ensuring they are aware of the change, have an opportunity to provide input, agree to it, and working towards successful application.

Customer Relationship Management Implementation in Supply Chains

Information communication technology is useful to minimize supply chain risks, because it enables personnel to operate with timely information that improves communication and coordination (Tang & Zimmerman, 2013). Supply chain personnel can use information to their advantage by monitoring and enforcing ethical behavior of all suppliers to encourage productive CRM behavior. Enforcing ethics in communication technology is critical in a multi-tier supply chain, because it take only one unethical supplier to create an information technology breach (Tang & Zimmerman, 2013, p. 28). Focusing on communication, training, and follow-up discussions highlight key steps to successful change implementation that become necessary when establishing customer relationships and maintaining them long-term. Strong customer relationships and effective CRM can eventually lead to alliances that strengthen organizations when working together towards a common goal. This section reinforces the relevance of building

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trust, communicating, and sharing knowledge, which improves cross-functional operations throughout the customer relationship lifecycle that include training and necessitates follow-up discussions. Following up with personnel ensures understanding whenever change occurs and provides the opportunity for feedback and improvements to occur, which is why these factors are important in customer relationship management and supply chains.

Customer relationship management is a complex process that helps personnel when managing consumer interactions and data in supply chains throughout the customer lifecycle. Supply chain management is a discipline that involves numerous interrelated activities within cross-functional departmental areas. Due to organizational fragmentation, effective CRM is important in supply chains to build trust and encourage open communication to minimize risks. Supply chain personnel focus on improving customer relationships, increasing customer retention, and planning long-term sustainability. In order to meet these goals, communication is essential in collaboration so that teams work together as one cross-functional unit. Aligning strategy and goals enables supply chain personnel to help one another to enhance performance and make decisions with the customers' best interest in mind.

Supply chain personnel should be familiar with their suppliers, their suppliers' suppliers when establishing, and developing CRM strategy. Communication is the key factor in ensuring strategy and goals remain in alignment throughout the supply chain, improve customer relationships, and increase productive interactions. Ethical behavior and quality should be key factors in alignment throughout the supply chain. Although cost and speed are also relevant customer satisfaction factors, communicating the message that ethical behavior and quality supersede those factors is critical for suppliers to remain competitive short-term and long-term.

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Standardizing communications and operational practices is helpful so that personnel know whom to contact whenever they become uncertain during everyday activities, which is a useful step in strategic CRM planning. Offering supply chain personnel incentives to discourage unethical behavior is also beneficial, because it provides opportunities for recognition and professional growth (Tang & Zimmerman, 2013). In other words, this behavior creates positive energy that enhances customer relationships and performance.

Incorporating organizational theory is relevant to develop the integration of supply chain management and information communication technology (ICT), because managing customers' interactions and data throughout the customer lifecycle is necessary for sustainability and long-term growth. According to van Donk (2008), the relationship and integration of supply chain management and information communication technology in all of the research papers useful for their study reflect a specific concern about how these factors intertwine with managerial and organizational theory related problems. Implementing better organizational and managerial insights to increase ICT usage in supply chains is a necessary strategy to plan activities. Our constantly changing technological society necessitates a fast flow of information and expects quick responsiveness to all details. Van Donk (2008) relates additional research on the integration of ICT in supply chains is important due to the minimal information available regarding relationships between these two factors. The concept of learning more to improve complex processes such as ICT in supply chains make sense since there are always ways to improve and change environments for the better.

Trust, Open Communication, and Knowledge Sharing

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Trust is a necessary element in building relationships that includes open communication and knowledge sharing. CRM requires trust, communication, and knowledge sharing when implementing practices and technologies. CRM strategies, management, analysis, tracking, and monitoring require cross-functional communication for all of these activities to happen successfully. Supply chain activity is complex with many cross-functional operations. Improving capabilities requires a continuous learning process, which takes account of mutual learning through knowledge sharing between various supply chain personnel (Wang, et al., 2008). Taking a proactive approach to learning with the intent of increasing competence amongst supply chain personnel is the foundation for maintaining relevance in a constantly changing work environment. Continuous learning is applicable to CRM due to continuous changes that occur in everyday activities.

Case-based reasoning (CBR) is the primary approach for development of a knowledge-sharing model for supply chain personnel, which involves integration with supply chain practices (Wang, et al., 2008, p. 151). More specifically, CBR consists of problem solving and continuous learning that functions from human memory and experience as the knowledge source (Wang, et al., 2008). CBR is a viable option for CRM strategy, because the process references lessons learned as a method for improving business relationships with customers, improving sales, and retaining loyal patrons.

Research by Ambrose et al. (2008) shows a relationship between development frameworks that is influential in communication media selection in two purchasing contracts. This proves that supplier selection has a resultant impact of communication needs, the stage of relationship development, and the purchasing context (Ambrose et al., 2008). In addition, this

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research reiterates the importance of communication, trust, satisfaction, commitment, relationship maturity, power, and dependence (Ambrose et al., 2008). Supply chain personnel should focus on each of the seven factors to collaborate for improvements and learn from previous issues when developing CRM strategy. Ambrose et al. (2008) conclude in their research interaction that takes place specifically between the buyer and supplier strengthens the relationship, which supports the benefit of implementing the seven factors in CRM. Therefore, as phases progress, the level of information sharing, quality of communications, extent of information sharing, and collaboration increases (Ambrose et al, 2008).

Throughout this study the importance of communication surfaces, which is why it is relevant to mention information communication technology has the tendency to increase costs. The brief increase in cost is worth the financial change and time personnel spend, because it is a necessary element in effective supply chain management and information communication technology. Globally competitive situations require a considerable amount of communication, and become vital as customer relationships mature to withstand the test of time and remain competitive (Ambrose et al, 2008).

Product and service relationships encounter different communication media specifically from the buyer and supplier perspectives (Ambrose et al., 2008). In product situations, the buyers facilitate relationships, direct activities, and influence communications (Ambrose et al., 2008). More specifically, buyers use e-mail to reduce uncertainty in customer relationships that do not have any negative undertones (Ambrose et al., 2008, p. 374). In service purchasing scenarios, supply chain personnel view the buyers as exterior elements in the ongoing management of relationships, because internal managers play a more central role (Ambrose et al, 2008). The

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majority of existing literatures revolves around a two-way exchange between the supplier and buyer where the latter appreciates e-mail and telephone communications (Ambrose et al., 2008). The message buyers attempt to relate is they have control over the situation and relationship while also placing emphasis on reducing uncertainty to complete transactions and meet everyone's needs within the supply chain (Ambrose et al, 2008, p. 374).

Ambrose et al. (2008) confirm their research supports the theory that rich media are essential conduits for learning and knowledge transfer within supply chain networks (p. 374). This type of media transmits complex knowledge and supports routine problem solving (Ambrose et al., 2008). The media choice becomes less rich as relationships transpire from ambiguous to those of increasing familiarity, which means telephone and e-mail communications may become sufficient at that point (Ambrose et al., 2008). In product purchasing situations, the buyer is a central point influencing the communication media choice and may prefer information communications on the telephone (Ambrose et al, 2008). However, in service relationships, the buyer is less central and may request more engagement due to the ambiguity of the situation (Ambrose et al., 2008). Ambrose et al. (2008) concludes their research finding with thoughts that communication media influence happens as a result from the stage of the relationship development in addition to whether the buyer is purchasing products or services. Conflict resolution is an existential circumstance where the selection of communication media may change based on the situation and needs of personnel. Overall, policies such as buyer rotation have a disruptive effect on customer relationships, which is why encouraging a renewal phase is necessary when employee turnover occurs (Ambrose et al., 2008, p. 376).

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Knowledge sharing is a key enhancer of supply chain performance (Cai et al., 2013). However, knowledge sharing does not happen easily or automatically. The process requires trust and communication in an empowering situation where personnel are comfortable with offering ideas and input to supply chain concepts. Knowledge sharing is applicable in customer relationship management too, because this process also requires trust and communication. Cai et al, (2013) suggest trust and power are two central precursors for knowledge sharing between a buyer and supplier. Specific attention to technical exchange and technology transfer is significant to remember due to the need for real-time information and quick responsive feedback (Cai et al., (2013).

According to Cai et al. (2013), they confirm knowledge sharing is an important factor in determining supply chain performance in a collaborative network. Commitment-trust theory and resource-dependence theory is relevant in supply chains, because trust and power are key elements during purchasing activities. Trust and power have differential impacts on knowledge sharing especially with technical exchange and technology transfer (Cai et al., 2013, p. 2061). Therefore, it is pertinent to take a proactive approach to enhance knowledge sharing, because their data analyses show that power also plays a role in knowledge sharing behavior (Cai et al., 2013).

Although knowledge sharing does not come easily or automatically, creating the best environment for personnel to communicate and offer input is necessary for short-term and long-term growth for supply chains to remain competitive. Furthermore, creative and empowering environments enhance knowledge sharing, which may improve performance (Cai et al., 2013). Personnel should be ready for knowledge sharing at the corporate level and supply chain level,

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because each departmental area has the potential to influence the next (Cai et al., 2013).

Personnel should never ignore trust-building opportunities especially when doing business in Asia, because Asian suppliers are more often than not also supplying to their competition (Cai et al., 2013). Personnel should recognize the differences between technical exchange and technology transfer to emphasize different strategies when sharing knowledge in different situations (Cai et al., 2013). Personnel will notice significant benefits when making conscious and proactive steps to managing knowledge sharing within supply chains (Cai et al., 2013, p. 2072).

Lessons Learned

The objective in supply chain management is to remain competitive. Customer relationship management enables personnel throughout the supply chain to communicate, interact, offer feedback, manage change, and minimize risk. Assessing company performance by benchmarking presents an opportunity for supply chain personnel to understand the complexity concerning strategy and performance within that organizational structure (Sarode & Khodke, 2009).

Digitization is in competitive environments such as business, supply chains, research, science, and education. As the environment changes how people process and store CRM data, leaders must maintain awareness of the dangers from this technology and be ready to implement risk management plans (Mazareanu, 2013). The development of information and communication technologies invites hackers and attacks, which will evolve into various other problems (Mazareanu, 2013). Therefore, recognizing changes and managing control measures is another way to direct attention towards customer relationship management in supply chains from a data

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tracking perspective. Concerning data tracking, moving average (MA), autoregressive integrated MA and smoothing spline are forecasting techniques useful for time series data (Hwang & Lee, 2014). Automating data enables users to enter data and view it in real-time while it also giving personnel across the supply chain access to raise issues or make changes quickly.

Distribution channels are essential in business structures similar to other processes, because if a product does not reach the end customer, then the business does not have purpose (Agarwal & Singh, 2014). According to Agarwal and Singh (2014), their research supports the relevance of communication, collaboration, and attention towards environmental factors in supply chain management. Information communication technology enhances customer relationship management, which is indispensable in supply chain functions. The interaction in supply chains is extensive amongst cross-functional departments, which reinforces the importance of communication and collaboration during ongoing changes that last throughout the customer lifecycle.

Hilt (2011) suggests more cross-fertilization between strategic management and supply chain management would be beneficial for supply chains as they incorporate effective customer relationship management. In other words, integrating strategic management with supply chain management would benefit both fields. Effective customer relationship management would also benefit from change management techniques to encourage transformational leadership throughout the supply chain.

According to Li and Jiang (2013), supply chain personnel should extrapolate the foundation of CRM from individual enterprises to the entire supply chain. This means the interrelated functions within supply chains will benefit when effective CRM happens throughout

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the organization to overcome isolation of external information and place emphasis on multidimensional two-way communications and information sharing. In addition, cooperative alliances generate productive activity with the supply chain network that may enhance quick responses for the customers (Li & Jiang, 2013). Minimizing cost is also another potential benefit when aligning strategy, because reach extends to both internal and external operations and resources (Li & Jiang, 2013).

Identifying and focusing on the driving organizational force is helpful when aligning strategy and enhancing communications to improve productivity within supply chains.

Maximizing business and customer value happens because of abiding by knowledge sharing principles in supply chain environments (Li & Jiang, 2013). Personnel should look through the supply chain from the eyes of the customers to reconstruct operations by adding value to enlarge markets, satisfy requirements, and share information (Li & Jiang, 2013). Transformational horizontal integration of supply chain management derives from evaluation of unconventional resources (Li & Jiang, 2013).

Customer relationship management is an honorable “password” personnel in organizations use to win competition in the 21st century (Li & Jiang, 2013). Now that relationships are closer than ever, the foundation of carrying out customer relationship management is vital to successful supply chain management (Li & Jiang, 2013). Collaboration amongst organizations within supply chains will help maximize cost reduction opportunities and increase customers’ loyalty, which is essential for businesses to remain competitive (Li & Jiang, 2013).

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Danese and Romano (2013) conclude from their research that supply chain personnel must investigate environmental conditions and customers' needs prior to implementing changes. For instance, before implementing a customer integration program, personnel should assess the supply chain structure, because adopting customer integration practices will not also guaranty improvement to efficiency (Danese & Romano, 2013). In scenarios concerning long lead times, complementing customer integration practices with actions targeting a faster supply chain structure in a slow supply network could amplify problems and offset efficiency benefits (Danese & Romano, 2013). Even short lead-time situations require appropriate research prior to implementing changes in conjunction with adequate training and follow-up to avoid miscommunication and failure. In other words, a good idea is not a one-size-fits-all answer to every problem.

Information communication technology has a positive effect on supply chain performance either directly or indirectly through supply chain management depending on the situation (Zhang et al., 2011). The integration of information communication technology, supply chain management, and supply performance are specific opportunities to make use of transformational leadership in customer relationship management. Many leadership theories apply to supply chain management due to the integrative nature of this process. Customer relationship management is integrative also, which is why communication is crucial for effective performance in this method as well. Exploring how information communication technology can improve supply chain performance offers chances to enhance customer relations and increase customer satisfaction.

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Much of the available research regarding information communication technology focuses on direct-refereed relationships while ignoring the complementary effect of information communication technology and supply chain management (Zhang et al., 2011, p. 1234). A positive effect on performance can occur regardless of what type of information communication technology and supply chain technique personnel use of the performance measure considered (Zhang et al., 2011, p. 1234). Unfortunately, at this time a comprehensive view on why and how information communication technology attributes to supply chain performance is not available (Zhang et al., 2011).

The next section explores research contributions as they relate to CRM implementation in supply chains. Understanding the role of leadership and recognizing gaps in research will offer insight and lead to new questions for future research. Constantly changing supply chains in global environments will require ongoing review and assessment of expectations and strategies to maintain a competitive edge over competitors.

Research Contributions

The research contributions throughout this study are vast ranging from the relevance of scholarly rigor and purpose to various CRM ideas and insights that lay the foundation of how supply chain management fits into business research. The theme of this study reinforces the significance of establishing trust, building relationships, and keeping communication open to ensure supply chain personnel have the opportunity to work together effectively. Customer relationship management is another area of complexity as it relates to supply chains, because trust and communication is critical to acquire and maintain relationships. The overall functionality of supply chains and customer relationships become prevalent as time goes on

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when remaining competitive and sustainable as changes happen over time. Technology drives change, and customer relationship management is necessary to communicate different approaches, train supply chain personnel, and follow up with appropriate action to solidify newfound knowledge.

Customer Relationship Management Implementation in Supply Chain Management

CRM implementation in supply chain management requires considerable observation to requirements, research, and feedback from supply chain personnel, training, and follow-up so that the outcome meets the purpose. A paradigm shift between customer relationship management to stakeholder relationship management systems where integration of buyer and seller databases exists to develop solutions for the entire supply chain instead of single entities (Tokman & Beitelspacher, 2011). Supply chain personnel must work together aligned on strategic initiatives achieves a common goal. Establishing trust helps promote an environment where personnel feel confident when sharing ideas and providing feedback. Furthermore, supply chain personnel need to be involved throughout exploratory change processes in conjunction with actual changes, because their feedback is crucial for successful implementation and sustainability. Every change effects the entire supply chain, which reiterates the relevance of communication and feedback. Supply chain personnel should understand why changes happen and be ready to alter their activities accordingly.

Role of Leadership

The role of leadership in supply chains is necessary for effective customer relationship management. Leading with the best of intentions is a step in the right direction, but successful outcomes require knowledge leaders who take the time to investigate and communicate with

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supply chain personnel. Customer relationship management and supply chains involve integration of activities, which is why investigating the current situation, interacting with supply chain personnel, listening to needs, and strategizing as a team is crucial to finding positive alternatives from current processes. Leading with knowledge and enthusiasm is beneficial for supply chain personnel, because this behavior will extend to the customer relationship activities. Engagement in roles and specific responsibilities encourages employee ownership throughout the implementation of a change. As a result, supply chain personnel have the knowledge to understand existing conditions, recognize methods for improvement, and have the opportunity to share ideas, receive feedback, and move forward with a change as a team who never has to worry about negative repercussions. In other words, every experience is an opportunity to learn and grow.

Insight and New Questions

There is a lack of supply chain literature defining relationships between responsiveness and flexibility (Reichhart & Holweg, 2007). Establishing cause-and-effect customer relationships in supply chains may help personnel recognize additional methods when adapting to change. Identifying key relationships within the supply chain might help uncover the differences between requiring and enabling factors that contribute to responsiveness (Reichhart & Holweg, 2007). Supply chain personnel should focus on demand uncertainty, product variety, and lead-time variability when exploring contributing factors for fluctuation in supply chains is essential to understanding responsiveness (Reichhart & Holweg, 2007). Reichhart and Holweg, (2007) suggest studying unit of change such as product and volume mix with delivery responsiveness as it related to the time horizon concerning short, medium, or long-term responsiveness. The level

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of responsiveness changes throughout the supply chain reiterating the importance of customer relationship management when monitoring and responding to issues.

Publishing research in noteworthy business journals is expensive and challenging, which is why they are lacking innovative ideas (Simpson et al., 2015). Answering narrow questions without offering practical application of knowledge defeats the purpose of publishing new supply chain research to support relevance in the field (Simpson et al., 2015). Therefore, generating research income, improving relevance, and maintaining methodological rigor in supply chain literature is worth exploring (Simpson et al., 2015).

More research is necessary within existing institutional theory areas with a wider scope of applications to understand customer relationship management as it relates to supply chains (Kauppi, 2013). The problem with institutional theory in research and academia is that they focus on similar strategies concerning improving areas such as efficiency, when change over time and other out-of-the-box thinking is relevant to understand known aspects of supply chain management (Kauppi, 2013). One of many research options is to work directly with supply chain personnel to understand their needs, investigate alternate improvements, and implement changes that can make industrial situations better while also advancing the body of operations management literature. In an ideal situation, this activity will happen. However, boundaries of bridging the gap between defining the true purpose and finding value in research must happen. After that, closing the gap between researchers and industry personnel also needs to occur, because each can help one another advance.

When reviewing CRM literature from a scholarly perspective, Flynn (2008) relates how top-tier journals dislike the term “applied,” but there is a difference between bad research and

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irrelevant research. The purpose of research is not to entertain fellow scholars, but instead discover applicable topics and answer questions of critical importance to help improve industry activities (Flynn, 2008). Therefore, distributing results and acquiring feedback from industry professionals in supply chains needs to happen (Flynn, 2008). If the collaboration of researchers and supply chain personnel becomes common, this will open the door to limitless CRM opportunities, because these activities also invite creativity. The current goal of researchers is to publish research in top-tier journals, because this activity has the tendency to advance careers. However, finding the foundational purpose to create a research study such as investigating CRM impact in supply chains is more noteworthy, especially when a researcher or team of researchers uncovers a new method that changes everyday operations even in the slightest manner. Immediate application of results from supply chain research in the field offers an opportunity to test ideas before finalizing a new CRM strategy.

The question stems from purpose for supply chain behavior that leads CRM activities. Researchers should ask themselves why they are conducting a study on CRM in supply chains. Defining the purpose may help redefine their rationale, which can improve the outcome. Researchers want to advance their careers and become scholarly leaders, but they usually express the desire to make a significant impact on their field of study. Therefore, it makes sense to work with industry leaders such as supply chain personnel who have the experience and direct impact to improve everyday operations. Likewise, researchers also need to look past studying cost and efficiency improvements in supply chains and customer relationships. Supply chains may benefit from incorporating industrial organizational psychologists into their research as a way of getting a better understanding of why behavior happens to enhance ideas about CRM. There is a

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psychological aspect of customer relationship management since the process involves behavior and associations. Hence, becoming more familiar with behavioral aspects behind establishing trust and encouraging open communications will help in complex situations such as CRM and supply chain management.

The strategy supporting a need to define a CRM process remains important. A plan is always useful to understand how to get from an initial developmental stage towards completing the final stage. Although, complex situations require more integration of research methodologies concerning CRM to truly understand the behavior and outcomes in supply chains. Gathering ideas from cross-functional research areas should add value to understand existing situations better, offer creative ideas as these groups work together, and provide favorable outcomes that can add to other aspects of exploration and development in CRM. Research throughout this study support the notion that there are key areas of cost and efficiency that supply chain personnel drive attention towards, but there is more to know of these scenarios such as the impact of behavioral aspects and CRM strategy. Conversely, cost is always going to be a focal point for researchers and industry leaders, because time is money. Initiating innovative research with a definitive plan and targets is a starting point that will be useful for cross-functional industry leaders and researchers to begin new forward-approach thinking about CRM as it relates to supply chain management.

A new way of thinking is necessary to get creative results. Following the same practices will not produce different results in a drastic enough manner that will change and benefit supply chain personnel and customer relationship situations. Understanding the history of research in comparison to endless future opportunities offers an idea of the foundation to launch new ideas.

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The goal should be much more than to advance careers and make supplementary money. In the end, the objective is to change everyday customer relationships in supply chains for the better, and possibly create a new paradigm that will change how personnel operates. The outcome will benefit all parties, which includes customers who are the foundation of all business functions.

In the conclusion of this paper, there is a review of the impact of leadership on customer relationship management in supply chains. Leaders play an important role in strategy and putting plans into action. Therefore, review of concepts occurs to reiterate the importance of trust and communication in the workplace. Relating customer relationship management to technology implementation such as ICT in supply chain management is also relevant. Technology can help or hinder situations regardless if they complement communication or not. Therefore, reiterating how information communication technology can benefit customer relationships is worth mentioning due to the possibilities for future improvements. The significance of empowerment, communication, and collaboration are elements in supply chains that leaders must encourage to acquire environments capable of sustaining rapid changes. These factors become more important in situations where rapid responsiveness is not only a customer's requirement, but also necessary to keep operations moving successfully.

Exploring obstacles and unforeseen challenges to increase self-awareness helps to find problems before they happen. Productive behavior requires this type of behavior to adapt to change and sustain success long-term. In other words, reactive planning usually has negative results when problems get into the hands of customers. Per earlier discussion, it makes sense to think of creative solutions that may improve customer relationships and supply chain activities. Doing similar activities will only produce identical results. Thinking out of the box requires

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researchers to work with supply chain personnel or other industry leaders to understand requirements and find ways to make situations better. Investigating methods to enhance customer relationships is only the beginning of recognizing all avenues that can improve productivity in supply chains.

Investigating best practices and outlook of customer relationship management and supply chains will help researchers and industry professionals get a better understanding of everyday processes. From there, they can speculate change and create strategies that may fit their needs. Remembering to implement effective change management practices is vital for any alteration to become successful, because new ideas usually bring resistance in the workplace. Knowing why a change needs to happen and working collaboratively, helps increase employee buy-in when the time comes for implementation. Fear and resistance are natural reactors to change. Therefore, responsive scenarios that involve customer relationships and supply chains necessitate strict adherence to a change management strategy for favorable outcomes.

Conclusion

Impact of Leadership on Customer Relationship Management

This seminar paper serves the purpose of acquiring a better understanding of impact of leadership on customer relationship management as it relates to technology implementation in supply chain management. Leaders who promote open communication, empowerment, and encourage collaboration should produce favorable results when implementing a major technological change in the workplace. When implementing CRM strategy, leaders within the supply chain should work together and communicate to ensure successful outcomes. Taking the initiative to follow up on changes after implementation is important to sustain productive results.

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Therefore, supply chain leadership is a critical role in everyday operations, because it requires personnel to take initiative, determine requirements, collaborate, establish a CRM strategy, and follow through with plans. Without effective leadership and a solid strategy, CRM implementation may happen for the wrong reasons or fail if personnel do not communicate and collaborate. Interacting with trusting leaders becomes crucial, because people do not want to follow someone working without purpose or with poor intentions.

As the global economy changes rapidly, supply chain leaders need to focus on multiple factors that contribute to performance, one of which is CRM. These leaders also must pay attention to behavior involving clarification of needs, effective planning techniques, monitoring operations, and problem solving (Bag, 2014). Communication, training, and follow-up become crucial elements for leaders who want to adapt to change by taking the customers and employees' perspectives into consideration throughout every supply chain activity. Empowering employees offers limitless opportunities for people to learn and grow professionally and personally. Communication and networking are essential practices in a global economy, and this is why encouraging innovation is ideal for CRM in the supply chain context (Bag, 2014). When leaders understand behaviors, they can influence people and teams within the supply chain, which is critical to favorable performance outcomes (Bag, 2014).

Relating Customer Relationship Management to Technology Implementation in Supply Chain Management

Acknowledging the relevance of leadership and technology implementation in CRM practices and supply chain management is necessary due to the integration of cross-functional activities in this context. When solid relationships exist within the supply chain structure, cross-

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functional personnel offer information concerning customer attitudes, purchasing activity patterns, and consumer trends (Agarwal, & Singh, 2014). CRM is the solution to help reconcile supply chain structure, because communication is necessary to define roles and responsibilities. More specifically, communication and information exchange enhance relationships, which is useful when working towards establishing and maintaining supply chain connections. Exchanging information is crucial in supply chain interactions where changes happen quickly, and this makes knowledge sharing an important aspect of CRM. Information technology assists in obtaining accurate and timely data to share throughout the supply chain. Responsiveness is important in our rapid moving global economy that demands quick reactions to actions and individualized attention when possible.

Organizations that develop efficient and effective supply chains will have a distinct advantage over competitors that lack the ability to recognize needs for effective CRM and work through issues (Thomas, Defee, et al., 2011). In addition, purpose is necessary to fulfill the results that management anticipates for effective CRM in supply chains. Defining a CRM strategy and adhering to plans become essential as time goes on, because when one part of the supply chain fails, everyone else affiliated with the situation feels an impact too. Integrating processes and practices makes sense in supply chain activities due to the cross-functional nature of them. Taking the time to understand various perceptions within a supply chain enables personnel with better information when establishing and implementing a CRM strategy. When people understand the need for change and work collaboratively to implement an improvement of any sort, this activity strengthens customer relationships. As a result, supply chain leaders can expect favorable CRM outcomes when working together towards a common goal.

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As supply chain management becomes more complex globally, supply chain leaders must focus on activities that establish trust, encourage open communication, and promote knowledge sharing. Customer relationship management involves cross-functional processes, continuous dialogue with customers, extensive communication, along with increasing customer retention and effectiveness of marketing initiatives (Chun-Hsien, Tasi, & Chu-Ling, 2010). Risks in customer relationship management can evolve if supply chain leaders do not adequately plan to address supply network design, customer integration implementation, or any other large organizational changes (Danese & Romano, 2013). Reducing the possibility of nervousness in customer integration can result in amplified positive effects on efficiency through communication and involvement with stakeholders (Danese & Romano, 2013). Increasing knowledge reduces fear, which is important to combat the fear that brings resistance to change. Decreasing potential problems minimizes risk in general.

Importance of Empowerment, Communication, and Collaboration

Successful CRM implementation depends more on strategy than the amount companies spend on technology (Rigby et al., 2002, p. 106). Communication leads to collaboration for effective decision making, because supply chain employees are more likely to take ownership of performance outcomes when empowered to voice their perspectives and make choices. Information communication technology is useful to minimize supply chain risks, because it enables personnel to operate with timely information that improves communication and coordination (Tang & Zimmerman, 2013). Focusing on communication, training, and follow-up discussions highlight key steps to successful change implementation that become necessary when establishing customer relationships and maintaining them long-term.

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Strong customer relationships and effective CRM can eventually lead to alliances that strengthen organizations when working together towards a common goal. Trust is a necessary element in building relationships that includes open communication and knowledge sharing. CRM requires trust, communication, and knowledge sharing when implementing practices and technologies. CRM strategies, management, analysis, tracking, and monitoring involve cross-functional communication for all of these activities to happen successfully. Globally competitive situations entail a considerable amount of communication, and become vital as customer relationships mature to withstand the test of time and remain competitive (Ambrose et al, 2008). Likewise, knowledge sharing is a key enhancer of supply chain performance (Cai et al., 2013).

Obstacles and Unforeseen Challenges to Increase Self-Awareness and Change Management

If one link fails within a supply chain, the problem jeopardizes the entire organizational structure and reputation of the business and people within its affiliation. Therefore, recognizing the importance of customer relationship management and understanding techniques to solidify connections is necessary for fundamental everyday business activities as well as long-term growth and sustainability. According to Cai et al. (2013), they confirm knowledge sharing is an important factor in determining supply chain performance in a collaborative network. Customer relationship management enables personnel throughout the supply chain to communicate, interact, offer feedback, manage change, and minimize risk. Therefore, supply chain personnel must recognize the importance of strategic planning, communication, and teamwork to implement CRM successfully in the workplace. Insufficient planning and communication may do more harm than good when implementing changes.

Best Practices and Outlook

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Identifying key relationships within the supply chain might help uncover the differences between requiring and enabling factors that contribute to responsiveness (Reichhart & Holweg, 2007). Supply chain personnel should focus on demand uncertainty, product variety, and lead-time variability when exploring contributing factors for fluctuation in supply chains is essential to understanding responsiveness (Reichhart & Holweg, 2007). Reichhart and Holweg, (2007) suggest studying unit of change such as product and volume mix with delivery responsiveness as it related to the time horizon concerning short, medium, or long-term responsiveness.

One of many research options is to work directly with supply chain personnel to understand their needs, investigate alternate improvements, and implement changes that can make industrial situations better while also advancing the body of operations management literature. If the collaboration of researchers and supply chain personnel becomes common, this will open the door to limitless CRM opportunities, because these activities also invite creativity. Therefore, it makes sense to work with industry leaders such as supply chain personnel who have the experience and direct impact to improve everyday operations. A new way of thinking is necessary to get creative results.

The outlook for effective CRM in supply chain management consists of many opportunities for personnel to learn and grow professionally and personally as the global workforce encourages balance between work and life activities. Corporate social responsibility is driving ethical behavior in supply chains, as consumers want more from their companies. As we break away from the traditional organizational work model consisting of many years of loyalty to the life of the independent contractor who manages his or her own career, this is proof that change is inevitable in supply chains and adaptable with effective CRM. Continuous

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improvements in CRM will occur in supply chains as people recognize the importance of constant learning and developments in the workplace. Since individuals have more potential to change themselves than corporate cultures at a large organizational level, this brings hope that knowledge will deliver success as people work together towards a common goal to implement effective CRM in supply chain practices.

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