



July 2013 - Issue #89

## Welcome from Lisa

Thank you for the overflow of feedback and comments on my new website! I'm thrilled with the new 'look' and functionality - it's nice to combine both "form" and "function" into a win-win!

This month, I am continuing with my theme of emphasizing one of my brands/ service lines in the feature article with "Why Become the Strongest Link in Your Supply Chain?". It's a vital topic for manufacturers and distributors in today's new normal, and I look forward to your feedback and suggestions.

### IN THE NEWS

Please check out my latest speeches, articles & quotes:

- *Research & Markets* picked up my ExecSense webinar, "[Controlling Rising Workforce Costs as COO](#)".
- Published "[Project Leadership Doesn't Matter Unless You Care About Results](#)".
- Quoted in *Training Magazine* in "[Leadership Incubator Lessons](#)" and in SAC's "[Today's High Tech and High Touch](#)".

I'm also thrilled to announce that I've been selected to speak at the APICS (Association of Operations Management) International Conference in Orlando in October 2013. I'd love to have you [join us](#).

I had a wonderful month of June. My Dad continues to recover, and my Mom has a little break (still doing more than 99% of the people I know, forget about retirees but we'll take it!). I was able to spend time with them recently and help with a few projects to boot - exhausted the shredder such that it went on the fritz at least 10 times but it prevailed in the end.

And, I enjoyed the 96th birthday party for Harry who has to be the most active and sharp-minded 96 year old (beats 99.9% of 45 year olds as well!). I was able to get help posting a picture below as promised!

Enjoy the summer!  
Lisa

[Email](#)  
[LMA Consulting Group, Inc.](#)

P.S. Please think of me if you should know anyone who would like to elevate business performance & accelerate cash flow. I will take good care of your referrals!



~ Marjorie and Harry ~

Special thanks to Susan Brunasso for the photograph.

## Why Become the Strongest Link in Your Supply Chain?

In today's new normal business environment where sales are no longer easy, talent is in short supply even amidst high unemployment levels, volatility is the new norm and customers want "more for less - and NOW", finding strategies to stand out from the crowd is no longer innovative; it's required to survive! Companies are turning to the supply chain to make that happen!

As much as any executive is interested in elevating business performance, the supply chain offers not only an answer to that need but a solution to the hot topic in today's information overloaded society - how to have an effect on time. Every one of my clients is interested in time - finding a way to get the most essential priorities accomplished each day, shortening lead times, making rapid, well-informed decisions, accelerating new product and service introductions etc. Thus, being known as The Strongest Link in Your Supply Chain is pivotal to success.



There are countless topics we could discuss as to how to become the strongest link in your supply chain; however, as time is of the essence, we'll limit it to a few critical steps: 1) Get your house in order. 2) Think culture. 3) Start small but on the "right" path.

**1. Get your house in order:** Now that you're interested in jumping on the supply chain bandwagon, you'll most likely be disappointed to hear the most important place to start is with "your house". There's no point in thinking about elaborate supply chain concepts if they'll be of no avail. I repeatedly see that my clients who focus on internal excellence look as though they are lagging behind at first but always far surpass the ones who try to jump straight to the latest fad. Getting your house in order includes the following types of activities: understand and improve business processes, further leverage already-existing systems to improve service and efficiency, develop supply chain talent and teams, and resolve internal bottlenecks.

**2. Think culture:** Undoubtedly, the best strategies fail if culture doesn't support them. Thus, it makes sense to spend a few minutes to think about your culture - which set of beliefs governs behavior in your company? If you'd like to make the supply chain your strategic advantage, you must have a culture that values collaboration (and therefore people), visibility (and therefore embrace the sharing of information), and flexibility (and therefore be willing to invest in several areas such as cross-training, equipment etc.).

Although it might be hard to think of why you wouldn't support these concepts, when it boils down to the day-to-day, it can get harder. For example, if you have to choose between making your month end numbers and standing behind your new culture (which you believe will ensure the year's numbers even if you miss the month), which will you choose? Or, if you need to invest what could be a significant amount of money on implementing the right system for your business which will pay off in spades down-the-line but will likely not only cost precious money but also significant time immediately, what will you do?

**3. Start small but on the "right" path:** If there is one mistake in common among the majority of my clients it's that they want to jump into the fire (latest idea or fad) without making sure it best aligns with the strategy and that they are prepared to succeed. False starts can create havoc to success!

Instead, start small but make sure it's on the correct path to achieve your supply chain vision - and then work it aggressively! For example, one item that often can be of value in becoming the strongest link in your supply chain is to think about sales and operations planning - in essence, balancing demand with supply across your organization and in alignment with your customers and suppliers. However, even S&OP backfires frequently when executives don't start small and figure out what will work in their organization.

For example, I've seen executives tied up in all sorts of S&OP meetings drowning in spreadsheets yet accomplishing nothing. Instead, what I've found to be successful is a "simplified S&OP" - start by getting the right people together to review key information (such as expectations for future sales and any obvious potential threats such as supply constraints) and develop action plans for improvement. Pen and paper (even on the back of a napkin as my former CEO used to say) can achieve wonders!

Your smart competition is already on the path towards leveraging the supply chain to deliver bottom line business results. What are you doing to outsmart them and become the strongest link in your supply chain?

**Did you like this article?** Continue reading on this topic:  
[Supply Chain Strategy - Formula for Success](#)

## 5 Ways to Improve Processes

Process improvement has been around for centuries. I laugh as I see the fads come and go with different names and hoopla yet the fundamentals remain the same. What is process improvement if not just in time, lean, Toyota production system, TQM, demand driven MRP?.....and the list goes on. How do we stimulate ideas that will help our companies?



1. **ASK** - It's always prudent to start by asking your employees, peers and managers. It's an often overlooked secret to rapid cost savings and revenue generation ideas.
2. **Read** - Read the latest industry magazines, the newspaper, blogs, newsletters (of course *Profit through People!*) etc. You'll be surprised what ideas can apply to your situation.
3. **Listen** - Slightly different than asking is to listen. Instead of talking, listen to your colleagues with an ear towards interesting ideas. Asking clarifying questions during conversations can be revealing.
4. **Network** - There are countless industry, geography and topic-related events and groups. For example, my APICS (Association of Operations Management) chapter hosts events on manufacturing and distribution topic areas. Industry groups such as aerospace and defense have numerous events. Attend, ask, listen, network and learn.
5. **Social media** - There is also an overwhelming amount of information available on social media. Join a Linked In group and ask how to leverage your ERP system to become more efficient etc.

**Did you like this article?** [Continue reading on this topic:](#)

[Implementing Processes](#)

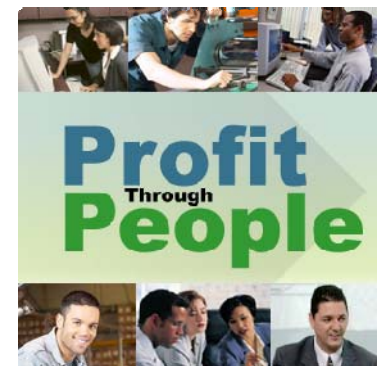
## Is Talent Important to You?

I have always believed that people are #1 to success. Without people, there is no business. I hear executives use these words; however, later they talk about people as costs. Which message do you think is taken away?

I have the opportunity to network with several top executive recruiters in my ProVisors groups, and there seems to be a new trend emerging - top talent is not only hard to find but it is ready to "make the move" to companies who appreciate them. Thus, have you thought about what your top talent is thinking?

What are you doing to retain your top talent? It isn't about the money. For as much conversation as goes on about money, it isn't a key motivator. Of course the lack of money is a problem (so I'm assuming you are paying within reasonable ranges in alignment with job requirements) but money alone will not keep your top talent.

Do you notice when an employee puts in extra effort to achieve a key result? Do you say thank you? Do you appreciate ideas? Do you ask what employees think will work or for potential pitfalls? Do you spend all of your time with the problem employees and ignore your high-performing employees? Do you ask about career path aspirations? Do you offer training and tools? Do you deal with difficult problems? Are you willing to address the problem employee who is creating havoc? Employees want to be able to count on you!



**Did you like this article?** [Continue reading on this topic:](#)

[Employees: Your #1 Asset](#)

Since identifying trends is an important Eagle Eye skill which is instrumental in finding opportunities to elevate performance, I thought a few ideas on how to spot trends would be helpful:



1. **Start with metrics** - It is near impossible to spot trends if you don't review key metrics. What information is important to running your business or your functional area? Track progress.
2. **Look for peaks & valleys** - I find it interesting that we can review a huge amount of metric data and create endless Power Points and yet we still miss trends. Reviewing a single point in time is largely useless. And getting lost in too much data is not helpful. Instead, put it in perspective: How does it relate to what has happened previously? Review the last several years, quarters, months or weeks side-by-side.
3. **Take out outliers** - I also seem to sit in endless meetings where we get bogged down in outliers and non-essential details. Instead, take a step back and look at what the big picture is telling you and ignore the outliers.
4. **Calculations** - If you spot a trend change, make sure the calculation process wasn't changed. It's easy to get carried away with trends that do not exist if the baseline data or the calculation method changes.
5. **Collaborate** - When you spot a trend, ask related parties for their insights. Often, you can rapidly determine if it's an outlier or a trend by simply asking experts.

**Did you like this article?** [Continue reading on this topic: The Hidden Benefit of Observation](#)

## Recommended Reading

[Steve Jobs](#) by Walter Isaacson - A great read with interesting insights about how Steve Jobs transformed Apple. Undoubtedly you'll pick up a few good tips.

## Connections

- An Inland Empire company in the food industry is looking for a Master Scheduler and a Supply Chain Manager for the Ontario facility. Please get in touch with [lhogan@venturafoods.com](mailto:lhogan@venturafoods.com).
- An Inland Empire technical services company is looking for engineers. Please [email](#) if interested.
- My APICS (Association of Operations Management) Inland Empire Chapter is looking for a few exceptional speakers and/or tour opportunities - our goal is to provide jam-packed value, and so we are always looking for ideas. [Email me](#).
- My Ontario ProVisors group of trusted advisors is searching for three types of attorneys - employment, business litigation, and real estate litigation. If you know anyone who fits the bill, please refer them to [me](#).



**NOTE:** To submit an item for this section, please send me an email with a short description of your needs and an email address. Please note that NOT all requests will be published as it must fit the guidelines and align with the Profit through People brand.

## What is *Profit through People*?

I've used the Profit through People brand since my newsletter's inception in 2006 as it resonated with me. Although I consult on topics within each of my service lines--Eagle Eye Strategic Focus, The Strongest Link in Your Supply Chain, the Systems Pragmatist & Profit through People--I find that people are key to success in every situation. If you are interested in elevating your business performance, please [contact us](#).



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