



Supply chain optimisation in the midst of Brexit

Supply chain managers are navigating uncharted territory as new borders loom

BY POST REPORTER

There are many challenges facing today's supply chain managers, including globalisation and customer expectations around reduced costs and increased transparency. But the risk factor looming largest on the horizon is Brexit.

"Brexit is a major event that is being closely watched by companies concerned about the potential disruption to their supply chains," said Dr Eoin Plant, assistant head at the School of Transport Engineering, Environment and

Planning at DIT's National Institute for Transport and Logistics (NITL).

"Many supply chains may have to be reconfigured to ensure optimal design and effectiveness if a hard border is introduced," said Plant.

"In a market where supply chains rather than individual organisations are competing, it will be crucial for members of the supply chain to harness technology such as big data and autonomous vehicles to gain improvements in efficiency and effectiveness in order to maintain competitive advantage."

The NITL offers MSc Sup-

ply Chain Management programmes on a full-time and part-time basis to equip supply chain professionals with the skills required to navigate a rapidly shifting landscape.

"The part-time programme is very popular with ambitious career professionals eager to develop their skills and knowledge in order to fast-track their career progression. The part-time professional programme is delivered on a flexible module basis," said Plant.

"DIT also offers the undergraduate programme BSc (Hons) Logistics, and supply chain management graduates of this specialist programme are in very high demand from across many industries," he said.

"Knowledge and skills are both key to harnessing the benefits of new technolo-



Nikolas Valantasis-Kanellos, lecturer in Supply Chain Management, DIT

gies for organisations. This also requires soft skills such as building relationships and

managing complexity. NITL's MSc programme targets the development of these skills."



Dr Eoin Plant, assistant head at the School of Transport Engineering, Environment and Planning at DIT's National Institute for Transport and Logistics (NITL)

DIT lecturer in Supply Chain Management Nikolaos Valantasis-Kanellos said the impact

of digitisation in everyday life was vast and inevitably reshaped the management of logistics and supply chain networks.

"The rise of the Internet of Things, which is underpinned by technologies and innovations such as big data and autonomous vehicles, has the potential to change the way of doing business and improve information and material flows throughout the supply chain," said Valantasis.

"It also has the potential to change the mindset of supply chain partners, to increase trust and collaboration."

Plant and Valantasis-Kanellos agree that the new technologies driving the Internet of Things are the key ingredients necessary for the achievement of the EU's vision for a Physical Internet by 2050.

They believe that the Physical Internet would provide a dynamic sustainable solution for the optimisation of global supply networks.

"The Physical Internet is envisaged as an end-to-end global logistic network which, like the internet, will rely upon a set of rigorous standardisation protocols and trust among network members in order to make the system work. Goods will be transported in modular, standard containers equipped with smart technology which will enable every unit to be precisely tracked," they said.

"Collaborative cutting-edge pan-European research is striving to develop ICT platforms that will allow real-time information exchange among supply chain actors and facilitate accessible multimodal transportation for all users."

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Growth hots up for Cold Move

Supply chain solutions provider plans to build on success by extending the value-added service it delivers to customers

Supply chain solutions provider Cold Move is forecasting another year of record growth as it builds on the success of a major investment in technology and expertise during 2016.

The company's turnover grew by over 60 per cent last year, with the creation of 30 new jobs, bringing the total number of employees to 150 by the end of December.

"The growth in our business is coming from growth within our customers' businesses," said Cold Move's chief executive, Jason Mallon.

"Our key customers are continuing to grow within the retail market and consequently Cold Move is growing. At the same time, our capability needs to grow alongside our customers' changing requirements," said Mallon.

"The hard work in terms of systems and management took place last year so we feel we're going to fully utilise the new systems during 2017 and extend the value-added service we deliver to our customers," he said.

"Last year, we concentrated on growing the business substantially and bringing a new depth of knowledge into the business to offer a unique service to our retail clients."

One of the strategies Cold Move employed was the development of a new software system.

"Our sales-based ordering platform integrates with our



Jason Mallon, chief executive, Cold Move

partners' point of sale (POS) infrastructure. It pulls all the sales data from the retailers into our systems and converts that sales data into supplier orders," said Mallon.

"The new system removes the forecasting element from order management. Once our system is integrated with our customers' POS systems, our system triggers a notification to our clients indicating the peak times at which individual products sell. We then use that information to ensure that stock is on the shelves at peak demand time," he said.

"Our systems are now very highly integrated with our clients' systems. Our process is no longer around holding stock but about driving stock through the supply chain as quickly as possible."

"Stock that is going to be bought tomorrow is only delivered into us today so it only goes onto the shelves a couple of hours before it is bought. All the purchasing data comes back to us and allows us to order directly from suppliers."

Cold Move delivers supply chain services to major brands across food retail, food service and food manufacturing and plans to grow its client base

in the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector.

"More than 20 per cent of the contents of the average household freezer comprise products that have come through Cold Move's frozen supply chain," said Mallon.

"We see significant growth potential in the pharmaceutical area in 2017 considering all the controls that we've implemented around our current food operation. However, our main focus is going to be on growing our business in the food retail and food manufacturing sectors."

In spite of Cold Move's high growth in turnover, Mallon said 2016 had been a challenging year in terms of pressure on profit margins as a result of the company's investment in building its organisational capabilities.

"We redeveloped our Dublin Port site to bring it up to the highest standards so it is now accredited to British Retail Consortium (BRC) Grade A standard for storage and distribution," he said.

Maintaining the integrity of Cold Move's supply chain is crucial and the company employs a full-time in-house quality assurance department

to monitor all activity while HACCP-trained personnel undertake due-diligence checks across the operation.

The company took over its current site in Dublin Port in late 2015 and spent nine months redeveloping the facility.

"We see all the growth in our business coming from our Dublin operation at the moment. Our other facilities in Oranmore, Co Galway; Newbridge, Co Kildare; and Swords, Co Dublin, are all relatively mature and service a range of key clients, but our Dublin facility is where we are seeing most growth and we have the capacity to grow," said Mallon.

"Last year, we focused on driving the intelligence within our systems and within our senior management team. We increased our revenue base and our customer base by targeting specific customers where we felt we could add a lot of value through a combination of our facilities, management expertise and newly designed systems," he said.

"The forecast for 2017 is to deliver the same level of growth across the business as we achieved last year."