**AFRICA CENTER FOR PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

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**1 Define logistics? What are the advantages and disadvantages of logistics to an organization?**

Logistics is the process of strategically managing the procurement, movement and storage of materials, parts and finished inventory (and the related information flows) through the organization and its marketing channels in such a way that current and future profitability are maximized through the cost-effective fulfillment of orders.

According to the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals (previously the Council of Logistics Management) logistics is the process of planning, implementing and controlling procedures for the efficient and effective transportation and storage of goods including services and related information from the point of origin to the point of consumption for the purpose of conforming to customer requirements and includes inbound, outbound, internal and external movements.

Academics and practitioners traditionally refer to the terms Operations or Production management when referring to physical transformations taking place in a single business location (factory, restaurant or even bank clerking) and reserve the term logistics for activities related to distribution, that is, moving products on the territory. Managing a distribution center is seen, therefore, as pertaining to the realm of logistics since, while in theory the products made by a factory are ready for consumption they still need to be moved along the distribution network according to some logic, and the distribution center aggregates and processes orders coming from different areas of the territory. That being said, from a modeling perspective, there are similarities between Operations management and logistics, and companies sometimes use hybrid professionals, with for ex. "Director of Operations" or "Logistics Officer" working on similar problems. Furthermore, the term Supply chain management originally refers to, among other issues, having an integrated vision in of both production and logistics from point of origin to point of production. All these terms may suffer from Semantic change as a side effect of advertising.

Not all courier companies can afford to set up their logistics. Especially not the large multinational ones who have an extensive presence in different countries. Courier companies thus, often have to rely on the help of third-party logistics (3PL) companies. As with any business decision, hiring 3PL to carry out logistics comes with its own set of pros and cons. Here are some of them:

**Advantages**

**Specialization**

3PL companies are highly specialized because they are created with one and only one purpose - to provide logistics support to various businesses. Specialization naturally increases the efficiency of such organizations, which in turn benefits the courier companies that hire them.

**Access to advanced new technology**

Due to high specialization, 3PL companies usually have access to better technology than in-house logistics departments. The new technology helps both reducing the time spent on a task and cutting costs.

**Access to required facilities**

It is challenging for a company to have access to warehouses and transportation required for the shipment of items of huge volume or size. On the other hand, 3PL companies almost always have access to such facilities.

**Ability to handle large number of clients at a time**

Hiring 3PLs helps courier companies to handle a large number of clients at the same time. It is possible because such logistics companies usually have a large capacity along with a very high amount of efficiency.

**Disadvantages**

Irregularities on the part of Third-party Company may lead to problems.

Once a courier company hires a 3PL company for its logistics distribution, it allows some of the control of the entire shipping process to slip away. When there is complete lack of control over a particular process, there is always a chance that a problem may crop up. And if it does, it may cause harm to the reputation of the company.

**Communication problems**

Two completely different companies are working towards achieving the same goal, and in a scenario such as this, communication is of very high importance. But, since the message must travel from one company to another, complications may arise, which in turn could lead to misinterpretation of facts or complete miscommunication. When this happens, most often than not, the delivery becomes a failure.

Therefore, it is vital for a company to be responsible while hiring a third party logistics company. All the advantages and the disadvantages have to be put through extensive scrutiny.

**2 Why should an organizations use just in Time? Give its advantages and Disadvantages.**

A just-in-time inventory system keeps inventory levels low by only producing for specific customer orders. The result is a large reduction in the inventory investment and scarp costs, though a high level of coordination is required. This approach differs from the more common alternative of producing to a forecast of what customer orders might be. By using just-in-time concepts, there is a greatly reduced need for materials and work-in-process, while Finished goods inventories should be close to non-existent. The use of just-in-time inventory has the following advantages:

* There should be minimal amounts of inventory obsolescence, since the high rate of inventory tumover keeps any items from remaining in stock and becoming obsolete.
* Since production runs are very short, it is easier to halt production of one product type and switch to a different product to meet changes in customer demand.
* The very low inventory levels mean that inventory holding coast (such as warehouse space) are minimized.
* The company is investing far less cash in its inventory, since fewer inventories is needed.
* Fewer inventories can be damaged within the company, since it is not held long enough for storage-related accidents to arise. Also, having fewer inventories gives materials handlers more room to maneuver, so they are less likely to run into any inventory and cause damage.
* Production mistakes can be spotted more quickly and corrected, which results in fewer products being produced that contain defects.

Despite the magnitude of the preceding advantages, there are also some disadvantages associated with just-in-time inventory, which are:

* A supplier that does not deliver goods to the company exactly on time and in the correct amounts could seriously impact the production process.
* A natural disaster could interfere with the flow of goods to the company from suppliers, which could halt production almost at once.
* An investment should be made in information technology to link the computer systems of the company and its suppliers, so that they can coordinate the delivery of parts and materials.

A company may not be able to immediately meet the requirements of a massive and unexpected order, since it has few or no stocks of finished goods.

**3 Can Supply Chain management be used as competitive advantages by an organization? Give five reason well explained.**

1 Higher Efficiency Rate:

When your business is able to incorporate supply chains, integrated logistics, and product innovation strategies, you'll be in a great position to not only predict demand as well as to act accordingly. And this is, without any doubt, one of the main supply chain management benefits. Why? When your business implements supply chain management systems, it will be able to adjust more dynamically to the fluctuating economies, emergency markets, and shorter product life-cycles.

2. Decrease Cost Effects:

One of the advantages of supply chain management is the costs decrease in different areas. The most important ones are:

* *Improves your inventory system;*
* *Adjusts the storage space for finished goods which eliminates damage resources;*
* *Improves your system's responsiveness to the actual customer's requirements;*
* *Improves your relationship with both distributors and vendors.*

**3. Increases Output:**

One of the main benefits of supply chain management is the communication improvement. This adds up to the coordination and collaboration with shipping and transport companies, vendors, and suppliers.

**4. Increases Your Business Profit Level:**

When you place your business open to the new technologies and an improved collaboration within the different areas, you can be sure that this will ultimately increase your business profit level.

**5. Boost Cooperation Level:**

When we're talking about the most successful businesses right now, one of the things they all have in common is the communication. In fact, when there is a lack of communication, your vendors and distributors have no idea about what's going on. So, this is definitely one of the main advantages of supply chain management. Plus, when you also open your doors and embrace technology, you can also take advantage of the fact that people don't even need to share the same space in order to be a true communication.

The communication among the different areas of your business will allow you to have faster access to forecasts, reporting, quotation, statuses, among many other plans in real time.

**6. No More Delays in Processes:**

One of the main benefits of supply chain management is the fact that through communication, you can actually lower any delays in processes. Since everyone is aware of what they're doing as well as what others are doing, this will mitigate any late shipments from vendors, logistical errors in distribution channels, and hold-ups on production lines.

**7. Enhanced Supply Chain Network:**

It's not easy to maintain a sustainable supply chain management system. According to some of its advocators, one of the best ways to do it is by using a combination of lean practices (like waste removal, for example) with agile. By combining all the information gathered on the different sectors of your business will allow you to have an enhanced supply chain network.

To Conclude

As you can see, there are many benefits for your business to adopt a supply chain management system. However, it's a lot easier said than done. Nevertheless, when you want your business to grow, this is definitely something you should consider. AIMS' Institute of Supply Chain Management help professionals to build and enhance their supply chain management expertise. AIMS' well-known and career oriented programs include.

**By Khalfan Abdallah Salim**

**4 What are inventories? How important are they to an organization?**

Inventories are materials and supplies that a business or institution carry either for sale or to provide inputs or supplies to the production process. All businesses and institutions require inventories. Often they are a substantial part of total assets. Financially, inventories are very important to manufacturing companies. On the balance sheet, they usually represent from 20% to 60% of total assets.  
  
Inventory Management ties up capital, requires handling, uses storage space, deteriorates, sometimes becomes obsolete, requires insurance, incurs taxes, can be stolen or gets lost. Inventory must be considered at each of the planning levels with production planning concerned with overall inventory, master planning with end items and materials requirements planning with components parts and raw material. The primary function of inventory is buffering and decoupling. It serves as a shock absorber between customer demand and the manufacturer’s production capability, between input materials required for an operation and the output of the preceding operation, between the manufacturing process and the supplier of raw materials.

In order to avoid such troubles, business strategies should be continually reassessed. To make this feat possible, it is important to thoroughly understand the kind of inventory at hand, the challenges it brings, and the need for better inventory management practices. This article will help realize the importance of inventory management in an organization.

**Objectives of Inventory Management**  
  
Many different organizational units have an interest in the creation and control of inventories. These objectives often conflict and must be resolved through negotiation and consideration of the overall benefits to the company. Some of the major objectives that underlie the use of inventories are:

**Customer Service**: Customer Service is the ability of a company to satisfy the needs of the customer. Inventory Management helps achieve this in several ways, including delivering in a timely manner, buffering against uncertainty, and providing variety to meet individual customer needs.

**Buffering against Uncertainty**: Inventory Management are often held because either the demand for goods or the replenishment of goods is subject to uncertainty. Anticipated demand for products is often forecasted in various ways. Inventories allow delivery even when demand exceeds those that were expected. Sometimes there is also uncertainty regarding supply; that is, how quickly can goods be replenished? Transportation, quality problems, excessive scrap,.

Manufacturing business

If you are in the manufacturing and production business, then you deploy inventory to convert it into another form. Your customers could be both consumers and other businesses. This is what your inventory stock includes:

* Raw materials, such as automobile parts for a car company.
* Work in progress inventory, such as a semi-constructed building for a construction business.
* Finished goods, such as a laptop that has just been assembled.

Retail businesses and distributors

Such businesses don’t stock up raw materials or unfinished goods. Their main focus is to deliver completed products to their customers. Retail businesses include departmental stores that stock grocery items or shops that house various brands under one roof.

Distributors, on the other hand, buy inventory goods from the manufacturers and sell them to retailers. A distributor is often seen as the “middleman”.

Services business:

Not all firms sell finished goods. Some specialize in providing certain services to their customers. They still, however, require an inventory in order to assist these services. As an example, medical inventory helps medical staff in diagnosing and treating various ailments.

Challenges of stock management

Recent statistics show that the U.S industry loses a whopping $46 billion to inventory shrinkage. This usually results from the lack of robust logistics and supply chain management. Poor stock control policies have an adverse impact on business performance and lead to the following challenges for both small and medium-sized businesses:

Inaccurate forecasting

Most organizations treasure their insights and use them to predict future demand and develop strategies. If your insights are unreliable, your business is bound to take a hit. You’ll find excess inventory cluttering your warehouse or disgruntled customers receiving their deliveries late. Both scenarios translate to losses for your company.

Such malpractices can be tackled by investing in a tracking program for all your assets. Doing this allows you to tap into accurate real-time data which significantly streamlines procurement. When you’re able to monitor consumption trends in real-time, you are better equipped to reduce the chances of obsolete assets in your inventory and delays in order completion.

Poor data accessibility

Inventory management is not restricted to just one department. While the administration is responsible for taking orders and making purchases, the whole team should be updated on the current condition of the inventory.

Say, for instance, the inventory manager decides to switch to a cheaper vendor. But due to the absence of an employee management system, the news never reaches the admin officer. If this were to occur, the company would end up buying the wrong stock from the old vendor. Therefore, it is necessary to adopt a centralized inventory control program which can be accessed by everyone in the office.

Inability to meet compliance:

To maintain quality standards, all businesses are expected to follow a set of regulations laid down by governing bodies. Stock safety and inspection are carried out in line with these recommendations.

Companies should be wary of compliance rules as failure to meet them can result in heavy penalties and a marred reputation. That isn’t all- you also compromise the quality and safety of your inventory.

To avoid such a fate, conduct regular audit sessions to ensure that your inventory is meeting all relevant standards. Regulatory bodies tend to conduct unannounced surveillance of facilities so don’t slack off in this department.

Inventory management software to drive up profits

The best way to optimize your management processes is to invest in cloud-based software. By integrating software into your workflows, your company can rapidly generate higher sales and productivity to meet yearly objectives. The importance of inventory management in an organization can be realized by the following benefits:

Allows access to real-time data:

A robust management system allows you to track inventory utilization from procurement till the last stage of disposal. Such strict supervision gives access to real-time data for different phases of inventory consumption. A cloud-based system reduces the chances of human error and raises accuracy levels for greater efficiency.

 Results in optimized utilization

The importance of inventory management in an organization can be further understood by the growing need for optimized utilization.

Well-planned strategies regulate resource allocation to cut down overhead costs. Optimizing usage helps make the most of the resources on hand whereas irresponsible usage leads to frequent breakdowns which require expensive large-scale repairs. Enjoy higher Return On Investment with better asset utilization!

Lowers risks associated with overstock and outages:

Excess stock ties up cash which companies could have utilized in a more profitable capacity. This loss of funds can easily surpass any wholesale stock advantages. Factors like changing consumer preferences, new trends, market fluctuations, all affect the demand curve so be prepared to deal with seasonal fluctuations.

With an inventory management system, you can order in advance and house only what you require.

Allows greater room for stock diversification:

With readily available data on all facets of inventory, you can make authentic business analytics possible. With this thorough insight, companies can run actionable reports to adjust stocks according to the current market demand. This way, the business remains prepared to tackle unforeseen challenges at all times.

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Get the most out of your inventory management system

The importance of inventory management in an organization is vast. In order to maximize profits and grow, it is critical that companies work on their inventory management processes. The right software program in this regard will provide you with a variety of features to boost up inventory utilization.

Here are a few ways you can upgrade your company’s inventory portfolio for maximum returns in the long run:

Track items across locations for constant updates

One of the key factors concerning warehouse management is tracking inventory items. Whether you are a small or large-sized business, you have hundreds of goods coming in and going out for projects. The best way to maintain a robust system of check and balance is to implement positioning software for your company.

By doing this, you will be able to trace every movement of an item, every time it is checked out for use or maintenance. Such practices help attain data transparency and signify the importance of inventory management in an organization. Tracking lets you easily locate your inventory in large storage houses and create efficient workflow opportunities for your employees.

Streamline inventory check-ins and checkouts

The basic definition of inventory management also includes items in transit. For businesses on the go, maintaining records of frequently used items becomes tough. Oftentimes it happens that employees require a similar bundle of goods for projects in different locations. The most efficient way to handle such situations would be to create duplicate carts to enable seamless check-ins and checkouts.

Software programs designed to cater to your inventory needs let you do exactly this. Keeping in mind the importance of inventory management in an organization, this feature has added benefits for your employees as well. They no longer need to waste time preparing the same cart they used for a previous business conference. Effective time allocation motivates employees to manage tasks in a productive way!

Prevent outages with automated stock management

For any business to optimize its stock, it’s better to understand what accounts as its stock first. Companies have diverse functions and for this reason, they tend to deploy a variety of goods and services. Stock refers to anything an organization uses to make a product or deliver a facility. Primarily, the stock can be classified into the following:

* Raw materials which can be readily used in production processes
* Unfinished goods undergoing the production process
* Finished goods ready to be bought or sold
* Consumables which can be used to aid the production process

Having a clear idea of the type of stock you require adds to the importance of inventory management in an organization. You can set minimum thresholds levels to alert you when the inventory is about to finish. After doing this, you will be able to generate automatic purchase orders for new stock. Making arrangements in advance helps prevent outages and overstocks and streamline work operations.

Record usage over time to forecast demand

A wise business move is to maximize short-term returns while building long-term strategies for the future. This is possible when you record, store and analyze everything related to your business performance.

Present company performance and trends portray how your inventory will evolve over the next few years. Such phenomena highlight the importance of inventory management in an organization. Start doing this by tracking history for all your inventory items.

Having all the information related to item utilization over time gives you a fair idea of what changes you need to make in your current stock and inventory management practices. A comprehensive database enables strategic decision-making and inventory optimization for your firm.

When it comes to increasing your ROI as well as upgrading your business techniques, one thing that does it all is inventory software. It serves as a single point of access for all your employees and isn’t just limited to purchase orders or vendor management.

In order to achieve an overall improved system of inventory management, your company should opt for Inventory. Being a cloud-based software, it allows you to store all your inventory data in a secure system which is protected against malware and unauthorized use. This makes it easier for your company to withstand any infringement threats that might come your way.

Apart from being a user-friendly software, Inventory has the capacity to scale up quickly as the business expands. Isn’t that great news? No need to jump from software to software every time you acquire a couple of more assets or hire new employees.

Another exciting feature Inventory offers is its flexibility to work with your existing software programs. No need to dispose of your current data to get in line with Inventory. This software allows easy integrations wherever possible so that you can use whatever your employees are comfortable with. Linking a supercharged inventory management system to your company software only doubles the chances of a positive outcome.

Inventory truly realizes the importance of inventory management in an organization and is always upgrading. Make the most of your inventory today and utilize it to get improved results!

**5 Why is planning essential in logistics and supply chain management?**

Any successful business leader will acknowledge the crucial importance of effectively organized logistics. They understand that implementing seamless logistics is a key element in keeping pace with customer demands and outperforming competitors.

Whatever the size of your business, you will want to grow and expand. That probably means expanding on a regional, international or global level. Whatever your business location or industry, logistics can help cut on the costs and time you spend to move products from one point to another.

Supply chains are complex and sensitive as they depend on always-changing customer demands. A supply chain cannot ensure high value if it is without effectively organized transport. For this reason, logistics is one of the most crucial factors in the quality of any supply chain.

If you look at effective transport done right, you might get the impression that it “seems simple”. It actually requires a lot of special knowledge, skills and professional management to get it look so “effortless. Don’t let the end result of good logistics fool you – it takes a lot of specialized assistance to get it to flow so smoothly.

Effective transport improves a supply chain by decreasing (if not avoiding) waste of materials and time. This helps supply chain professionals transport products and deliver them to the right location, on time – which is a priority for any successful business.

**Effectively coordinated logistics leads to positive business results**

As businesses grow and expand (regionally, internationally or even globally), they become more reliant on effectively organized supply chains which includes sophisticated logistics. This element of supply chains is not something that “only matters in large-business development”. It is just as crucial in terms of improving efficiency and profitability with smaller and medium-sized business as well.

Logistics plays an essential part in supply chain management. It is used to plan and coordinate the movement of products timely, safely and effectively.

Customers now not only include your neighbors and local friends; they include people from across the globe, as well. Regardless of the distance, each customer expects their products to be delivered quickly and flawlessly. In order to do this, smart businesses [hire experienced professionals](https://www.aacb.com/) to align the pattern of movement of products in the most convenient and practical way.

**Logistics helps businesses create value**

Providing value to customers does not only refer to quality or quantity. It also refers to availability. As better logistics makes your products more available to an increasing group of people, wise business leaders consider it a very important tool in creating value for customers.

Logistics creates and increases the value businesses offer by improving merchandise, and ensuring the availability of products. In order to provide more value, businesses either work on improving their own logistic activities or rely on professionals.

**Logistics helps in reducing costs and improves efficiency**

With global trade growing more popular, logistics has become the heart of supply chains. Business leaders have realized they can reduce their costs by establishing partnerships with other businesses which offer transportation and warehousing.

When businesses start using such services to outsource transport and warehousing, they improve their overall business efficiency, sometimes dramatically. If they let these partners take charge of [shipping their goods](https://www.aacb.com/freight-shipping/) to end customers, this results in a better reputation and a stronger brand.

By working with highly professional and reliable logistics companies such as A&A, many businesses have improved their efficiency by providing faster delivery of product. This leads to an improved customer experience and higher working efficiency in general.

**Logistics helps delivering your product at the right place timely**

Logistics is firmly and clearly defined within a supply chain. However, due to differing customer demands, it has to be constantly evolving in order to provide better results. Customers nowadays are more likely to impulse shop using a smartphone, and be equally as impatient about receiving their order.

With professionally organized logistics, businesses are able to answer short-time requirements. By choosing an experienced team of professionals, business entrepreneurs can ensure quick and safe shipping, warehousing and delivery of their products to customers. They can incorporate these services in a way that adds value to their offers, and ensure their products get to the right place on time.

**Logistics is the key to success with supply chains**

Supply chains are unique networks between businesses that deal with the production, shipment, warehousing and delivery of products. These networks are very important to businesses as they largely affect sales and profits. However, without effective and well-organized logistics, supply chains can’t help your business gain a clear advantage over the competition.

While a good marketing strategy can “open many doors” and attract customers, a reliable logistics service can help your business build and maintain a positive public image. Meanwhile, poorly organized logistics can lead to losing customers and decreased sales.

Keep your customers satisfied, rely on experienced logistic professionals

Satisfied customers are the most precious asset for any business. They are the main drive for the supply chains in each of the three phases: manufacturing, marketing and logistics. For this reason, it is a priority for each business owner to clearly understand customer needs, preferences and demands, and then work relentlessly to meet them.

When successful business leaders acknowledge the needs and requirements of their existing and potential customers, they develop a strategy. Whether the business is small, middle-sized or large, strategies rely on effective logistics.

**CONCLUSION**

Persisting long-term megatrends create challenges for logistics managers and result in increasing demands on the network skills of today’s companies – due to ongoing globalization, security requirements, the need to protect the environment and spare resources and, last but not least, requirements relating to their business systems such as customer differentiated reliability, flexibility and cost-efficiency. Many logistics managers need an extended scope of customer-focused responsibility (end-to-end), stronger integration in corporate strategy and organizational structures, better operationalization of logistics goals, more transparency in the area of logistics costs and a stronger focus on innovative cross-company projects. At present, many companies still focus their efforts on internal processes and operational goals. But the picture is different in different companies and also varies from sector to sector. The majority of companies have still not implemented holistic responsibility concepts for the customer-to customer process, and this is something that will require major effort. The trading sector has been successful with its end-to-end implementation concepts based on the idea of reverse integration and has therefore made more progress in some areas than many industrial companies. The analyses in these studies show that very few surveyed companies have already attained a high level of logistics network maturity. When formulating their logistics goals, companies react to global challenges by prioritizing service-level-oriented logistics goals, which in some areas take precedence over cost goals. This applies above all to global and fragmented logistics networks with high outsourcing levels and qualities. In future, cooperation in global networks will increasingly depend on how successful the various players are in identifying the key central trends and then integrating the resulting tasks in their value systems, strategies and operational logistics systems. The ‘best’ companies strategically integrate their logistics activities in the overall business system. They have recognized the benefits of logistics and can measure these benefits. This means they are able to create a higher end-to-end scope of responsibility and to successfully complete strategic projects. As a result, they already achieve provable cost advantages by implementing successful

Outsourcing projects in a globalized corporate environment with the emphasis on sustainable solutions. In doing so, they succeed in arriving at a holistic assessment of risks and opportunities throughout the entire network (end-to-end) and coordinating these risks and opportunities with their network partners, and this is ultimately what enables them to develop a focused network strategy. This strategy is based on, among other things, frequent use of horizontal cooperation models and a standardized network-wide assessment procedure for their suppliers and service providers. Moreover, the ‘best’ are increasingly using supra-regional and cross border benchmarking systems on a regular basis – primarily to identify network-wide optimization potential. We assume that benchmarking in this area is not designed solely to allow comparisons but also serves as a management concept. This would mean that it would be justified to claim that the ‘best’ review and compare their logistics performance and skills on a regular basis. They use the resulting insights to identify best practices geared towards further optimization and adaptation – and then implement these practices globally.

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