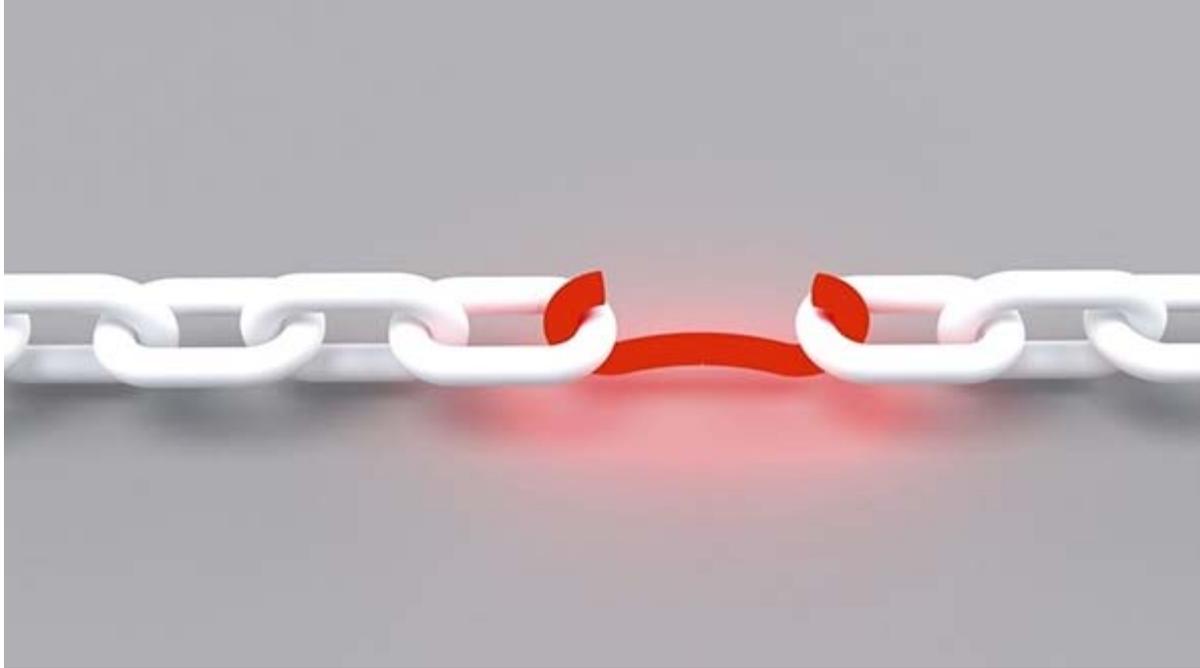


# Talent Shortage Is a Weak Link in the Supply Chain

Nov 13, 2015 David Rice, Bisk Education

The supply chain industry will need to fill about 1.4 million new jobs between 2014 and 2018, but where will the talent come from?



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With the supply chain industry suffering from a lack of available talent for management positions, U.S. companies are stepping up efforts to recruit qualified and skilled professionals for those roles.

The supply chain industry will need to fill about 1.4 million new jobs between 2014 and 2018, according to a study by the logistics trade group MHI. That's roughly 270,000 jobs per year. But the talent shortage is one of the "major barriers preventing innovation in the supply chain," the study found.

The number of available positions is likely to inflate in coming years as the Baby Boom generation reaches retirement age and the need for workers with experience in engineering, analytics and robotics continues to rise.

Chuck Edwards, president of automation products manufacturer [Lenze Americas](#), told *Fortune* magazine that part of the challenge in attracting new talent is explaining the cool factor of the 21<sup>st</sup> century supply chain to college students. Lenze Americas sponsors student projects and looks for guest speaking opportunities on college campuses to "better explain where the real excitement and future growth is."

Other executives say the industry's image problem stems from common misunderstandings about what it means to work in supply chain management. "A frequent misconception from newer supply chain hires is that supply chain management is simply the 'math' behind shipping and receiving," As Karmen Gilbert, vice president of supply planning for [Havi Global Solutions](#), said recently, "Many people new to the industry are not familiar with the supply chain management industry, and oftentimes don't realize the significant amount of collaboration and relationship management required between customers and suppliers to be successful."

In many cases, people are unaware of the breadth and depth of the employment opportunities within the supply chain field. From marketing to data analysis and human resources, supply chain companies are seeking managers across departments. And they're having to get creative to succeed.

According to [an article in \*The Wall Street Journal\*](#), toy maker Mattel Inc. is ramping up its hiring of college graduates directly out of business or supply chain management programs. The company is looking to overhaul its supply chain operations by turning recent grads into well-rounded supply chain leaders of the future.

By prioritizing diversity of experience, Mattel is now moving employees through various stages of the supply chain earlier in their careers. Mattel's aim, the article notes, is to help workers acquire new skills in different job functions, providing them with a holistic experience to take into management.

## **Bridging the Gap to Supply Chain Management**

The challenges in identifying and attracting supply chain talent aren't restricted to specific companies, industries or geographic locations. Among executives of multinational companies, 71% reported difficulty finding senior leadership for their supply chains, according to a survey by Deloitte Consulting.

Similarly, a 2014 survey by talent development firm SCM World found that 43% of supply chain execs believed it had become more difficult to recruit and develop talented employees in recent years. SCM World executive Kevin O'Marah told *The Wall Street Journal* in the aforementioned article that supply chain professionals who have worked in a specific area, such as production or sourcing, are having trouble bridging the gap to management because they lack expertise across supply chain functions.

For supply chain professionals looking to enhance their credentials for a move into management, certificate and degree programs offered by nationally recognized and respected universities can be a good option. [SCM World recently ranked the top universities](#) according to their ability to develop supply chain talent, with [Michigan State University](#) ranked #1.

Such programs can help develop metrics-driven, tech-savvy supply chain leaders who have the business skills necessary to succeed in a marketplace that is evolving at a rapid pace. Additionally, industry certifications from professional groups such as APICS or ISM can provide in-depth knowledge of procurement, logistics and other specific areas.

**“For someone who has little experience in the supply chain industry, it would be beneficial to explore available resources and commit to self-learning,” HAVI’s Gilbert says.**

**“Pursuing certificates such as APICS CSCP to understand the basic concepts, followed by an internship, is crucial to developing and applying supply chain skills.:**

Indeed, the major players in the supply chains of tomorrow may not currently be working in the profession, or, even if they are, may not realize a career transition is possible.

“If someone does not have experience representative of supply chain management, I would encourage him or her to revisit their previous experience,” says Frank Vido, director of supply chain planning at HAVI Global Solutions. “Anyone who has had to keep stock, order supplies, anticipate demand, or any number of things in a ‘non-SCM’ role has participated in the end-to-end supply chain, whether he or she was aware of it or not, and should use this experience to demonstrate knowledge and relevance.”

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