

The challenge: Supply chains and digital

Digitization promises new speed, efficiency, and flexibility for your supply chain. But how will you get from here there? Our new blog kicks off by inviting you to join the discussion.

November 2017

Knut Alicke, Christoph Lennartz, and Jürgen Rachor

As a supply-chain manager, you know that the [digital transformation](#) is on its way. Maybe your customers and partners are asking for greater levels of visibility and fast, seamless data exchange. Perhaps your traditional operational-improvement approaches are no longer producing the performance benefits your leaders demand. Maybe you are still struggling to eliminate stubborn issues created by poor internal transparency or inconsistent data. Most likely, you face a combination of these pressures, and others too.

Unlocking the opportunity

But if your organization is like many others, you probably face [significant hurdles](#) as you plan, implement, and scale up your digital efforts. Supply-chain executives tell us that that they can find it difficult to create a compelling case for digital initiatives, or that they struggle to establish a truly digital mind-set among their people. Some executives feel unsure about the supply-chain function's place within their organization's overall digital strategy.

Supply chain in the front seat

It's our belief that the supply-chain function shouldn't just be playing an active part in a company's digital transformation—it should assume a leadership role. The arguments are compelling. The supply chain occupies a unique, central position within the organization, closely linked to other critical functions and the material and information that flows between them.

Moreover, supply-chain personnel have the right combination of skills, including strong analytical capabilities and a deep understanding of business requirements. And the supply chain has the right attitudes too: its emergence as a separate function is relatively recent, yet it is already familiar with rapid technological and organizational change.

Documenting the digital transformation

To learn more about impact of digitization on the supply chain, and about the impact of the supply chain function on wider digital strategies, McKinsey is embarking on a major collaborative research project with the [WHU Otto Beisheim School of Management](#). (This article is one element of the PhD research of Christoph Lennartz on digital SCM transformations.)

Over the coming months, we'll be using this blog to share what we learn, describing how supply chain managers are overcoming the challenges and capturing the benefits of digitization, and how they are shaping the digital transformation of their organizations.

Get involved, for privileged access

We don't want this to be a one-way process, however. We'd like your insights and input too. **Participating in the project is easy**, requiring only a few minutes of your time to talk to our researchers. In return, **you'll receive privileged access** to the full results of the project, and the opportunity to participate in crucial events, including expert discussions and best-practice-sharing forums.

Take part, and help put yourself in the driving seat of your organization's digital transformation. For more information, contact [Christoph Lennartz@mckinsey.com](mailto:Christoph_Lennartz@mckinsey.com) ■

Knut Alicke is a partner in McKinsey's Stuttgart office, ***Christoph Lennartz*** is a consultant in the Munich office, and ***Jürgen Rachor*** is a senior expert in the Frankfurt office.

Copyright © 2017 McKinsey & Company, Inc. All rights reserved