

# Famed Flashbacks

## Moving mountains of product with foresight, not minions

*Manley clocked in as the master of capacity planning*

By Fred W. Crans

**SCHAUMBURG, IL (March 15, 2024)** – Carl Manley’s Bellwether Class of 2012 summary profile reads as follows: Carl L. Manley has spent more than three



Carl L. Manley, Bellwether Class of 2012

decades in supply chain operations where he was one of the earliest developers and implementers of integrated delivery network supply chain strategies and regional purchasing collaboratives, IDN-directed consolidated service centers, performance improvement initiatives and physician/primary care integration with supply chain activities. He also was instrumental in the founding of SMI and its predecessor organization that brought together IDNs to cover supply chain strategic initiatives.

I first met Carl while working on a project with VHA Performance Consulting (VHA was a precursor to Vizient). My role was to observe processes and activities in Sentara Health’s warehouse up to the point of delivery to the final destination – usually one of Sentara’s acute care hospitals.

Carl was one of Sentara’s senior leaders, but, as I once described my “Baseline” column in *Healthcare Purchasing News* back in 2007, he looked more like a shop foreman with his white shirtsleeves rolled up to his elbows and his pocket

protector full of pens. He was as comfortable on the warehouse floor as he was in the Board Room. He engaged the hourly workers as a peer and did the same with C-suite members. In a way, he sort of reminded me of the Peter Falk character Lt. Frank Columbo, - the detective whose *modus operandi* was to scratch his head in confusion, ask some apparently unrelated questions, all while moving his way toward solving the crime. *[Editor's Note: Even though "Columbo" aired on multiple television networks from February 1960 through January 2003 and now available in reruns, anyone younger than Generation X might not be familiar with or care about him. So, for the younger generations, think of Columbo as an earlier male version of Elsbeth Tascioni, a quirky character recently spun off from "The Good Wife" into her own TV series, "Elsbeth."]*

And I was right.

One week while I was at Sentara, Carl assigned me to work the 3-to-11 shift in the warehouse. My job was to observe and accompany the workers as they performed their daily tasks. He told me to record everything I saw, but NOT to help out, and to report to him on Friday before I left for home. I took Carl's directions seriously and assiduously recorded everything I saw.

And every day it was the same.

The crew punched in at 3 p.m. and immediately began pulling and staging orders for delivery to the hospitals. They stopped at 6 p.m. for dinner, after which they loaded the trucks and set out to the various hospitals. They pulled up to the loading docks, off-loaded their supplies, put whatever needed to be taken back to the warehouse in the trucks, closed the truck doors and headed back to the warehouse.

Once they returned to the warehouse, they unloaded the trucks, parked them in their assigned spots, cleaned up their work areas, punched out and went home! The first night, I was somewhat confused and didn't say anything, but by the second night, I had to ask, "What are you guys' working hours?"

"Three to 11," they replied.

"Does Carl know you guys are punching out at 8:30?"

“Yeah, he’s the one who told us to do it.”

“Don’t you guys hate being robbed of two and a half hours’ pay every day?”

“We don’t get robbed. Carl told us just to punch out when we’re done, and he’ll take care of the timecards, so we get a full 40-hours every week.”

I entered my Friday report-out meeting with more questions than answers. Carl was sitting behind his desk with a big smile on his face. “How did your week go, Fred? Is Joe over at the Norfolk Hospital still dragging his behind and letting the other guys do all the work?”

“Yeah, Joe knows how to slide with the best of ’em. The week went well. Everything got delivered correctly. There were no issues to report, except one.”

“What’s that,” he asked with a gleam in his eye.

Like Columbo was known for saying, “Ah, just one more thing ... there’s something that bothers me...”

“Well, Carl, every night, all the work is done by 8:30 and your workers just punch out, close up the warehouse and go home. I asked them about it, and they said that you told them to punch out and go home when the work was done, and you would make sure that they received a full 40 hours’ pay every week. Why the hell would you do that?”

“I thought you would figure it out, Fred. You see, we are planning on acquiring two more hospitals and I needed to know how much excess capacity I had, so I told them they could go home when the work was done. By having them punch out, I get an accurate read of how much cushion I have and be able to accurately calculate how many new people I will have to add when the new hospitals come on board.”

Carl Manly, the Capacity Planning Godfather.

*Fred W. Crans, Bellwether Class of 2020, has more than five decades of healthcare supply chain experience and service in a variety of executive leadership roles that spans military and private-sector communities as well as provider, supplier, group purchasing organization and consultant segments. He currently serves on the Advisory Council of Bellwether League Foundation and as Healthcare Business Development Executive for St. Onge Co. For more, visit Bellwether League Foundation's web site at <https://www.bellwetherleague.org/>.*



Fred W. Crans, Bellwether Class of 2020