

FROM THE PAGES OF *LEADERS & LUMINARIES* E-MAGAZINE ...

Vintage Voice

New Year, new you to be resolute

Time for supply chain's renaissance to emerge

By Rick Dana Barlow

SCHAUMBURG, IL (January 8, 2024) – Whenever a New Year rolls around some people obsess over making resolutions – whether they be eating right, exercising more, feeling and looking good, making more money, quitting, retiring, traveling, whatever.

Some follow their aims and goals well into the New Year; others succumb to the daily routine and stresses of life and throw in the towel by February (likely after Valentine's Day for obvious reasons).

Given all that has happened throughout the world, the nation, the industry and the profession, healthcare supply chain executives, leaders, managers and professionals should make and practice their own collective resolution for 2024 – a leap year, an election year, a pivotal year for growth, influence and progress.

Like what you ask?

You've heard the not-so-old saw, "never let a crisis go to waste," or some variation of the adage, more or pop phrase. Unfortunately, for the last three consecutive years, those in the healthcare supply chain have accomplished just that and it threatens to continue.

Say what now?

You may be exasperatingly and exhaustively tired of hearing about the global COVID-19 pandemic, but memories linger about stockouts, backorders and logistical clots in between, be they labor issues at coastal docks to a grounded freighter blocking the Suez Canal. But it's time to inoculate yourself from Pandemic Logistics Stress Disorder (PLSD).

You may be angered and frustrated about details shared in ongoing reports of the Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Hamas wars – particularly the ordinary citizens caught in the middle, suffering from and victimized by needless violence and unconscionably egregious behavior.

Here in America, we agonize and complain when our overnight delivery fails to arrive on our doorstep at the “promised” time on the invoice and receipt.

What's the common denominator?

For all of these situations, supply chain operations (should) take center stage.

Yes, you read that right. One of the major causes of and solutions to many, if not most or all, of these crises and problems involves supply chain. To foment or prevent something requires the successful manufacture, distribution and transportation of goods and services; to alleviate, relieve or satisfy demand for assistance and rescue requires the successful manufacture, distribution and transportation of goods and services.

If that sounds like a vinyl disc spinning on a turntable, ignore it in a streaming world at your own – our own – peril.

If supply chain represents a common denominator in these events of human suffering – let's call it a cause-and-effect situation, then what is missing as an element of an (if not the) antidote?

Visible and vocal supply chain experts – inside and outside of healthcare.

If you've watched media reports during the last three years alone, you've likely seen and heard many talking heads – from media personalities to politicians to late night talk show hosts to bloggers – pontificate about the problem, point fingers and bloviate about potential solutions in the consumer outlet.

All placebos.

Consumers, by and large, don't read the trades – unless they work in the affected areas.

But the trades, per se, remain the bivouac and residence of useful expertise – particularly in supply chain ... and in healthcare.

You.

Now search online for any consumer media that features the audio and/or video of a healthcare supply chain executive, leader, manager or professional sharing his or her frontline and back-office knowledge, experience and wisdom with those on one side of the camera, telephone or computer as part of an informational report for all those on the other side of the television, radio or computer.

Good luck finding many examples. If and when you do, send me the link. I'll celebrate, fete and share the good news.

Likely, you won't. And that must stop. Starting this year.

There are plenty of supply chain experts in healthcare out there – including Bellwether Hall of Famers, Ammer Honorees, Future Famers and hundreds – if not thousands – of others who have yet to be recognized and honored for their creativity, knowledge, leadership and management.

You know who they are. You know who you are. I challenge and encourage you to step up and share your expertise. Serve as a knowledgeable and reputable source to inform, encourage, educate and even comfort the general public.

Yes, I recognize that your organizational corporate communications, marketing or public relations department likely serves as a gatekeeper to protect branding and

imagery for investment and PR purposes (and in this era where artificial intelligence and deep-fake technology can alter and seduce perception, many are hesitant and risk-averse). Instead, assert yourself and recruit them to the cause. Demonstrate how you can serve as a capable ambassador of and evangelist for your organization, the profession and the industry.

Only then will healthcare supply chain draw the genuine respect and admiration it deserves, which also will attract young talent into the mix to develop their skills in growing collegiate programs.

We don't need more crises to justify and motivate healthcare supply chain development, growth, influence and success. We just need to capitalize on the ones we've experienced already and are meandering through now.

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