

Business Velocity through E-Supply Chain Excellence

The editors asked Paul Albright, President and CEO of SeeCommerce (formerly VIT) how supply chain visibility and performance measurement can be used to derive significant business value from existing technology investments. He discusses how SeeCommerce's SeeChain applications help companies diagnose problems and pinpoint opportunities, which result in improved supplier performance, lower carried inventory costs, and, ultimately, competitive advantage.

Why should senior executives explore supply chain visibility and performance measurement?

We need only to look back at Christmas 1999 to understand the significance of a high-performance supply chain. For dot-coms and brick-and-mortar manufacturers alike, fulfillment problems devastated bottom lines – and valuations. Manufacturers realized, the hard way, that understanding the performance of their supply chains was far more important to their success than a glitzy Web presence.

Now that the manufacturing world is embracing an e-business model, executives realize that running an extended supply chain without performance visibility is like trying to fly an airplane by looking at the fuel gauge. Key decision-makers need a transparent, real-time view of the supply chain so they can proactively take advantage of changing conditions and avert disasters before they happen. In today's competitive environment, business managers simply can't afford to wait weeks – or months – for the information they need. They need to see how their manufacturing initiatives are performing real-time, so their employees and partners can immediately collaborate to make faster, better decisions across the global supply chain.

How is SeeCommerce helping companies leverage their existing technology investments to exceed their supply chain performance goals?

Our Internet applications deliver new value for companies' past investments in ERP (enterprise resource planning) and manufacturing systems by providing immediate views of supply chain

information on demand. Each user actually sees data in business context so he or she can take action with confidence. Our customers consider SeeChain essential for competitive advantage, allowing them to see, investigate, and take action on supply chain problems in real time through the Web.

Our applications represent a new era for software – technology that provides business managers, which are 95% of the users – with information they understand and need to do their daily jobs better. It's summarized so users see transparent views of their requested data on the fly – why should they care if it comes from SAP, i2, Manugistics, or some other system? Because it's all via the Internet, we supercharge their organizations in weeks, not months, so users gain a rapid return on investment.

What do you see in the future for supply chain technology? What new collaborative technology is on the horizon?

We believe that the next wave in supply chain technology will be Supplier Relationship Management (SRM). The world has come to understand the value of CRM (customer relationship management) and ORM (operating resources management). SRM presents a new level of business effectiveness.

The driving premise behind SRM is that you're only as good to your customers as your suppliers are to you. A leading industry analyst reported that there is a trillion dollars of inefficiency left in the supply chain, much of which is supplier-related. With the rise of e-commerce and online procurement, the business-to-business world must embrace a whole new type of

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supplier relationship. In order to take full advantage of direct supplier and independent trading exchanges, businesses need a dynamic supplier collaboration system to evaluate and improve myriad supplier relationships.

To help our customers collaborate with their suppliers, we recently introduced SeeChain Supplier. It's designed to help major manufacturers and distributors greatly improve suppliers' performance and collaboration. Measuring supplier services based on various metrics, including timeliness of order fulfillment

and downstream quality of goods, SeeChain Supplier aggregates and analyzes supplier performance data from existing transaction systems and presents it daily via the Web.

Several of our customers have had supplier-rating systems for years, but they were typically reactive, not proactive. They report that SeeChain Supplier significantly enhances their ability to collaborate with thousands of suppliers, which they expect to result in up to a 15% improvement in supplier performance. Since performance, in turn, affects cost savings, parts availability, and customer satisfaction, they should see a definite bottom-line impact from using the SeeChain Supplier application.

What types of companies can best benefit from this technology?

Companies from a wide variety of industries can benefit from supply chain visibility and performance measurement software, including high-tech and packaged-goods manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, automotive, and retail.

Typically, we work with Global 1000 companies that wish to leverage the Web to gain competitive advantage by enhancing the performance of their supply chain

operations. They've usually made significant investments in ERP and operational systems, and they have chosen us to provide intuitive, secure access to their information. As a result, hundreds of decision-makers can make better decisions faster.

Why is SeeCommerce is in a position to help major manufacturers and distributors realize bottom-line benefits?

With first-to-market standing, strong analyst support and A-list financial backing, SeeCommerce is well positioned to be a valuable, stable partner for our clients. By delivering real bottom-line impact, we've secured multi-billion dollar, market-leading Global 1000 companies as customers, some of whom have been in production and gaining measurable business value from our products since Q4 of 1998.

While some niche players offer pieces of our solution, no one can provide the breadth of domain expertise we hold in supply chain and Web technology. With every implementation we gain even broader expertise, which, in turn, we fold into the product. This allows our customers – as well as us – to get further and further ahead of any potential competitive threat.

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Web link

For more on visibility, see:

enslow.ASCET.com

bruce.ASCET.com

anderson-g.ASCET.com

For more on metrics, see:

lapide.ASCET.com

miller.ASCET.com

For more on ERP, see:

lapide.ASCET.com

evans.ASCET.com