Leaner, meaner, eco-friendlier logistics

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As competitive qualities like an agile supply chain, and greener more automated ways of doing business take hold in the logistics industry, so companies continue to clamour to gain market share. Here are the season's logistics trends in brief, writes Charles Edelstein of Executive Placements.

Cat on a hot tin roof

If your manager asked you what agility means within the logistics sector, would you be able to respond intelligently? Would you be able to win your senior's approval in your next logistics job interview on the basis of this answer?

You'll realise now just how critical being agile is to business today: as the demand for products and services increases, so fluctuations in supply and demand must be catered for, and costs must be kept low to ensure return on investment stays high.

While you may still be a junior in the game, it always pays to think about how you would do things if you were running a business, or leading a global team. It pays to think big, because then you will be able to contribute on a high level throughout your career – by finding ways to:

- upskill without delay on new technologies;
- remain abreast of market trends;
- adapt rapidly to customer demand;
  and
- better manage stock levels to avoid supply-chain disruption.

So mention in that interview, or advise your manager (when the opportunity arises), of the importance of a back-up plan – including alternative suppliers, lower-maintenance vehicles, and best-in-class strategies when you next encounter a challenge.

Mind over machine

If logistics management deals with the flow of goods, services, and data from the point of origin to the point of consumption, the transformation brought about by automation cannot be underestimated.

Gone are the days when humans feared the bots taking over their jobs – in fact, Juan Perez, employee value proposition (EVP) lead and chief information officer (CIO) at Salesforce, writes for Harvard Business Review that: “The ability to quickly and easily automate workflows helps companies achieve faster time to value, whether by reducing case handling time, boosting conversion rates, providing faster quotes, expediting client onboarding, or streamlining order processing”.

Once again, whether you’re in the market for a logistics job, or are making your way rapidly up the industry’s career ladder, there’s no denying the extent to which off-loading goods in a warehouse, or the manual picking of such goods, can pose problems of all kinds – time-related, health-related, and especially error-related.

Even semi-automated processes for lifting and carrying can cut unnecessary time out of operations, and help to prevent injuries in team members who would surely be better placed to handle higher-level tasks and duties during the working day.

Take a walk on the green side

As the environmental, social and governance (ESG) aspects of doing business become increasingly important, so the criteria used to evaluate a company’s risks and practices rise to the fore.

While ESG frameworks are becoming a critical aid to sustainable investment, in that they can help investors to analyse the extent to which that firm’s operations are aligned with their values, so businesses of all kinds are being called upon to reduce their environmental footprints in whatever ways they can – not just to minimise their impact on the environment, but also to improve their operational efficiencies.