

View Point



Agile Supply Chain Management Information Visibility & Integration Highlights

Alex Farcasiu

Supporting non-standard data format across the extended supply chain continues to remain a challenge despite standardization based on EDI, GDSN or other formats. Established data exchanges find it difficult to support all the proprietary extensions at a cost that makes it accessible to small and medium companies across the globe

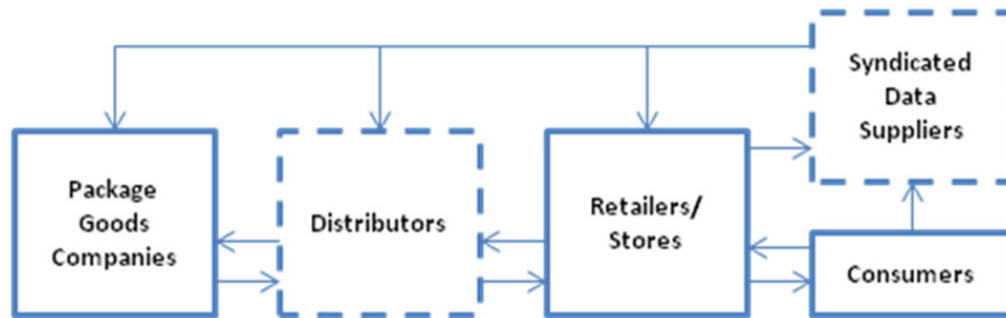
Global packaged goods companies struggle connecting with distributors in developing markets due to technical complexity as well as location and language barriers. Those markets are still dominated by small family owned retailers. Measuring promotions efficiency, capturing advanced demand signals or introducing new product remains difficult

Generating complex and/or exploratory analytics based on data acquired from multiple partners is difficult and can't be done during the expected time window.

This paper is highlighting key challenges related to supply chain visibility and describes elements of a comprehensive framework required to enable flexible and comprehensive solution.

Extended Supply Chain Challenges

Today supply chains include a variety of players and may span across the globe.



Multiple forces drive the need for greater visibility. For large global companies multiple geographies require the adoption of different supply chain strategies adapted to the local economic and cultural realities. Language barriers and operating across time zones create increasing complexity and difficulty in effectively communicating with supply chain partners and customers.

In developing markets large retailers have smaller role than in developed markets and data often has to be collected from multiple distributors and small family owned stores.

In many companies, supply chain information exists in disparate systems and the data received from suppliers is often inaccurate or very difficult to access. Manually intensive processes to collect supply chain data from internal systems and external trading partners result in poor decision making, and an increase in supply chain risk exposure and inefficiency. Mergers and acquisitions may create even more complexity as each new division finds itself operating in silos and unable to leverage economies across the organization.

There is a rising trend to combine in a flexible, cost efficient way data from multiple supply chain participants as well as third parties like Syndicated Data Suppliers or Logistics companies in order to provide a complete E2E picture. Frequently reporting requirement change to better reflect business needs and IT departments have to be able to respond at the speed of business.

Such complexity makes it difficult to see what's happening in your supply chain from moment to moment. It can jeopardize your effectiveness in the management of critical activities with suppliers, and undermine your ability to meet customer demands and compete in the marketplace.

Required Capabilities

1. Data mapping & integration

- Ability to map various data formats leveraging advanced tools and domain knowledge while leveraging existing standards and data exchanges and complementing them when required with added value capabilities
- Support any standard as well as proprietary integration mechanisms: batch, web services
- Ability to integrate any type of data: master data, orders, inventory levels, syndicated data... from any type of partner: packaged goods manufacturers, distributors, retailers

2. Monitoring and notification. Monitor all network nodes for events like: out of inventory, changes in consumers patterns, inconsistent master and reference data

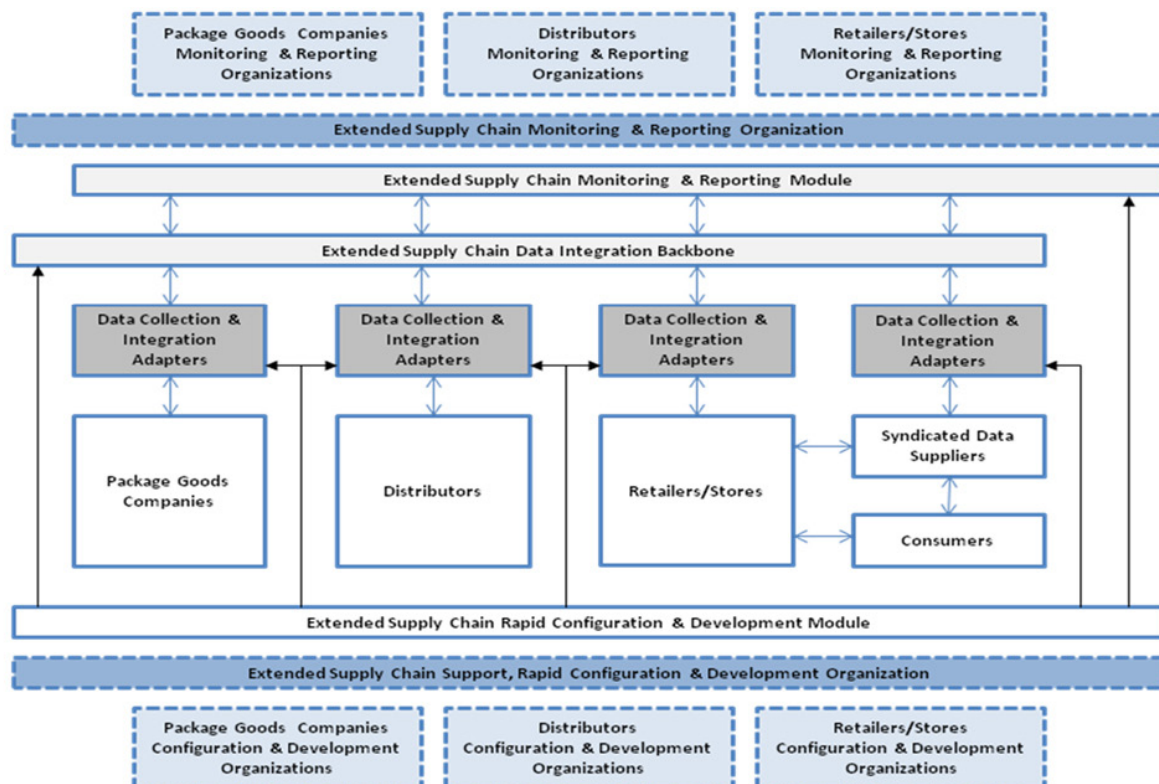
3. Reporting, dashboards and advanced analytics

- Each new supply chain partner should plug into the reporting framework and once integrated the information provided will automatically be leveraged for key KPI
- Partner and role based customized dashboard should display relevant KPI's as well as operational supply chain data
- Supply Chain participants should be able to execute advanced analytics and data mining without affecting the overall system performance

4. **Advanced support with in-depth domain and technical knowledge.** An E2E support organization capable to offer technical and business solution for constantly changing has to be available to support the framework. This service has to be provided at a competitive cost and on a as needed bases
5. **Call center, on boarding, multi-language and location support**
 - The support organization has to offer services like partner on boarding, technical and business support call center, training services, systems customization and integration implementation
 - Taking in account the typical global distribution of operation in a modern supply chain, it is essential to be able to offer support services in each location and local language
6. **Flexible delivery model.** In order to be inclusive to all the supply chain participants all services should be offered in a multiple formats: packaged, to be deployed and operated by each enterprise, business process outsourcing to be delivered by a fix number of resources associated to each participants, SaaS operated exclusively by a service provider
7. **Agile technology platform & support framework.** The solution has to be able to deliver in weeks instead of months. A combination of flexible architecture and highly specialized shared services can ensure that new partners or functionality can be deployed in a competitive manner
8. **Offer complete supply chain visibility.** Traditional supply chain blind spots like integration with medium and small distributors in developing markets or POS data from small retailers should be covered leveraging technology varying from mobile computing to direct data collection. This is critical in order to give visibility in some of the most dynamic segments of the supply chain
9. **Multi-directional data exchange.** The flow of information has to be enabled from retailers toward manufacturers: POS Data, Inventory, Orders... as well as from manufacturers to retailers: master data, promotions

The Agile Supply Chain Unified Framework

The following figure illustrates an example of integrated agile supply chain framework:



Key components of this framework include:



About the Author

Alex Farcasiu is a Principal Architect with the Retail, CPG and Logistics practice at Infosys. For more than 15 years he focused on enterprise integration and data management solutions.

For additional information please contact him at: alex_farcasiu@infosys.com



For more information, contact askus@infosys.com

About Infosys

Many of the world's most successful organizations rely on Infosys to deliver measurable business value. Infosys provides business consulting, technology, engineering and outsourcing services to help clients in over 30 countries build tomorrow's enterprise.

For more information about Infosys (NASDAQ:INFY), visit www.infosys.com.