

The Future of Supply Chain, Episode 125: Business trends, challenges, and opportunities with CSCMP's CEO Mark Baxa

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Richard: I'm Richard Howells, and this is The Future of Supply Chain, a podcast where we discuss hot topics, best practices, and the latest innovations in today's global business. In today's episode, I'm joined by the Council for Supply Chain Management Professionals, CEO Mark Baxa, and from now on I'll be just you saying CSCMP instead of the full name Mark, if that's okay with you.

Mark: Perfect.

Richard: It's a pleasure to have you on the podcast. We met a few months ago at a SCCMP Executive Inner Circle event at MIT in Boston, and we discussed the possibility of you being on the podcast. So it's great to actually have our calendars align and, you've been able to make time to be part of it. So [00:01:00] welcome to the Future of Supply Chain. If you could introduce yourself and tell us a little bit about CSCMP, that would be great to kick us off.

Mark: Richard, thank you very much. And, uh, as you already mentioned, we met at the executive inner circle. that's the, the specific carve out for chief supply chain officers, executives in supply chain, to gather around critical thinking, solving for today's problems, but carving a path for the future. As you indicated, I have the fortunate pleasure of representing about 11,000 members as their president and CEO of this wonderful organization and about a quarter of a million affiliates. Those are connected into us by various means, social media, et cetera, around the world. The Council of Supply Chain Management professionals are CSC is now in their 63rd year. And, uh, why is that significant? Well, we began this journey many years ago under the leadership of Dr. Don Bauer, socks from Michigan State, and a few others that thought that

supply chain professionals then at [00:02:00] that time was really materials management distribution, well before supply and chain were put together.

Richard: I was going to share i am sure it had a different name at the time.

Mark: It did. Yes, yes, yes. It was a very different name at the time. Then it graduated into the Council of Logistics Management and then of course, in 2005 we changed it to CSCMP. But we gathered, uh, really for the purpose of adjoining each other, and thinking about ways to solve critical problems on the road ahead. Because the visionaries that began this association really felt that development, education, networking, and just overall connecting with those that are working on similar challenges or opportunities could benefit from one another. And of course. Take it to where we are today. There's many different forms of that take place around the world as we speak. So, if I think about the core relevance of CSCMP, it's truly in the heart of educating and developing and connecting the world's supply chain professionals. We're an unbiased research [00:03:00] oriented, laden with white papers and many live and virtual events to continue the conversation and the journey of solving for today's problems and looking to the future of supply chain. And it covers every aspect. And when I say supply chain, I really do mean the genuine holistic supply chain. Our members are, very broad in terms of their areas of expertise, from academia to military, to, beneficial cargo owners or practitioners and service providers like SAP, and that makes up the ecosystem of today's supply chain, when you think about things in a more holistic fashion, members can join at a very nominal rate, access all of our content. And then we have another profile on the formal education and training platforms under the SC Pro brand, and that counts. Fundamentals, foundations, LinkedIn learning. And then of course, certification. And here we've seen, this is [00:04:00] remarkable actually, in the last 18 months, we've had over 70,000 course starts. It's a record, it's a record rate, and it's growing every day. And it's fantastic because it speaks to one thing, and that is people are thirsty for information concepts and continuous learning to improve. And leaders, this is a really important call out because if you not thought about it in this light. Step up because your people are thirsty and when you develop them, they're likely to stay. And of course, your supply chain becomes more competent and competitive. So that's why we exist. And, uh, our mission is in bedrock, etched in stone. We live this every day and we're here for the profession. And we can talk more about how we do that as we get into the podcast here, but that's the whole of it and my personal background. I am actually a, an agrarian in agriculture, if you will. I started that career in 1981, joining the Upjohn Company, which owned an agricultural seed division called Asgrow Seed Company. And Agro had its [00:05:00] foundation in the vegetable seed business and actually became the number one seed producer for vegetables, fresh market and producer, if you will, Back. Oh my gosh. It

became, you know, that in that status in the early 19 hundreds actually and, uh, continued that tradition and it became very resonant in the row crop business. And then eventually Monsanto companies started acquiring seed companies, biotech inventions had to have a home which were embedded into many of the seed products around the world and still are today, and then now purchased by buyer. And I was with that whole organization throughout my. Entire career is the company's transitioned. Over half of that was spent in the formal supply chain. And I love the supply chain. And I love building up others, so they could do a, an even better job tomorrow and what they're aiming to do. And frankly, that's my heart and that's why serve as I do here at CSCMP.

Richard: That's great. And I'm proud to say I'm one of those 11,000 members, [00:06:00] I've been for many years now and, I'd love reading the research and the white papers. And you are probably the ideal person to ask this next question. From your perspective and the perspective of your members, what are the most critical challenges facing global supply chains as we look towards 2026 and beyond?

Mark: It's a big question and I'll try to unpack that as, as clearly and succinctly as I can and we can dive into details as you wish, but certainly we're at the cross section of what I call, a hyper transformative generation of leadership. And what I mean by that is we're at the cross section of solving the influx of geopolitical challenges of today, which are frankly man induced. Right? There are people induced. We are facing, we're facing geopolitical challenges, of course, we're facing wars. We're facing a number of things that environmentally are frankly. Human created. [00:07:00] The other side of what humans are creating is this generation of technological advancements that are just moving at warp speed. Artificial intelligence is now coupled to what we believe was a most transformative period of time in supply chain in the late nineties and all the way through the two thousands, and SAP's a big part of that. And that is everything from ERP systems to solutions that solve for critical challenges or enable the supply chain to work on the digital side. And now artificial intelligence, robotics. We have machine learning and we're all experiencing this at some level, but most of us experience the taste of that from really the large language models such as Chat GPT, and others. But it goes much further than that. And this is growing exponentially. And the challenge there, when I talk about warp speed is that humankind keeping up with that and translating the results into actions, right? You're smiling, you know, it is just [00:08:00] growing really crazy, crazy fast. And our members aren't necessarily resisting. They're looking for, is the train gonna slow down fast, slow enough so I can just step on right the car and get going? So there is a. There's just a lot of energy towards progress and what this evolution of technological advancements can do for us and the future of supply chain and humankind, frankly. And yes, there's

risks associated with it. There's liable risks, there's, cybersecurity risks and all of that. But we can either live in an era of fear or we can live with eyes wide open about the risks, but taking advantage of where this can actually enable us to do great things. So our members are embedded in this. Full force. But solving for today's challenges and a moving target around cost of goods impacted by tariffs, restrictions, and other things that are occurring on the, if you will, the geopolitical stage, are a hyper concern for supply chain leaders and [00:09:00] adjusting to this, how to leverage these cost impacts. Will they stay? Will they change tomorrow? I mean, you talk about uncontrolled states of managing your bottom line. We're kind of living through something that we've never seen before and we can talk all we want about the impacts of COVID-19. And many of us face personal losses, and I'm certainly sorry for all of that. The constraints, the new business models that had to be created, but yet the supply chain. Still delivered. The shelves still had what people needed, right? We still had medicines, we still had food. Might not have been the color of sweatpants you wanted, but you still got sweatpants. And yes, of course we eventually found toilet paper might have been extra strength instead of extra smooth. But we got our job done. And that's just the beauty of supply chain. But today, there's moving targets, and this is a big challenge for the supply chain right now, and that is the moving targets. And we can talk about how some are working on solutions around that, but. You asked about the big challenges. These are the top two that come to mind. There's certainly other state of the economy finances, a flattening or [00:10:00] some, almost near flattening growth. across time since the second quarter of 2023, a challenge logistics market, there's challenges that really flow through the top two things that I talked about that are impacting everywhere else, right? So these are things that are top of mind of our leaders, our members and, uh, others that are working on things to help our members see their way through.

Richard: You set me up perfectly for the next question because you talked about the disruptions, challenges and sometimes opportunities that arise because of those disruptions. You talked a little bit about the rate of change and the rapid technology advances. So with all of this in mind, how do you see the role of supply chain professionals evolving in the coming years? What is a typical supply chain executive of the future?

Mark: Well, first and foremost, they're artificially intelligence infused, AI infused leaders of the future. AI infused workforce of the [00:11:00] future. And this will come in many different styles and forms, and industry verticals will have their own specific ways of addressing this. If I just look at the planning function, whether that be integrated planning or that be manufacturing planning and look at demand planning, S&OP processes, all of that is going to be enabled at a much higher level of performance through artificial intelligence and

machine learning. If I think about the manufacturing processes, look, the auto industry showed us many years ago that robots or robotic arms are part of the manufacturing process and how automobiles are designed and eventually made to be built involves robotics. The efficiency of that, whether they be welds, former shapers, it doesn't matter or just core parts assembly. And now, we think about how these technologies will be advanced. Well, it's gonna take a mindset shift and we can discuss all we want about what jobs are gonna be [00:12:00] replaced by either robotics or artificial intelligence, or, I like to think about it as more enablement. Because it, I find it difficult and our members do as well, that the human element is gonna be removed. It's just not going to be. So this is just a different way of doing work, but in a way that brings a higher level of performance on many different levels across all functions. let's not forget that, we're thinking about ways to augment the workforce of the future. We have vehicles that are driverless, that are being piloted in many different places and, and in many different forms, from taxis to 80,000 pound gross weight trucks right here in the US. And we're gonna see more of this. So we're not done inventing and we're not done in done creating. So the workforce of the future and the leaders of the future. We're gonna have to think in a different way. it's not just looking at streamlining and optimizing processes, it's invoking technologies and enabling things differently and ways we get work done differently. [00:13:00] And you might argue that it's no different than what we did 20 years ago. It's probably the same. We did look at the evolving workforce and, and ways we do work. Absolutely. So that will continue. But it's taking on a different form because the supercomputers are involved now, and this is something that we predicted would be coming while it's here, and it's going to advance in ways that perhaps most of us can't even imagine today because every day's a new day, we see new things being created that just absolutely are mind blowing technologies. So I look forward to the workforce of the future and helping them through content education and thinking differently. In terms of how they will do their work on the road ahead.

Richard: You mentioned a little earlier the pandemic and the moment when everyone in the world understood what a supply chain was. You didn't have to explain what supply chain is anymore. You just had to explain how it needs to help. You said that we made it through by being more resilient in effect, and that's been the, the word of this decade [00:14:00] for sure is resilient when it comes to supply chain. But how are organizations or how can organizations ensure that they have this agility, this resiliency, because disruptions are not going to stop. They're only becoming more frequent, if anything. So how do companies become more resilient?

Mark: It takes different forms. Some manufacturers that do some really great things for society. Let's just think about one particular sector, and that's a

commercial aircraft industry and the supply chain that enables that to work. It's incredibly vast and it's complicated, right? And I don't know everything I need to know about it, but a little bit of imagination gets you there pretty quickly. And when you have subcontractors that build critical components of a particular line of aircraft and they can't keep up with demand, one of the options is you acquire them and bring them inside. You resource them, and [00:15:00] you own the technology. Another is you invest in it. So there's different ways, and I just use that as a foundational example. When I think about building resilience, it's multifaceted. It begins with understanding how your supply chain is first and foremost constructed. And it's very important for leaders in supply chain to think about how all the functions are connected and their roles, and what each role and each operation needs from each other, and examining where the pinch points are in that pipe. Okay. Think about it as a pipe and where those pinch points are. There's equations or there's ways to solve them. So first and foremost, it really gets to standardizing, understanding your standardized your supply chain before you even optimize. And then quickly, where can we optimize? And that could be removing pinch points. It might be enabling things to go faster, better, and at a lower cost. And it also involves the networks that builds your supply chain or makes your supply chain [00:16:00] tick. Your technology providers such as your IT systems and give a commercial plug for SAP, you know, your ERP system, right? And how is it built? How's it being utilized? Right? Are still more people doing stuff with spreadsheets in the dark of the night where your partners in the supply chain can't see your work? Or is it enabled all inside the ERP system? How effective are you? What do you need to fix? And then you get into the, the next step is the kind of the hyper optimization. Where can we go faster, better, and more reliably? And this involves supplier networks and understanding the risk that your supplier networks bring to your business. The opportunity for resiliency that your supplier networks can offer your business. And we take it to the positive side. It's not all just about risk, it's about opportunity. It's about where your solutions rest. You know, many times we just run the logistics. Okay? If we can't get the truck with our contracted providers, then where can we get the next truck? Oh, let's go to a three pl. They've got all kinds of resources. Well, they might be procuring the same stuff from [00:17:00] the same trucking company you already have contracts with. So it's just an example where you have to uncover and take time to uncover the flows occur, not just within your own supply chain, but within your supplier networks. So then you can then begin to build out your options. To keep things flowing fluidly and every leader and every supply chain function should be challenged to create that fluidity first and foremost without creating additional cost. And if you have to create opportunity cost, which is what it is, then you gotta bring that to the fore. Everybody wants to know in the end, can we satisfy consumer demand? And sometimes, like it was during COVID, it is, I don't care what you do, just get it done, because our competition

can't get it there. So we've gotta win. And it happens in, in the regular course of business as well with or without COVID, right? Again, an awful experience that we all had to go through, but there were a lot of learnings in supply chain that came out of that. Let's take a case and example, right? This is well known, so [00:18:00] forget about where COVID came from. Wuhan, China is an epicenter of manufacturing. And multi-service providers in the procurement world are kind of the amalgamator or consolidators of parts coming from many different places. Right. and many times businesses were procuring from, sure, they had three parties, right? Three multi-service providers acquiring a widget, and it was the same widget. And from a procurement perspective, we've got leverage, we've got resiliency because we have three MSPs supplying the same part. We're great. But did we take the time to figure out where those parts were manufactured and populating those three MSPs? And what we discovered during COVID was they were all buying from the same core manufacturer. So no MSP had the part, right? So this is part of uncovering the supply chain, and that is we've gotta take time to know. Tier one, tier two, and possibly even tier three within our supplier networks. This is a big part, and I know I'm creating stressors right now for our procurement [00:19:00] professionals, but look, I learned this from some really great people because the last role that I had prior to retiring from corporate America, I spent four and a half years in our procurement function, and I learned a heck of a lot there. Didn't do it, all of it well, but I learned a heck of a lot. This whole idea around supplier stratification and supplier enablement, strategic sourcing, and supplier quality, it matters and it takes on a new dimension. Now, Richard, and this is what I'm really speaking about, and that is three bids in a solution. If that's who you are, you might wanna brush up on your sourcing skills just a bit, or you might wanna find a different part of the supply chain if that's the limit of what you wanna do, because you're not helping people. Right. You gotta go much deeper. You gotta become much more proficient at learning and uncovering. So this is a big part of building resiliency into a supply chain is what, what enables us to be resilient is the options we have and the options often rest with our supplier network. Whether it's the core material we need to build. It's the [00:20:00] core manufacturer that actually makes the retail ready solutions and everything in between. So there's a lot of weight on that. And then how we physically move it, how we store it, and how we get it to market. All of that matters. something that I hear we're learning as well that, Just because the order exists doesn't mean the order's gonna go. So a lot of this too is sitting with your final end distribution channel, who you sell into, whether it's direct to consumer, which is a harder prediction, I know. but that's where AI comes in to help us. But certainly at the business level, what's happening at the demand front and, and is this really going to be a sell through strategy where I can deliver what I've worked so hard to build for you? So all of this is part of a resilient strategy that our members

and certainly the supply chain as a whole, is now thinking, and there's a lot of research being done in this area.

Richard: If resiliency was the word of the decade so far. I think increasingly and in different geographies, more so than others, [00:21:00] sustainability is joining it. And sustainability from a supply chain perspective, supply chains are a huge contributor to the issues of having a sustainable business, which means it's a huge opportunity as well, to reduce your waste for example. So what are some of the best practices that you've seen of companies embedding sustainability into their supply chain processes?

Mark: You've set that question up beautifully because we focus on this at CSCMP big time. And in my last four and a half years, in corporate America, I had a huge role in actually our sourcing strategy around sustainability, which I thoroughly enjoyed. So let's talk about the consumer. Let's talk about the end consumer and what they want, and let's work backwards and how the supply chain enables that. So regardless of where we are today from a political perspective, let's just set that aside. Alright. What does society want? Society wants accountability. You can't [00:22:00] escape it. And it's not only environmental, it's ethical and it's economic.

Richard: Right.

Mark: I put it this way, it's doing the right things right all the time, the right things for the business, the right things for the consumer. In fact, you could probably and should reverse that, right? Things for the consumer, right? Things for the business. So when you go to buy a cup of coffee, what are you thinking about? Great taste, but reputation at the same time. Yeah, what's the reputation of who I'm buying this cup of coffee from? What do they stand for? Right? Are they ethically sourced coffee beans? I'm just using this as an example. What does all that mean? Well, I wanna know that it's truly that, is there fairness? Are all farmers given access to this great cup of coffee? Are farmers who are producing it and the conditions by which they're producing this coffee? Are they good conditions? Is the workforce humanely treated? And in the end, does it come to me in a clean form? However we define clean today gets to the environment. [00:23:00] So people hold manufacturers and frankly, the supply chain, 'cause manufacturing's part of the supply chain accountable for this. When people are scored either publicly or not as companies of how well they're doing across the three E's. Economic, ethical and environmental sustainability. Corporate social responsibility boils down to your, supply chain. It's the majority of it. So the consumer today is clearly thinking about this. They haven't let that off. And the way we know this is we're now in our sixth edition in

collaboration with MIT, who is the research firm or the research arm doing the work for CSCMP. It's the global state of supply chain sustainability. And that report will be unveiled at this year's Edge conference, at the Gaylord and National Harbor, October 5th through the eighth. So I invite everybody to attend that. It's an action packed conference, and it is the credible conference of the globe. So we'll unveil this report. You can [00:24:00] access prior additions of it as a member. And you can go back to the very beginning, which is really cool. But we benchmark industries, we benchmark the trends and we benchmark what NGOs, government agencies, and the voice of the consumer are doing from a sustainability perspective. But let me just go on record by saying this In all honesty, sustain sustainability in the marketplace is owned by the supply chain. This is where effective planning, sourcing, and procurement, manufacturing, logistics and distribution, customer service, all play out. And the environmental, ethical, and the economic pieces of it all play out. We hear more about the environmental piece than anything else. You know, whether it be scope three emissions, reducing waste. Companies are approaching this in so many different ways and technology is really helping, you know, how we take the trail and waste the things that hit the cutting room floor, if you will, in our manufacturing processes and how we use them again, how we recycle, renew, reclaim.

[00:25:00] All of this plays into our current supply chain. I mean, look at the use of plastics today and how far that's come. And you know, in the end, I really thank the consumer for the pressure they put on this because it's an ugly site. When you get to see a picture of a mass of plastic bottles floating around in the ocean, that is not a good day, really not a good day, and no business being in the ocean. Can we reuse that? Absolutely. And we've developed systems along the way, which, you know, when sustainability started to become more of a. A heat point for, or hot point for supply chain, let's just say 20 years ago or so, it's like, okay, wait a minute. We'll do this, but is there a cost advantage? You know, we're just not gonna throw money at it for the sake of throwing money. Put a business hat on. And as the OC Sheffey from MIT has said many times, there's a business model that fits sustainability. If you nearshore, you're taking emissions outta your supply chain. if it can be done right and right cost, right place, right time for the right quality, there are solutions that automatically help you become more [00:26:00] sustainable when you near shore or onshore versus a 5,000 mile long supply chain. It's just a simple thought, but it's very, very real. The aspect of respect. Supply chains have to show respect. It's a bad day when you wake up and you realize that Greenpeace is attacking your business because your packaging is coming from Paul. That's been mined from, a forest that was protected, just as an example. So that gets back to also the supply chain and the extended supply chain into the supplier network. But everybody plays in this, and there's a lot of resources, a lot of energy applied to this. The third piece I'll mention is just again, back to the sourcing strategy and having suppliers that align with your corporate philosophy and the needs of your consumer to ensure

they're also aligned. So these are all some of the, if you will, the evolution of better practices that are taking place in as we address sustainability. But in the end, it's about the supply chain and how we deliver the end product and how we've made [00:27:00] it, how we've sourced it, how we've come to market that puts the market in the sand, if you will, from a sustainability perspective and how well we're doing.

Richard: We've covered a lot of ground so far around the supply chain resiliency, sustainability, the role of supply chain and the importance of supply chain. So what skills and competencies will be the most important for supply chain leaders going into the next decade. And how can educational initiatives like the work that CSCMP is doing help bridge the skills gaps? Where should people be looking to get this education?

Mark: Well, the fundamentals of supply chain will continue to prevail. And what I mean by that is for those that are working in planning, procurement, and sourcing manufacturing. Logistics, customer service. There's a need to continue to develop people. Let's just talk about the existing workforce. So over time we can get lulled to sleep. That what [00:28:00] we need to know is all internal. And in reality in supply chain, and we heard this a lot during the COVID period and we're still hearing it now, frankly, is why do I have to go outside my company to find the answers? Why is the answers always seem to be outside the four walls of my business? And that comes from a lot of different perspectives that could be to who we're listening to, to, you know, solving problems, addressing the need, pulling teams together and how they may or may not be able to address them. And it takes on many forms. Bottom line is. Continual training. And testing, if you will, or just equipping your people for the knowledge needed to do their roles. And we can't fear that. It is critical. Your better, more competitive supply chains are doing this, and they're investing in their people. And CSCMP has a great framework for this called SC Pro Fundamentals. It starts with an evaluation. It's free of charge. For our corporate members, you put it under their nose, it's 40 questions and you, it covers the eight dimensions of supply [00:29:00] chain, and we can pretty well predict where your gaps are so you don't have to just invest in all of it. You invest where the needs are. That's just an example.

Richard: That's a great starting point.

Mark: Yeah, Now we evolve into where we are today, and that's artificial intelligence and machine learning. We're partnering right now with corporate members to create content. We've started already in our LinkedIn learning platform, and it's going to continue to advance, whether it's leadership

development, L minus one, or it's the core of your supply chain. Everyone in your workforce we're developing courses to address this so that those have a need to know. But also want to know and need to learn so they can continue to grow, have options. And we're doing this in a, in a great way. So I'm very proud of what we can do to help the workforce develop. But look, I have an important message. This is a great question actually. Richard, when I speak, in front of groups, people don't like this, but I'll just admit it. I'll ask three questions at some point in the conversation. [00:30:00] How many of you in the room are people leaders? And I usually get about two thirds of the hands in the air. And I said, okay, keep your hands up. And I'll say, how many of you have a people development budget to spend on your people? And pretty much everybody's hand stays up. The question they don't want to hear is how many of you can honestly say you've invested at least 80% of that cost center you have on your people in the last 12 months? And the answer is always less than 5%. Hands drop everywhere. This is a common problem. So we talk a good game around developing talent, but do we have intentionality? And I'll, and I'll leave it at that. Okay. I'll leave it at that. Right. The last thing I'm gonna say is we created the talent center at CSCMP. This is a 501 C3 where money can be donated so that we can leave no person underdeveloped and without opportunity to enter the workforce, the US Department of Labor in the US alone. And I know this [00:31:00] podcast is global, so let me just talk about the US for a second. The prediction in 2030 is twofold. Number one is in 2030. Thereabouts. The United States will level off at a point where the death rate will equal the birth rate. What happens in the year following the answer. Number two is I want everybody to have a selfish position in supply chain. I don't think we're talking to any other business platform right now. Right? I want our unfair share coming into supply chain because we need that. That's the majority of the world's workforce. When you lump in manufacturing and all the other functions in supply chain, let's get real. It is the world's workforce. Okay, so what do we need? We need more people. Yes, there's artificial intelligence, machine learning, robotics and advancements that are going to occur. There will be some job displacement that's been going on for maybe 30 years already, but it's not the whole workforce. The workforce is gonna evolve. We need people, [00:32:00] especially in the front lines, especially. So we created the talent center for companies and individuals to make tax deductible contributions so that we can take our content and give it to and provide pathways for scholarships. But more importantly, our educational content goes into places where adult populations are overlooked and underserved. We're going into high schools now, and I could just go on our upcoming military veterans going into the workforce. There's all kinds of development opportunities, but. Unaffordable to many. So we are looking for the talent center to enable that footprint to happen. So what that does is it builds more capable individuals to enter the workforce. That's our goal. So, what are we doing about talent? First

and foremost, put the pedal to the metal in developing your workforce. It helps with retention, competency, and capability of your supply chain. That goes without saying. And secondly, let's go together on building the workforce of tomorrow. We need the enablement. [00:33:00] We must make it work because we can't just keep taking from each other. We have to really grow the numbers that are inside the workforce.

Richard: What initiatives or research from CSCMP are you most excited about right now, especially related to preparing for the future?

Mark: It's threefold. This is actually a great question and I'll jump right into it. We're continuing to evolve how we present and who we bring to the table to talk about innovation. And problem solving, and we will continue to do that. It's reticent inside of our mission, and that is connecting, educating, and developing the workforce. I'm excited about where our Edge conference is going, which occurs the fifth through the 8th of October at the Gaylord and National Harbor, just south of Washington d or outside of Washington, DC. So, plan to attend that. Great incentives to do that. And there's over 100, well placed if you will, content sessions in multiple tracks, great keynotes, but this is the foundation. [00:34:00] This is where we take time out of our busy schedules to address needs and connect our round tables around the world continue to expand. We now have over 100 round tables. And Richard, these are all run by volunteers, right? This is, we have over 700 volunteers around the world engaged and it's, we're creating it for those to attend. And these were economical, so. What I'm excited about is that footprint grows. The third thing is that the absorption of online learning and certificate based. Content. In other words, what I mean by that is you take the course, you accomplish, you know, a reasonable grade. What I say reasonable, I can't tell you the passing rate, but okay, you don't have to have an A, but we're still gonna make sure that you're competent. We're gonna reward you with a very meaningful CSCMP endorse certificate. And our educational platform is continuing to expand and we're about to make some announcements on some new content, which is gonna be really cool. So I'm really excited about this because. Chief supply chain officers, and we've learned through the executive inner circle [00:35:00] that they want to build competency in their workforce. It is absolutely there. They just may not know the path. Right? But this is a big mission, learning on the job, coaching and mentoring play, but external learning, look, it's more than 10% of what you do in supply chain. Because we're moving so quickly, the answers are not within. They're on the outside, so the pathway to educate people, I'm really excited about what we can do for the future. I really truly am.

Richard: One last question, talking about the future, I ask this to all my guests. So, uh, if it's possible to do in a sentence or two, what's your vision for the future of supply chain?

Mark: That we will continue to be the problem solvers and deliverers for society, that we will exist for the betterment of society. And as we hit that goal, we'll be financially rewarded. We'll be happy. We will live together in a very safe and secure world.

Richard: That's a very concise and clear answer. Thanks very much. And Mark, as I [00:36:00] expected, thanks for a great conversation. It's been really interesting and really educational as well.

Mark: Well, Richard, thank you. I really enjoy our personal relationship and thanks for the invitation and I hope this benefits everyone that listens to the podcast.

Richard: And I hope we get to work together for many years to come. And thanks everyone for listening. Until next time from Mark and I, thanks for discussing the future of supply chain.