

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Catch the Crest of the Wave in a Growing Economy

Irvin Varkonyi, Marketing Manager and Adjunct Professor,
Transportation and Logistics Management, American Military University

More than 200 operations professionals from the private and public sector completed two days of professional development at the APICS Six Packed Supply Chain Conference in Dallas, TX, last month. They came to make sure they catch the crest of the wave in a growing economy. No one can guarantee a booming economy in 2010, much less how quickly the economy will grow, but indications are clear that stakeholders in the global supply chain must prepare for an increasingly competitive economy as companies seek to make up for very challenging times. Conferences such as the Annual SDDC Training Symposium and the NDTA Forum will be equally important to stakeholders in two of the defense industry's premier logistics events.

Who attended the APICS event in Dallas?

Logistics managers, production managers, IT managers, and other operations professionals, representing companies throughout Texas, Oklahoma, and Northern Mexico attended APICS Six Packed. For the most part, they represented manufacturing organizations, but distribution firms were also present. Many of the attendees work for military contractors or subcontractors. Most were US-based and owned firms but many are owned by companies headquartered outside the US. These attendees had begun to see a pickup in orders and anticipated continued growth during the year.

Session leaders and panelists were industry professionals who shared their experiences. Certified instructors came from many states and diverse backgrounds in commercial and government operations. This author presented a session on "Global Supply Chain Performance Measurement in an Uncertain World." NDTA similarly reflects APICS' tradition as an educational organization. For APICS members and instructors, they pride themselves as a leading source in the body of knowledge in operations management, including production, inventory, supply chain, materials management, purchasing, and logistics.

What workshop topics were presented?

The Dallas conference divided into six topics:

- Globalization and flexibility
- Cost reduction
- Planning
- Empowering people
- Lean out your supply chain
- Inventory investment

These topics are not only among the most important to APICS members, but are equally important to military acquisition and logistics professionals. By their success, the private sector's ability to optimize these industrial imperatives will positively impact military sustainment.

For example, my session focused on utilizing tools that allow an enterprise to measure performance based on the tradeoff between optimizing operational efficiency and minimizing the vulnerability of the organization to disruptions. Another session led by Karen Pentz of MeGlobal Americas presented a case study on reducing supply chain costs while improving supply chain performance through a focus on logistics. Donald Clark of Clients First Business Solutions examined the pitfalls inherent in traditional metrics and measurement systems to develop a top ten list of metrics that provides a more comprehensive dashboard of industrial outcomes.

Why attend professional development events?

The professional development goals of attendees focused on learning about new developments in their industry, networking within their industry, and benchmarking their firms against others in their industry. Attendees earned credit toward recertification in their industry or Continuing Education Units, which are used to earn college degrees as well as maintain licensing requirements in many professions. These events also benefit attendees who seek new career opportunities.

Where do professional development events take place?

Events take place at global, national, regional, and local levels. The NDTA Forum

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

is a global event, attracting attendees from around the globe. The APICS Six Packed event was regionally focused. Our Scott AFB NDTA chapter also offers a regional event, in collaboration with AFCEA, the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association, entitled Cyberlog Mid-America, planned for 26-28 July (http://www.technologyforums.com/corporate/our_events.asp) The Cyberlog Mid-America 2010 "Transportation, Logistics and Cyber Integration" conference will offer educational sessions to support the DOD's focus on continuous improvement and developing greater efficiencies in logistics and information technology.

Professional development events can also take place online. For instance, Logistics Management and Supply Chain Management Review combine to offer periodic virtual conferences such as "The Next Generation Supply Chain" (http://www.logisticsmgmt.com/article/356880-Virtual_Conference_The_Next_Generation_Supply_Chain.php). These are available on demand 24/7. They offer an opportunity to save on travel costs and generally charge less in registration. Their ability to offer interactive sessions are less in comparison to in person conferences but they provide an option to operations professionals in addition to attending or not. Opportunities to interact with exhibitors at virtual conferences may be more limited than when attending traditional conferences.

When do you consider conferences for professional development?

Experienced staff or new hires all benefit from attending conferences. New hires who attend should have mentors from their organization in order to navigate the complexities of conferences. As conferences seek to squeeze more content into sessions in order to minimize time away from attendees' offices, as well as reduce costs, conference sessions seem to go at the speed of light.

How do you measure the outcome of professional development?

A simple method to evaluate the outcome of professional development is to ask your-

continued on page 148

continued from page 44

self—what did I learn? Is it useful? Will it allow me to be more productive? There are formal models to evaluate training. One of these, the Kirkpatrick model of training evaluation, is the established evaluation design used by the Professional Development Program (PDP) at Rockefeller University. This model specifies four levels of training evaluation: (1) Reaction, (2) Learning, (3) Behavior, and (4) Results. The four levels are sequential; though the evaluation of a training program may include one or more of these levels, no level should be bypassed to reach a higher level (www.pdp.albany.edu/Media/CommuniquePDF/V14_PDP_Communique.pdf). **DTJ**

The APICS Six Packed conference, now in its sixth year, has consistently delivered outstanding results. It measures outcomes through surveys. It measures the needs of its customers' requirements to help decision making on topic selection and presenters. Their attendees will catch the crest of the wave of economic growth in 2010.

*Contact Irvin Varkonyi at 703-3343-3259
or email him at ivarkonyi@apus.edu*
