

Relationship with Suppliers from the Perspective of Integrated Logistics: The Example of a Brazilian Company from the Sugarcane Sector

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Abstract

The main objective of this research is to evaluate how the relationship between customer and supplier, through the perspective of integrated logistics, can contribute and optimize the production processes of a company. The methodology used was applied research and, in accordance with its objectives is considered exploratory and descriptive, as it aims to report the phenomena of the studied reality and create better understanding of the problem through literature searches and data collection through the analysis of texts published both in the literature, as in printed materials and/or made available on the Internet. The strategies of organizations are increasingly focused on efficiency and effectiveness and for this reason seeks to use appropriate tools as alternatives to achieve those goals. The relationship with suppliers is a procedure that favors the performance of processes. However, it is necessary to conduct a job evaluation and a selection of service providers turning them into partners that will contribute to better performance of activities. It is a vision that is incorporated into the integrated logistics, which seeks to optimize the resources in order to obtain better results and convert in increasing the level of competitiveness of the organization. Every organization has its operational strategy; therefore, the company focus of the study implemented the HSE program to maintain and monitor the relationship with its suppliers, aimed, among other things, measure performance and commitment to Safety, Health, and Environment.

Keywords: Supplier; Relationship, Logistics, Transportation, Client.



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Introduction

The globalization that prevails in the contemporary world has demanded a high level of competitiveness from the organizations, boosted by competition which is based on price offer and quality of products and services. This scenario has aroused the interest of companies to the search and development of business strategies in order to participate actively in the market. To this end, it is for the organization to establish their differential of activity so that they are able to stand out in the highly competitive and globalized market.

The concern of organizations establishing market differentiation and at the same time looking to reduce costs have led to movements in the sense that the supply sector extends its relationships with suppliers. The development and information sharing have as their main purpose the improvement of products and services and risk reduction, to enable greater competitive advantage. In this situation, one of the processes that stands out is the management of the supply chain or supply chain management (SCM), which deals with the importance of managing relationships with suppliers, to obtain flexibility in order to meet the market timing and form, as they are demanded. The evolution of the security of long-term relationships is backed by contracts establishments who prescribe the rights, duties, and obligations of the parties, encouraging stability and ensuring a reliable partnership.

More and more companies are competing with each other, more intensely, with thinking in sustainable and profitable growth. Globalization dramatically evidenced this competition between economies, companies, and people. Faced with this global environment, logistics is highlighted as one of the main management tools for achieving competitive advantage. It has in its list of responsibilities the planning, implementation, and control of forth and reverse flows of goods, services and information including from its origin to the end point. To this end, it evolved into the concept of SCM, which includes all the planning and management of all activities aimed at identifying and prospecting suppliers, performing the procurement process, and managing the specific activities of logistics.

From the perspective of SCM, currently the supplier it is conceptualized in a basic way as the one who provides goods or provides customer service; however, you can see a transformation of simply supplying products or services to cooperation, collaboration, participation and integration with key business processes existing in the supply chain of the organization.

The consolidation of synergistic logistics partnerships between suppliers and customers takes on a great importance of representativeness in the current economic scenario, as it differs from a mere relationship of buying and selling, exploring the contact points that companies have, generating gains from process optimization production and logistics of the supply chain.

On placements about the relationship with suppliers is the question as to how organizations deal with this situation and how it is possible to obtain positive results of this relationship. Motivated to seek information about this issue, we performed this study which had its justification evidenced by the interest in learning more about it and at the same time generating knowledge, as a means of contributing to the SCM.

The general objective that drives this research is to evaluate how the relationship between customer and supplier, through a vision of integrated logistics can contribute and optimize the production processes of a company. For this purpose, the specific objectives are: to present the integrated logistics concepts and their importance for the production process of the company; highlight the development and supplier relationships; highlight the importance of strategy applied to the organization's procurement process; and finally report as an example the typical scenario that occurs in a large Brazilian business group, the sugar and energy sector, with regard to the relationship process with its suppliers involved in their logistics transport operations.

In addition to this introduction, this paper presents a conceptual approach to integrated logistics, then comments on potential suppliers also reports about the procurement process, a description to display a situation that happens in an organization and ultimately the concluding remarks summarizing the main points presented.

Literature Review and Theoretical Background

With the definition of the subject to be evidenced in the development of research and composition of the work, it is important to sustain the argument to be presented through a theoretical basis to report a synchronized manner the comments and opinions of authors involved with the subject.

With the thought directed towards the theme proposed the attention was concentrated in searching for information portraying in a comprehensive way four important points: the integrated logistics, which is all movement towards adding value through services, having the potential to involve all the inner and outer segments of the company; the development of provider that seeks to identify those who have the potential to be the organization's partners; the buyer-supplier relationship that aims to show a new form of relationship where the supplier has their involvement with the client becoming their partner in achievements; and finally, the procurement process that happens in business, which requires the implementation of strategies and technologies for the best trades to be made.

There are four topics presented with the proposal to base the discussion and explain concepts and opinions stated by authors, that worked together and in an organized way can contribute to a differentiated interpretation, and may even be an alternative to better use in the performance of activities.

Overview of Logistics

Most companies are driven by functions, i.e., every business process has its performance supported by an information system that reflects the technological development and represents a major evolution in optimizing administrations.

With the technological advances made in recent decades and the economic opening of the world market (globalization), logistics has become an important option for reducing costs and for winning the much-desired competitiveness. The theory since its inception has been through several changes, the concepts have been expanded and presented themselves as fundamental elements for the proper performance of organizations (ALBÃO, 2011).

Adopting the ideal that one cannot under any circumstances disregard the need for competition, all organizations, according to Schier, Lombard and Cardoso (2012) have been seeking to differentiate themselves from its competitors to obtain and keep customers, and therefore, it is necessary to be creative, agile, and flexible, with emphasis on quality and reliability.

Logistics Concepts

Logistics by Fleury, Wanke and Figueiredo's view (2000, p. 372) is classified as a real paradox, because while it is "one of the oldest economic activities and one of the most modern management concepts." They explain that the man left the extractive economy and went for organized productive activities, with specialized production and exchange of the surplus with other producers, in this way emerged three of the most important logistics functions, which are stock, storage and transport. The excess of production, which had not yet been consumed, becomes stock. To ensure their integrity, inventory storage is needed. In addition, for the trade to be performed, it is necessary to transport it from the point of production to the consumption destination. Therefore, logistics is very old and its appearance is intertwined with the rise of organized economic activity.

The Council of Logistics Management has its definition for logistics claiming to be: [...]that part of the supply chain process that plans, implements, and controls the efficient and effective flow and storage of goods, services, and related information, from point of origin to point of consumption, in order to meet customer needs (MOURA et al., 2004, p. 8).

It can be interpreting that logistics is the art of buying, receiving, storing, sorting, shipping, transport and deliver the right product / service at the right time, in the right place, resulting in the lowest possible cost.

Bowersox e Closs (2001) describes the logistics challenge is to become a core competency in organizations involving the management of physical and virtual value chains. For this basic conceptualization is undertaken efforts in the interpretation and development of the supply chain study as a management tool to add value and remain competitive in the long run.

However, these concepts do not express the context and magnitude that logistics has taken in recent years as an interface phenomenon between the market (suppliers and customers) and strategic activities, operational and tactical of an organization.

While production management efforts to gain a competitive advantage in cost, quality and other factors, logistics connects the production process at both ends - suppliers and customers - to the definition of alliances and partnerships, strategically bringing together supply and demand. With this vision, Bowersox and Closs (2001) identified logistics as a core competency, they made substantial changes in the manner of conducting the logistics management process as a strategy to respond to the threats and opportunities of the competitive environment.

Christopher (2007, p. 3) provides a definition for logistics looking at the big picture of the organization. "Logistics is the strategic management process of the purchase, transport and storage of raw materials, parts and finished products (in addition to the related information flow) from the organization and its marketing channels, so that the current profit abilities and future are maximized by delivering orders with the lowest associated cost. "

There are several different of logistics concepts, but what can be seen is that the definitions have been expanded and show up value assignment and characteristics that turns it into a potential major element for the competitiveness of the organization.

Logistics Evolution

Logistics as a concept is presented as a legacy of antiquity since it arose from the need of military operations to secure supplies as the army moved from the base to the more advanced positions. As a business or business concept, logistics by Camelo, Coelho and Borges (2010) explanation, emerged in the 1950s, as evidenced by the evolution of complexity in the supply of materials to meet different business activities, and product delivery process to the global supply chain, which required the participation of experts, called "Logistics Supply Chain". Professionals with technical expertise prepared for the performance of logistics activities.

Logistics has gone through several changes since its post-World War confirmation until today. Different authors try to present in detail this evolution of Business Logistics and its achievements. The demarcation and understanding of the evolution of logistics are of high importance for studies of strategic alliances (CAMELO; COELHO; BORGES, 2010).

Novaes (2007) in his studies on the evolutionary aspects of logistics he classified them into four phases, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
 The phases of the logistics evolution.

	Segmented performance	Stricted Integration
Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Isolated business action seeking to rationalize costs and maximize individual profit; ✓ stock as a means of ensuring balance and meet the demand throughout the supply chain; ✓ Systems information manual and slow. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Use of modal integration to lower transport costs; ✓ Strict Integration and noncooperative among participants in the supply chain (suppliers, manufacturers, distributors, retailers).
	Flexible integration	Strategic integration
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Search the minimization of stocks; ✓ The transport function becomes more important in the chain as minimizing logistics cost element; ✓ Dynamic and flexible integration to peer participants in the supply chain. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Logistics as a strategic element in maintaining and achieving consumer markets; ✓ Intensive use of information technology (internet, intranet, bar codes, storage software and routing); ✓ Full integration between all participants in the supply chain in a win-win relationship with maximum potential gain for the entire chain.

Source: Novaes (2007, p 45-50.)

There are four phases presented by Novaes (2007) that describes each one with its most significant points for historical purposes, however, the current phase or the Strategic Integration, it becomes important for being integrated, motivated by the revolution in information technology, which allowed the synchronism of activities and a systemic view of the company. The Integrated Logistics proposed the involvement of all members through interlinked and shared business processes, aiming to group together all company's activities related to the production process and distribution of their products to customers and consumers.

This form of activity, with grouping, helps the company better control the activities and make greater integration and commitment of the sectors that previously had limited view of their area of expertise. As a result, the companies have the prevalence of collective interests over individual, highlighting the involvement that each sector has on the distribution process of the finished products and the consequent influence across the organization (NOVAES, 2007).

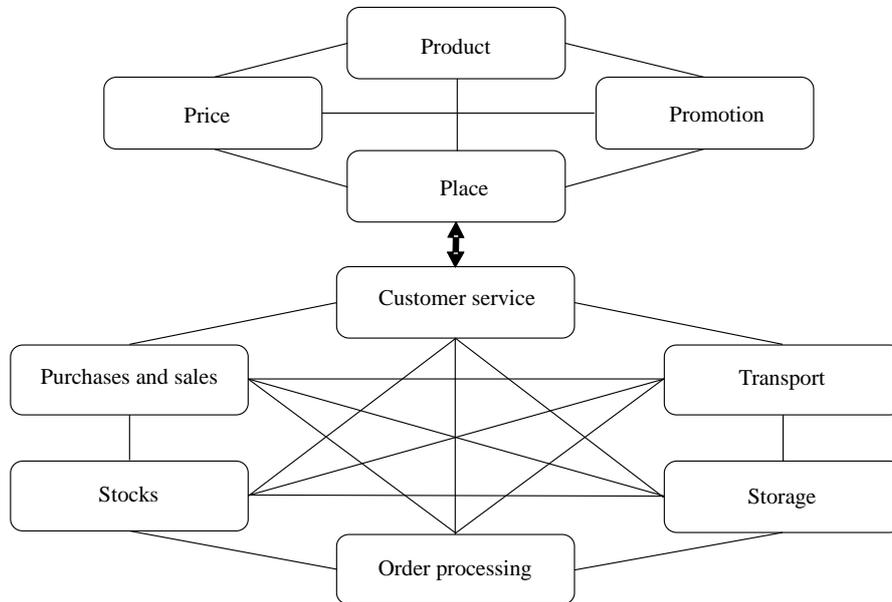
Integrated Logistics

In the capitalist system, where the computer science has a stake in almost everything that is done, the logistics is no different, as it is almost impossible to manage the input stream and output products, distribution, forecast consumption of materials and ensure the receipt by customer part as specified period, thus satisfying their needs (STRASSBURG, 2006).

According to Fleury, Wanke and Figueiredo (2000) in order to have a management in an integrated manner, it is necessary that logistics is seen as a system, ie a set of interconnected components, acting in a coordinated and a synchronized way, with the purpose of achieving a common goal. The proposal to optimize the individual components does not lead to optimization of the entire

system. On the contrary, projects the sub-optimization. This principle is generally called trade-off, the principle of compensation, balance, reconcile or losses and gains. Figure 1 shows the integrated logistics system.

Figure 1
 Conceptual Model of Integrated Logistics



Source: Carlini (2010, p. 25)

To Bowersox e Closs (2001), logistics is treated as the competence that connects the organization to its customers and suppliers. Customer data and information about them flow to the company for comment and sales decisions, forecasts, and orders in the same way, so the information is filtered and sorted into specific plans designed for the trading and production. Because of suppliers, product supply and the material are analyzed and established the flow of goods and value-added services resulting in the transfer of products. In this sense, the process has two interrelated actions, which are the material flow and information flow.

There are two movements that must go together, one helping and complementing each other, targeting the efficiency of logistics, which has its importance to the organization, since it is directly related to the final consumer. It is through this focus that the company should establish logistics strategy and competitiveness.

Supplier Development

Most traditional companies are set up in bases aimed for the functionality, thus have clear operational structure, and each section seeks to achieve the goals individually. Therefore, the composition usually identified is the company's organization in order processing activities such as planning and control products, purchase or supplies, production, packing, handling, storage, inventory, and distribution, among others. However, to manage these activities becomes necessary to have specific managers who directly take responsibility for success or failure of the function performance (Guarnieri; Hatakeyama; Resende, 2009).

The supply chain management is a relatively complex activity. It involves an integrated way of managing and using suppliers with relationship strategies looking after the business durability, through the credibility of sustained partnerships and collaboration that drives competitive advantage. Guarnieri, Hatakeyama e Resende (2009), also note that several organizations conclude that partnerships have improved the product, marketing strategies, customer service, finding more productive ways of acting together.

Chopra e Meindl (2003) highlights the importance of the exchange of information between manufacturers and suppliers to the performance of the supply chain, especially when it comes to the demand data, as this procedure is possible for the manufacturer to reduce the level of inventory, keeping deadlines and improving product quality.

The involvement of suppliers is of fundamental importance for organizations, as they can contribute to defining the quantity and quality of products or services offered by companies. In the sense that organizations need qualified suppliers to support its processes, it also becomes important to ensure that the relationship continues. The conception of Castiglioni (2009, p. 79) shows that suppliers are "all companies or individuals interested in supply needs of other companies in terms of raw materials, products, goods, labor and services."

Faria e Vanalle (2006) emphasize that the selection of suppliers should consider valid corporate criteria for all activities in order to create an identity and a bond. The priority and requirements are due to: price, quality, delivery performance, flexibility, financial analysis, analysis of administrative criteria, core competencies analysis and aspects relating to safety and the environment.

Buyer-Supplier Relationship

According to Slack, Chambers and Johnston (2002), an issue highlighted in supply chain management is management of relationships between buyers and suppliers. They claim that the behavior of the entire supply chain is formed by the relationship built between the parties.

To Ritzman and Krajewski (2004), the guidance that leads the relationship between companies is cooperation and is based on the sense of partnership between the supplier and the buyer company or focal company. This relationship should prevail mutual help wherever possible. The strategy of reducing the number of suppliers can contribute greatly to the purchasing company, as suppliers become an extension of the focal company. This reduction decreases the complexity of the management of supply, however, should take into account the service guarantee from the supplier because the reduction leads to the risk.

The Procurement Process

Planning and control, reduced costs, obtaining reliable information that can provide agility in decision making and seeking to raise the level of efficiency and effectiveness are some important points in management processes.

This concept can be attributed to the procurement process that has its evolution as an activity of high importance to the performance of the organization. In general, products and services, as reported by Ferrari (2006) have their supply accomplished by external companies whose entrepreneurial organization has no direct control, needing the effective implementation of a procurement planning, instruments and contract management to mitigate risks and achieve the goals.

The procurement process has its operations in order to meet the various sectors of the organization, and on this aspect, it is clear that the search for better results and good performance of an organization go through the relationship between departments. Procurement management has its application markedly for the company, regardless of its size and market segment.

Gasnier (2001) emphasizes that the procurement management undertakes actions to achieve and supply of goods and services outside the organization, but the big challenge in the selection and development of suppliers, consists of communication skills, negotiation and monitoring. It is therefore a matter involving human resource that needs to be prepared and trained to perform the duties that the practice of procurement process demand.

Methodology

As for the classification of this research, from the point of view of its nature is applied, according to Silva and Menezes (2001), because it involves truths and local interests. According to its objectives, it is considered exploratory and descriptive, as it aims to accurately describe the phenomena of reality studied and catch more aware of the problem through literature searches, data collection and case studies, as defined by Gil (2010).

For ethical purposes of research, we do not mention the name of the company involved in the study. Therefore, during the whole work we use the fictitious name of "Company X". Free to choose the

"Company X" as an object of study, the first determining factor is the importance of it in the national scene, after all, the group consists of 24 mills producing sugar and alcohol and 63 fuel distribution terminals. Another important factor in choosing the company was the convenience, after all, the study's author works in the company in question, including during the preparation of this work. The focus of this work will be in the relationship of "Company X" with transport service providers to the sugar operations.

Situational Approach

The basis of this theoretical context, with emphasis on the relationship with the supplier, from the perspective of integrated logistics, we tried to bring some information on the subject of practical character, which occurs in "Company X", which is a branch company of energy from a joint venture between Cosan and Shell. According to Exame (2013), it is one of the top five Brazilian companies in terms of revenues and a major fuel distributor. It operates in the production of sugar and ethanol, energy cogeneration and fuel distribution, through stations with Shell brand.

HSE Program

The Health Management Manual, Safety and Environment (HSE) is to set guidelines and establish responsibilities for the required effective environmental performance and the health and safety of its employees. In this management model, it is important that all workers and the chain of command are coordinated and agreement, in determining the goals to be achieved, either in the execution of tasks set out in internal rules.

In the logistics area of sugar, the goal is to introduce safe behavior in the areas of transport and distribution give "Company X", reducing incidents and accidents. It was developed and implemented various procedures and standards. They include activities such as periodic health examinations, control of working hours and rest times of the driver, check- list, travel plan, HSE dialogues, and communication campaigns, among others.

To meet the cargo transport operations of the plants, the "Company X" must hire companies that supply transport services. With the unification of operations of the companies Shell (fuels segment) and Cosan (sugar ethanol segment), it was necessary the spread of the HSE culture in the new company, which came from fuel transport operations, thus attempting to establish standard procedures for hiring transport services.

The Supplier Development Management, Safety and Environment, aims to support suppliers in every way, with a set and structured work with Transport Advisors, which have the responsibility to promote the transfer of technology, know-how, as well as the sustainability of the group's value chain. During this process makes the approval of suppliers, bearing technical visits, guidance for aligning processes, qualification, monitoring, and performance measurement.

Performance Indicators

Suppliers are assessed following the nine goals pre-established and described below, which they are measured through regular monitoring visits, audits, and on-site evaluation of the logistics team, through the managerial control items. After the audit visits will be generated reports with non-conformities observed, which will be forwarded to the participants of the program and subsequently elaborated an action plan to address the gaps.

1) Responsible for Safety

The transport company must have a person responsible for safety, which may be the owner, supervisors, managers or, when existent, HSE personnel, who should be responsible for assessing the performance and provide improvements.

2) Risk Assessment and Management

The assessment and risk management will prevent and minimize accidents related to HSE issues, mitigating the consequences, providing essential information for management, decision making and resulting in the identification of risks in the process of service delivery by trucks.

3) Legal Compliance

The transport company is responsible for maintaining and updating the legal documents that affect their activities.

The documents pertaining to the transport trucks should be maintained, controlled and updated by the transport company, containing all the necessary permits by the regulations of the type of transport operation performed, such as security legislation, health and the environment described by the competent authorities.

4) Conduct and Competences

Carriers must ensure the safety of people involved in operations due to its critical elements of the activity and therefore declare themselves able legally and technically.

The transport company must ensure that professional drivers adapt to the minimum qualifications of experience and training to develop the work on the principles of safety behavior and meet the requirements of the legislation in force.

5) Operational Processes

It is important to keep track and inspect the performance of those involved in executing the tasks. This element talks about safe practices and procedures for the transport activity.

6) Contracting Services

This item is intended to ensure that aggregated drivers of transport companies perform their work consistently and compatible with the objectives of the standards of HSE.

7) Communication, Analysis and Accident Investigation

Investigation and Accident Analysis are essential to the continuous improvement of HSE performance in transport operations. The Standards and Guidelines require that all accidents are reported and investigated.

8) Preparation for Emergency Response

The planning and emergency preparedness are essential to ensure that the occurrence of an accident, all necessary measures are taken to protect the public, the environment, personnel, assets and the company's reputation. These procedures should be established to prevent or minimize the escalation of consequences of those events.

9) Integrity Operations Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

An evaluation process that measures the degree to which expectations are met is essential to improve the integrity of operations and maintain the level of responsibility. Should take place annually through a self-assessment and evaluation by "Company X". The self-assessment checks the integrity of operations and continuous improvement of processes of Service and must be performed by the company contracted carrier and its subcontractors.

Program Perception

Because of the procedures adopted, the number of service providers has decreased over time. This reduction in the number of suppliers has been seen internally as positive, since the carriers by following the premises mentioned above, they become an extension of the company. From an operational point of view, it also has decreased the management complexity of operations.

The "Company X" front of their business policy has not tried conducting any research to determine the level of supplier satisfaction. So far, the only current practice focused on relationships with transportation providers that they have is the HSE program, which, in general, has brought benefits such as greater security for employees and business partners of the company, effective reduction to traffic fines and labor and environmental notifications, reduction of accidents in the workplace, better match the requirements and demands of Sales and Quality areas, and thus increase of safety and environmental responsibility, with added value for the brand, and increased market competitiveness.

So, it is the procedure adopted by "Company X" for the relationship with the supplier, which, as said by (Fleming, 2004), represents an opportunity to improve operations between the buyer and the seller in that it implements improvements in working practices in order to achieve a mutual success.

Conclusion

Organizations in its dynamic performance, seek improvement of its processes, updating equipment, use of technology and skilled human resources, in order to obtain better results of the activities necessary to achieve the goals that are outlined.

The functionality of the company undergoes through determinations procedures, which recommend best practices for the activities to be carried out. However, it requires the valuation of

information that portrays the reality of the performance tasks and contributes to the management of the business. To do so, tools are implemented to provide the necessary evolution for such achievements.

The organization has several departments and each one with different activities, but all converging on the same final result, therefore, to optimize processes, it is necessary to have services and products aligned to the organization's production proposal. These come from the relationship with suppliers and service providers.

The organization in its operating requires the participation of suppliers, which are essential links within the business process, as the company depends on the transportation for the input suppliers and to get their products to the consumers.

It is worth mentioning that the good practice recommends selecting suppliers who hold profile to be part of the framework service providers. It is a process that seeks to bring to the organization not just a seller of products or services, but also a partner to work together with the same aims and objectives. This procedure leads to the relationship that should exist between a provider and buying company. Partnership activities to improve the performance of activities and optimize resources, reducing costs and increasing quality.

In the competitive environment in which the "Company X" is, it is necessary to develop differentials for survival in a constantly changing market. In this scenario, the criteria for evaluation and selection of suppliers can be used in the context of managing the supply chain.

With the implementation of the program, the selection of suppliers has ceased to consider only one basic criterion, the price at which the supplier provides the service. The total cost, which considers all the costs associated with the acquisition of the service; the overall quality offered by the supplier (not only the minimum required quality); the level of service provided by the supplier, the cost of transportation, consistency and frequency of deliveries and the supplier's flexibility; technological capacity and provider of process; their financial health; and the structure and organization of supplier strategy, are among the new criteria came to be adopted.

Within the HSE Program in the "Company X", the provider evaluation process means to understand, communicate, and improve their transport service performance. If all components of supplier evaluation system are executed correctly, the measurement of carrier performance should lead to the development of it. This improved performance has a great potential to positively influence the client companies, both financially and competitively, ensuring a good level of service, with competitive price and meeting the deadlines. For this to occur, "Company X" needs to work with its suppliers to develop action plans because of these assessments, the closure of their development process cycle.

Thus, the relationship with suppliers will be a very important tool for supply chain management, as through training, services and recognition performance, the program will promote a pattern of differentiated relationship with partners, thus increasing the level of loyalty. Moreover, that way will achieve concrete results in the near term, as cost savings, increased productivity, and quality, as well as ensuring sustainability in transport operations.

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