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Enabling Horizontal Collaboration Through Continuous Relational Learning

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Abstract

Now that supply chain operations are facing new challenges due to the necessity of reducing costs and CO₂ emissions, companies are increasingly leveraging cooperation with companies from other supply chains as a source of competitive advantage. The aim of this book is to build upon a framework of inter-organizational learning for horizontal collaboration, and the outputs from this study are designed to help in understanding the relationship dynamics and the managerial insights of horizontal collaboration for sustainable and profitable cooperation in freight distribution. The proposed framework is based on exploratory research, including semi-structured interviews with senior managers from four different companies from the home appliances, automotive, retail, and food and beverage industries. Additionally, collaborative evidence from different successful pilot cases relevant to the distribution operations of the four companies are described in order to illustrate the framework presented. The study demonstrates that by applying horizontal collaboration practices companies can learn and create absorptive capacity. Our case studies provide in-depth explanation of how the relational elements of cooperation in freight distribution can lead absorptive capacity toward overcoming the barriers to collaboration and toward efficiency, sustainability, and innovation. The successful pilot cases demonstrate the following benefits. (a) In terms of efficiency, intelligent freight combinations have achieved savings between 9 and 49 %, depending on the different applications. (b) In terms of effectiveness, horizontal collaboration partnerships have allowed incremental delivery frequencies and service level. (c) Regarding sustainability, consortiums have achieved between 20 and 30 % savings in CO₂ emissions. (d) Supply chain managers are able to heed all of the elements that will help their companies improve their performance through horizontal collaboration. This book fills a gap in the literature by providing a generic model for horizontal collaboration dynamics. It can be used by any participant involved in or willing to start horizontal collaboration in freight distribution.

Keywords Horizontal collaboration • Inter-organizational learning • Collaborative relationships • Supply chain management • Successful case studies • Freight distribution