

A collaborative solution

Supply chain management comes under the microscope during an economic downturn, as companies seek to improve their cash position. However, as CEO of **Asite** Tony Ryan explains to Jim Banks, the temptation to squeeze suppliers and customers on payment terms should be rejected in favour of a more collaborative approach.

When your partners in the supply chain are under pressure it pays to work with them more closely and support key suppliers and customers through difficult times. That is certainly the view of companies that provide the technology for supply chain management (SCM), who are focusing on how to deliver collaborative supply chain processes that are simple and effective.

Among these technology providers is Asite, which provides a collaborative Software as a Service (cSaaS) platform to help its clients realise supply chain efficiencies.

'There are a number of factors that cause problems in supply chain management, but the main one is failure to look at a holistic approach. A company must look at every facet in the interconnected network of people it does business with,' says Tony Ryan, CEO of Asite.

Asite's clients are largely in government and the architectural, engineering, construction and property sectors. They use cSaaS to facilitate sourcing, project management and procurement through all points in their supply chains.

cSaaS is a web-based platform hosted and managed by Asite, which enables its clients to manage and streamline processes more efficiently and at lower cost. The result is a more responsive supply chain, with typical cost savings of 56-70%.

'Companies often focus on their internal processes, but they need to make sense to all supply chain partners. They need to handle data in an interconnected way, to leverage that data. Let each supply chain partner manage its own data well but in a collaborative way to improve performance. That is where our cSaaS platform can help,' Ryan explains.

He believes that larger corporates and government bodies that can flex their

muscle in the supply chain can drive this collaborative approach forward. Asite's list of clients, which includes BAA, the NHS HSBC, Laing O'Rourke, United Utilities and Diageo, suggest that he is seeing this happen in practice.

'It is all about leaner, meaner supply chains. We take on the burden of managing the hardware and hosting the service. We get greater economies of scale because we do it for thousands of organisations. Our customers have no hardware purchase to make. We manage it all and provide low-cost connectivity to the hardware and software,' Ryan explains.

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Means and motivation

Moving towards more collaborative supply chain processes requires a shift in psychology and the tools to connect the many points on a supply chain. With the global hardware platform that Asite has put in place and leveraging the advantages of what has become an accepted IT business model, Software as a Service (SaaS), the shift in attitude among corporates is now starting to manifest.

'We can hook into a company's existing infrastructure if it has invested in its own systems. Savings come from many sources, cutting down on paper processes, eliminating postage costs, less re-keying



of data. Companies can manage their own data if they choose, but the multi-million pound investments they would require to achieve similar systems and security levels is not normally where their business focus lies,' says Ryan.

'The solution is effective and cost-efficient for the whole supply chain. Companies can't squeeze their partners in the supply chain, they must be collaborative,' he adds.

Collaboration being the foundation of Ryan's message, it seems appropriate that he sees people rather than technology as the most important asset in the delivery of cSaaS.

'Our people are the most important component of our intellectual property. They are talented people who come from industry and have the right expertise to deliver the technology online. That is important as we are entering enterprise agreements, not piecemeal projects. We need to get into the DNA of our clients and to do that we need to show the success that comes with a planned, collaborative approach,' he explains.

This message, backed up by a drive for innovation to constantly improve the usability of cSaaS and maximise efficiencies, is hitting the right note in the market. ■

Further information

Asite
Website: www.asite.com