YOUNG PROFESSIONAL WOMEN’S PERSPECTIVES ON
SUPPLY CHAIN DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

A WHITE PAPER BY THE GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN INSTITUTE

IN THE GSCI SERIES:
PEOPLE IN SUPPLY CHAIN
NOVEMBER 2019
YOUNG PROFESSIONAL WOMEN’S PERSPECTIVES ON
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 3
Overview of Gender Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace 6
Research Findings 10
   Why Do Women Choose SCM as a Major? 11
   Transitioning from College to the Professional World 12
   The Perfection Trap 13
   Gaining Respect and Being Valued 15
   Work/Life Issues 19
How to Succeed? 22
   Corporate Culture Plays an Important Role 22
   Mentoring Programs 23
   Flexible Work Policies 24
   Managing the Pipeline 24
   Toward a More Gender-Equitable Workplace 26
Summary 29
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A Note on the Methodology Used in This White Paper
This is the first white paper in our “People in Supply Chain” series. It is qualitative in nature. The study is based on information gathered through a number of in-depth interviews and focus groups conducted over several years by Dr. Diane Mollenkopf and students in the Global Leadership Scholars program (under Mollenkopf’s guidance). The intent of the research is not to analyze data but to draw observations from the experiences of individuals within specific contexts. More details regarding this methodology can be found at the end of the paper in the section, “About This Research.”
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Introduction

Supply chains must be able and agile to win in the workplace and marketplace. The most able and agile supply chains are winning. “Abgility,” having the capacity, willingness, and flexibility to take quick action, is not what you gain at the gym; it is what you need to build in your supply chain. The current tumultuous business environment—from concerns about global trade disruptions to supply chain digitization—only serve to highlight that the advantage in “abgility” goes to the companies who can more quickly leverage benefits from their supply chain talent management strategy. In fact, as Figure 1 shows, a 2017 study by the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) stated, “companies that have more diverse management teams have 19 percent higher revenue due to innovation.”

In 2015, our Global Supply Chain Institute (GSCI) White Paper, Supply Chain Talent: Our Most Important Resource, stated that, “supply chain talent should be your highest priority—above the current quality crisis, cost compression targets, and everything else,” (p. 4, emphasis added). In fact, one of the best
practices we shared in 2015 centered on the development and practice of diversity within a firm’s supply chain organization. This research confirmed that Supply Chain Forum corporate partners who adhered to best practices created aggressive diversity goals and action plans to improve top-line, bottom-line, and long-term shareholder value. Other research provided a clear indication that recruiting, retaining, and developing a diverse management team had been shown to lead to higher levels of organizational success.3

Today, the need for the right talent has become even more of an imperative. What is clear from the research is that waiting to take action is not an effective strategy. It follows that, in Gartner’s most recent research on women in supply chain, organizations with goals and formal diversity and inclusion initiatives are making progress, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION INITIATIVES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PERCENTAGE OF RESPONDENTS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives (n=69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Objectives (n=49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q. How would you characterize your progress toward achieving gender diversity and inclusion at the TOP leadership level (VP level and above) over the past year?
Q. Does your organization/business unit have a stated objective to increase the number of women leaders in supply chain?
Source: Gartner (April 2018)

The University of Tennessee (UT) Haslam College of Business’ Supply Chain Management program and its Supply Chain Forum partner organizations have been working together to create stronger interest in supply chain management as a career choice among female university students, with the key goal of creating a more gender-diverse pool of students for future supply chain roles.
While university programs cannot in themselves solve the diversity issues of organizational leadership, the Haslam Supply Chain Management program plays a meaningful role in building the talent pipeline for entry-level positions. The program also works with industry and organizational partners on executive and mid-career development opportunities related to supply chain management skills and knowledge.

The UT efforts have focused on the NeXxus initiative, which currently comprises two distinct programs: the NeXxus student organization and the NeXxus Summer Academy. A student-led campus organization, NeXxus is dedicated to developing leadership opportunities for female supply chain students. Membership fosters a community of women focused on creating opportunities for one another and building courage and confidence as they enter the workforce. The Summer Academy program focuses on longer-term goals by introducing female high school students from Tennessee to supply chain management’s career potential, with the objective of creating stronger interest in the profession among students when they are beginning to think about colleges and majors. (More information about both of these initiatives can be found in the “About NeXxus” section at the end of this paper.)

Many of our partner organizations have developed and actively support diversity programs as part of their talent management strategies. Further insight can be gained by taking time to see the world through the viewpoint of those targeted by these recruiting and development programs. This report focuses specifically on the experiences of young women at UT in the early stages of their careers. Such a tight focus can provide insights that help firms better shape and manage gender diversity within their organizational structure and culture. This unique lens offers an opportunity for supply chain organizations to assess, and perhaps re-assess, their onboarding programs and their efforts to create inclusive workplaces as part of their retention and development strategies. The framework included at the conclusion of the report presents a roadmap for organizations to foster better working environments, development opportunities, and, ultimately, organizational leaders.
Overview of Gender Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace

Gender balance in supply chain leadership roles is still on the distant horizon, despite evidence that diverse groups make better decisions and that women’s skill sets are highly regarded in the supply chain context (see Figures 3 and 4). These skills include multitasking, collaboration, communication, and influence. In the cross-functional, complex, and fast-paced world of the global supply chain, excelling at these skills would suggest that more women would hold senior level positions in supply chain organizations. But this is not yet the case.

Women remain underrepresented at every level of the organization, and the disparity becomes increasingly apparent at senior levels.

According to a 2018 report conducted by McKinsey & Company in collaboration with LeanIn.Org, in spite of many firms’ commitment to gender diversity, more needs to be done to achieve the goal. The McKinsey & Company and LeanIn.Org report shows that little progress has been made over the past four years (since the inception of their annual report on women in the workplace). Women remain underrepresented at every level of the organization, and the
disparity becomes increasingly apparent at senior levels. These annual research reports consistently point to the need to develop a pipeline of talent that can rise to senior levels, which means paying particular attention to recruiting talent and then retaining and developing that talent to rise to senior levels of an organization. The *Women in the Workplace 2018* report indicates that women are less likely to be hired into entry-level positions and then even less likely to be promoted to managerial level. This has a major impact on the talent pipeline—there are simply fewer women to promote to senior levels.7

The experiences of those women who do rise through an organization’s management structure suggest that there is generally an uneven playing field, with inherent performance bias. For example, the report suggests that men
are most often hired or promoted based on their potential, whereas women are more likely to be hired/promoted based on their actual track record. This requires that women demonstrate their skills before they can advance. Further evidence of the uneven playing field comes in the form of women receiving less day-to-day support. These support gaps often manifest as fewer resources provided to succeed, less showcasing of female employees’ work by managers to others in the organization, less help with navigating organizational politics, and less access to senior managers. Often, women must also cope with the burden and scrutiny of being the only woman in the room or on the team, which results in the ongoing need to prove oneself.8

Finally, the Women in the Workplace 2018 report highlights that women are much more likely to experience harassment, or “everyday discrimination” known as microaggressions. These can be intentional and even explicit in the form of sexual or racial innuendo (or worse). However, they are often unintentional, such as when a female coworker is assumed to be more junior to or less knowledgeable than her male counterparts. Regardless of whether microaggressions are intentional or not, they signal disrespect and essentially reflect inequality since they are directed at people with less power—e.g., women, people of color, or those within the LGBTQ community.

As shown in the Figure 5, the results summarized in the McKinsey/LeanIn.Org report show that the experiences of women across all kinds of organizations and

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Figure 5

PERCENTAGE OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Microaggression Description</th>
<th>Only woman in office</th>
<th>Multiple women in office</th>
<th>Only man in office</th>
<th>Multiple men in office</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Needing to provide more evidence of your competence than others do</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having your judgement questioned in your area of expertise</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being addressed in a less-than-professional way</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being mistaken for someone at a much lower level than you are</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing demeaning remarks about you or people like you</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2018 LeanIn.Org and McKinsey Women in the Workplace study
Supply chain organizations are already focused on the recruitment, development, and retention of talent to build a more gender-diverse workforce.

Further highlight the additional burdens for women of color and/or those who identify as LGBTQ.

Research within the supply chain domain echoes these themes. Research efforts to understand and address gender diversity/inclusion within supply chain organizations have been spearheaded by AWESOME (Achieving Women’s Excellence in Supply Chain Operations, Management, and Education) and Gartner, Inc. These two organizations have been collaborating since 2016, producing an annual report on women in supply chain. The reports show that supply chain organizations are already focused on the recruitment, development, and retention of talent to build a more gender-diverse workforce. As supply chain management is increasingly recognized for its strategic importance in ensuring corporate success, supply chain leadership has become a differentiating factor for firms in the global marketplace. Thus, the recruitment, development, retention, and progression of women is at the forefront of many chief supply chain officers’ agendas.

There is still much change needed, however, for organizations to achieve greater gender diversity. Within supply chain organizations, the AWESOME/Gartner report suggests that 40 percent of the workforce (across all levels) is comprised of women, yet only 15 percent of the firms included in their research reported having female representation at the executive levels of their organizations. Of particular interest in the 2018 report, retention of women is for the first time edging out recruiting women in to supply chain positions. Both are of tremendous importance, but the subtle shift may demonstrate that a longer-term perspective is taking hold in supply chain talent management circles. As the AWESOME/Gartner 2018 report indicates, “The stakes are high—the loss of a single midcareer supply chain professional, taking into account loss of expertise and associated instability, will cost two to three times their salary” (p. 3). The loss of senior-level talent equates to an even more significant impact on an organization.
The focus on young women is purposeful: to provide insight into their experiences and to offer thoughtful direction to supply chain managers working to develop a more gender-balanced workforce.

Research Findings

The previous section provided an overview of the challenges that women face in the workplace throughout their careers. In contrast, the current research addresses a specific subset of females within the supply chain management discipline: young females at the beginning of their careers. While recruiting gender-diverse, entry-level employees has become more widespread, retention and growth of women to senior-leadership positions remains far behind the expectations of most organizations with regards to creating gender-diverse leadership within supply chain organizations. Thus, the focus on young women is purposeful: to provide insight into their experiences and to offer thoughtful direction to supply chain managers working to develop a more gender-balanced workforce.

Participants in the current study come from two sources: current female students majoring in supply chain management at the University of Tennessee and recent supply chain management graduates of the university (See the “About this Research” section at the end of this paper for more details about the participants and data collection methods). All participants are/were high-performing students while at the University of Tennessee, which indicates they could have high potential to be organizational leaders someday. Each topic raised in this report represents a theme that resonated across multiple participants, with specific examples presented to emphasize points raised by the participants. While the discussion may appear to be anecdotal, the highlighted incidents are not isolated, but manifest issues of commonality that arose across the interviews.

Current students were asked about their experiences as females in the classroom environment or during internships, whereas the early-career professionals were asked about their experiences of being female on the job. As expected, there were differences in perspective, primarily due to the context in which the women were immersed. Overall, however, there was far more similarity in responses, which transcended the student vs. professional boundary. Where appropriate, the student/professional distinction has been identified in the following discussion; otherwise no distinction is made.
**Why Do Women Choose SCM as a Major?**

Current students were asked about their decision to become a supply chain major. These women, all members of the NeXxus student organization, admittedly represent a high-achieving segment of the student population. An interesting aspect about their responses was their overall enthusiasm for their career direction, especially since most of them acknowledged not arriving at the university with a supply chain major in mind.

A few of them had older siblings who attended the Haslam College of Business or came from families in which supply chain was already the professional field of at least one parent; however, most of the students discovered supply chain once they became immersed in their studies within the college. Some had friends who were supply chain majors, and their enthusiasm for the field sparked an interest. Many had initially thought of supply chain management as “just glorified trucking.” For these students, two aspects of supply chain were attractive. One was discovering the diversity of roles supply chain has to offer, and they were interested in the “people” aspect inherent in most supply chain roles. Others remarked that they enjoyed the analytical, problem-solving nature of supply chain management more than they had anticipated.

The reasons for their enthusiasm spanned the spectrum of possibilities: “problem-solving,” “process management,” “team-building,” “a focus on sustainability,” and “international opportunities” were all aspects that the participants mentioned as making the field attractive. The simultaneous focus on data analytics and problem solving, coupled with the opportunity for interpersonal interaction, was an important draw for many of the women. Additionally, the cross-functional nature of supply chain management is particularly appealing to the interviewees who are looking for a variety of experiences and diverse opportunities throughout their careers. One participant summed up the discussion by saying, “The dynamic nature of supply chain management makes things interesting, and we’ve all learned that supply chain is where the real change occurs in business!”

*Students enjoyed the analytical, problem-solving nature of supply chain management more than they had anticipated.*
Transitioning from College to the Professional World

Many of the participants spoke of the transition from college to the work world and becoming a responsible adult. This was a significant change for most of them and for which many indicated they had been unprepared. For those who were highly involved in school and extracurricular activities and with on-campus leadership roles, the shift to an entry-level role in a corporate setting away from friends and family came as a shock. As one woman put it: “I was trusted and respected on campus in all my classes and clubs. That was a very empowering feeling. Then I moved out of that comfort zone, where nobody really knew anything about me, and I had to start from ground zero. That was daunting. It took me a long time to feel like I belonged at this company, that I had a place and a voice. Being able to take responsibility for things I was doing and doing them well, and having people come to me for things eventually helped me feel comfortable in myself again.”

As suggested by this interviewee’s experience, adapting to a new way of life, to the working world, in a new city, with people from diverse backgrounds can shake even the most confident entry-level employee. “I found the business world to be very male-dominated, very political and very opinionated. As a young female..."
coming into that world, I struggled to find my voice in a room full of strangers.” This particular young woman had to remind herself that she was hired in her role because the company believed in her, and she had to muster the courage to speak up as a part of her job. That was one of the most important steps toward ultimately being successful in her career. “I just wish I had been better prepared for it.”

**The Perfection Trap**

The perfection trap is something to which women are particularly vulnerable. The belief that success will come from doing things perfectly, not making mistakes or causing turmoil. When they don’t meet expectations, they often stew over the mistakes, making it harder to move on. Some of this perfectionism is socially instilled into girls who are trained to be good students, who follow the rules. These girls earn approval through their academic success, which often further entrenches them in the perfection trap. As young adults in college and new to the workplace, this notion of success being equated with perfection can often draw young women into playing it safe, not taking risks, not speaking up in meetings. Such behaviors make it less likely that these women will be perceived as potential leaders.

During the focus groups, the women were asked to watch and then comment on the TED Talk by Reshma Saujani, titled, “Teach Girls Bravery, Not Perfection.” The “perfection trap” was a concept that resonated with them: “I feel like I need to do something perfectly, and if I can’t, there’s something wrong with me,” is an attitude with which they all seem to struggle. This is an interesting finding, since all of the participants are extremely strong students and none could be classified as shy and retiring. Most of them have been outspoken and not apprehensive about making presentations in class. Yet, they related to the fear of not being perfect.

On this point, focus group participants identified with the observation that female students are less likely to speak up in class or to take on strong roles in group presentations. Several stated that understanding the concept of the perfection trap helped them empathize with the number of women in their classes who were hesitant to speak up during conversations or reluctant to take on major roles during class presentations because they might be wrong, which would be embarrassing. Several students noted that women may put themselves into the lesser roles during their university years due to their anxieties about being wrong or “exposed” as incompetent.

They also noted that those who actively participate in extracurricular learning (through membership in NeXxus or other campus clubs and groups, for example) were more emboldened to speak and present in front of others. However, these women remarked during the focus group sessions that they repeatedly have to remind themselves that “my questions aren’t dumb,” when trying to navigate group dynamics in the classroom. When asked how these classroom behaviors will translate into the workforce, all participants commented on the need to be willing...
Several women also commented that “men are also groomed to think that we should be perfect.”

to put themselves “out there,” to “speak up” even when they don’t feel confident. Of note here is that these women are cognizant of the need to overcome the perfection trap and will be able to work toward that goal.

In discussing the need to be perfect, many of the participants acknowledged that this quest had been part of their grooming (intentionally or not). However, several women also commented that “men are also groomed to think that we should be perfect.” This falls in line with the notion that women are judged more on what they achieve, rather than potential. One salient example of this point emerged during discussions that revolved around a co-op project in which one participant was tasked with working on carrier improvement.

Carrier on-time-in-full (OTIF) rates at her company had been extremely low, at 11 percent. With little guidance from her male manager, she managed the project and brought carrier OTIF service results to 92 percent by the end of her co-op and presented her results to senior management. Although she gave the presentation about her project, her manager received all the credit for the impressive results (and he never acknowledged the work she had done to achieve the results). When she asked this same manager to recommend her for a full-time rotational program at the company, he said, “You’re not good enough. I don’t see any real results from your project. You should have hit 100 percent on-time.”

Would this manager have said this to a male intern? Was he just trying to test her mettle? Regardless of the intent, situational leadership best practice would point out the vast difference in the power dynamic at play and say that his approach was not a good match for this type of situation. It was counterproductive, given that the company was probably trying to attract this exact type of talent.

Interestingly, one manager on another team did acknowledge the outstanding work that she had done, and he also acknowledged that her manager had done little to help or guide her, saying that she should be doubly proud of her accomplishments to improve carrier service. Unfortunately, and despite this positive reinforcement, the underlying message she received was that she needed to choose another company for full-time employment—one that valued her talent and capabilities.
One of the primary challenges that women reported facing in the workplace is the struggle to gain respect and be valued by others in the organization.

Gaining Respect and Being Valued

With reference to being appreciated for one’s talent and capabilities, one of the primary challenges that women reported facing in the workplace is the struggle to gain respect and be valued by others in the organization. Many spoke about having to toil to prove themselves and taking on tremendous workloads because they thought they needed to demonstrate their abilities to be seen as a good team member, capable of performing challenging tasks. Conversation about being respected and valued revolved around two underlying issues: learning how to navigate roles and the complicating factors of being both young and female.

One of the challenges women repeatedly brought up in discussion relates to their struggles to be respected, not “used” in the workplace. This issue was evident among the student participants, too. Female students working in groups reported that they were often considered to be the team organizers. The tendency of others to regard these students as planners and organizers meant they were often the first to gather a group and take initiative to help the team meet its goals. Taking this initiative often resulted in the women feeling like they were carrying the team, because their male counterparts didn’t step up to engage proactively in the team’s work (although this perception is not unique to women, SC leaders need to understand this dynamic). One woman remarked, “I want to dive in and be engaged – that’s how I learn, but I don’t want to be taken advantage of.” The participants made clear that being responsible organizationally for ensuring the work was done was not the same as being the group leader – none of them felt these were leadership roles they were assuming, which probably exacerbated the frustration with the “caretaking” roles they felt forced into.
Similarly, in a work situation during an internship, one woman reported that she and a male counterpart were working on corresponding projects, in which she was focused on outbound transportation issues and he was working on the same issue from an inbound perspective. It was logical that much of their data gathering would overlap, but the teamwork she had expected in the data gathering and analysis phase never occurred. While she strove to gather the needed data and meet the project deadline, her colleague spent most of his time networking with senior managers at the firm.

As the time came to present the report to senior management, her peer expected her to share her data and presentation materials with him. The intern struggled with this scenario on several fronts. First, she felt resentful that she had done most of the work, and yet he would receive much of the credit for it in the presentation. At the same time, she recognized that he had developed a strong network with the firm’s managers while she had been laboring to finish the project. Now, she didn’t feel as strongly connected to the broader management team as she perceived him to be.

This story was not presented as a complaint. It was an example of a situation in which the participant remarked that she would need to learn to maneuver more effectively when beginning her career. She questioned what she had done wrong to find herself in that situation and wondered how she could have navigated more effectively to feel more equal, in both her eyes and those of her managers.

Both of these examples—the students playing roles within class project teams and the young woman in the workplace—reveal an unconscious bias that often exists regarding role expectations. Women may feel resentful at being put into these roles, but they also find it difficult to escape them because no norms have been violated. Without an identifiable transgression, it is unclear if or how to protest these situations or how to break free from them in the future.

Many interviewees recounted that their efforts to fit in and earn respect stemmed from their own willingness to ask questions and to put themselves “out there.” Showing interest and curiosity about the work and the roles of colleagues goes a long way to building relationships that are founded on mutual respect. In this way, too, several young women spoke about how they could see themselves growing in their own roles. They comprehended that asking questions about things they didn’t understand wasn’t a mark of weakness but empowering because it enabled them to learn from others while strengthening their workplace relationships. They were also learning early to get over the perfection trap mentioned in the previous section.
“I expect to have challenges as I start my career. I know that I don’t know everything, and I expect to learn and will remain open to being coached, but I also expect that my path will be more challenging because I’m female.”

Being taken seriously when you’re new on the job is not something that only young women face, but these women were cognizant of having to overcome not just their youth, but also their gender: “I had to prove myself to them, which is why I worked such long hours those first 15 months on the job,” was one participant’s explanation for how tenaciously she had to work at the beginning. While all young entry-level recruits should expect to work diligently to master their roles at a firm, being young and female made proving themselves and gaining respect of colleagues more challenging.

These interviewees will eventually grow out of being young, but the experiences of having to work more earnestly now than male counterparts can take its toll as they progress up an organizational ladder. If nothing else, this exemplifies a well-known adage that Madeleine Albright, the first female U.S. Secretary of State, who served during the Clinton administration recently cited. “[Women] are going to have to work twice as hard. It’s just a simple truth… there’s plenty of room for mediocre men, there is no room for mediocre women.”

All of the participants in the research are dedicated workers and demonstrated a willingness to work as diligently as needed to prove themselves on the job. But these women were fully aware of having to prove themselves to the men in their organizations. “I expect to have challenges as I start my career. I know that I don’t know everything, and I expect to learn and will remain open to being coached, but I also expect that my path will be more challenging because I’m female.”

Being the only female – regardless of age – may also bring problems with garnering respect. One tech-savvy participant spent considerable time working on a new forecasting application her company was implementing, and she was recognized as the team expert, until a new boss arrived who did not think she could possibly know as much as she claimed. With no one to speak up for her, her role as the resident expert was suddenly in question; when she offered advice to her boss based on her knowledge, she was reprimanded for being out of line. “This guy, he had been in the business a long time, and there I was, ‘This little female, only a couple years out of college, and here she’s telling me how to run the software.’”

Her new boss was questioned by senior management about her behavior in the escalating situation (never about his own behavior), but she was never asked for her side of the story. The experience led this young woman to realize that she needed to leave that team because her expertise and credibility had been undermined.
Being one of the few women in an organizational setting can also make it difficult to find something in common with workmates (some reported this challenge with clients as well), particularly when the personal dialogue and extra-curricular activities center on sports. One woman recounted an interview for a promotion in which she was vying for a role with one of her best male friends at the company: “My interview was strictly about business, talking about the team and its direction. I thought the interview went well, and I know I was well qualified for the position. My friend’s interview was all about golf and weekend sports. He got the job over me.” Another relayed how her clients frequently asked if she plays golf, because the man who had recently retired from this role had played golf regularly with these clients.

“I know they’re just trying to find something in common with me, and they’re constantly telling me that my predecessor played golf with them. But you know what? I’m not him. It’s me here, now. Let’s spend time together to figure out how to work together because I’m the one managing this account now.

The outlook, however, is far from bleak. The women expressed strong appreciation for managers who did value their talent and skills. Several had female supervisors who had been supportive, encouraging them to take on challenging assignments because they believed in them. Such support early in one’s career is invaluable. And not all men are unsupportive: one participant mentioned a CEO in her first job who had watched her work for several months. At one point, a less-than-supportive manager in the company dumped a tight-deadline project that he didn’t want to do on her desk. She did it and

“I feel like it’s our job to empower each other and empower ourselves and be courageous. But I also feel like it’s our job to educate men on why we are worth it, what we bring to the table, and value us and help us grow.”
presented the results to the client. When the CEO saw this, he made a special point to tell her that she would be fine in life, and he had no doubt of her potential for success.

An interesting point was raised by the student participants about the need for women to help men understand the importance of gender equality in the workplace. One summed it up by saying, “I feel like it’s our job to empower each other and empower ourselves and be courageous. But I also feel like it’s our job to educate men on why we are worth it, what we bring to the table, and value us and help us grow. Teach them how to help us.” While the other women agreed, they also commented on their perception that companies need to do a better job training managers how to manage. Those promoted to managerial positions (with power over others) need to be worthy of the influential role they play in others’ careers: “If they don’t value women and they don’t want to help women grow – or any minority, for that matter – they don’t need to be in a management position. I know that’s a ‘duh’ message, but companies need to do a better job of evaluating these people’s values and assessing whether they’re really capable of helping everyone on their teams to succeed.”

This is relevant because the companies at which these women were working all have released public statements relating to how they value diversity and inclusion. Some of the participants said that companies need to do a better job of “walking the talk” that they espouse. These issues speak to an unconscious bias that resides within some individuals and corporations. Although many progressive organizations now have standard training programs to identify unconscious bias in their management teams, simply being aware of one’s biases is insufficient to change corporate cultures. As the participants suggest, and as attested to by experts, eradicating workplace bias is fundamentally an issue of leadership.

**Work/Life Issues**

Because young women oftentimes seem to think that they have to work tirelessly to be valued within the organization, the issue of learning how to manage work/life boundaries came up repeatedly in the interviews. Knowing how and where to set boundaries is something with which many supply chain professionals struggle. Similarly, these interviewees talked about their “workaholic” behavior patterns in the supply chain across gender, race, and global regions, which led to serious concerns about how to have a life outside of work. They wanted to make sure they would be valued for being dedicated and accomplished workers without risking being taken advantage of by systems that reward conscientious workers with more work. Setting work/life boundaries may be challenging for
women, since saying “no” to a job request can work against them. This is an area in which managers and human resource policies could be more direct in helping young women navigate their work boundaries.

Learning to set boundaries is important during the transition phase from college to professional life because of the impact on one’s work/life balance if not well managed from the beginning. Instead of putting in a massive amount of hours to prove herself and risking work habits that could lead to burnout and frustration, one young woman was counseled by her male boss to realize that no matter how diligently she worked, there would be more work the next day. It was some of the best advice she received in her first role: She now knew when to shut down at the end of the day, to turn off the work mind for some personal time in the evenings and weekends: “Basically, I had to learn early on not to let work control me.”

Recall that the women participating in this research are young, experiencing their organizations from entry-level positions. When asked about their futures, they often grew pensive. While some were already experiencing being the only female in the department or team, others noted that many of their peers were also women. All but one of these young professionals remarked about the lack of female senior leadership in their organizations: “I’m not the only one at my entry level—my company hires lots of females. But looking up the hierarchy, there don’t seem to be very many women there.” Their observations and explanations about the minimal number of women in higher management roles in their organizations reflect the difficult decisions they believe they will face in the future. A number of participants attributed this to family balance issues: “I guess at this company when I decide to start a family, I’ll have to leave the workplace,” was a common sentiment across the participants.

One participant relayed the situation of a senior female returning from maternity leave and being told she would need to increase her travel to keep her job. There was no apparent alternative, so she left the organization. Given the AWESOME/Gartner findings regarding how expensive it is to replace senior leadership, not only because of the salary levels, but also because of the institutional knowledge that is lost, this was an unfortunate loss for both the company and the employee. The experience also sent a message to at least one young woman at that company that there was limited potential for them to rise to senior positions at that firm: “It’s discouraging right now, for women. I highly respected her and had a good relationship with her, but now I’ve lost this role model.” Another participant saw things with more hope, saying, “my generation is keener on staying in the workforce after having families. I see my firm putting more women into the strategic positions that usually lead to the higher-level management roles. So maybe there is some hope after all, that I won’t have to leave this company.”
“My generation is keener on staying in the workforce after having families. I see my firm putting more women into the strategic positions that usually lead to the higher-level management roles. So maybe there is some hope after all, that I won’t have to leave this company.”

As expressed in these interviews, the perceived inability to have both a career and be a mother suggests that companies have considerable measures to take in order to provide opportunities for women that enable both parenting and career growth. Extrapolating, it may be proposed that this is not just a female issue; it is a broader societal issue that no individual company can change singlehandedly. But collectively, companies can do better to institute policies that are more family friendly, no matter which parent is the primary caregiver or breadwinner.

AnneMarie Slaughter, a former U.S. State Department director of policy planning as well as the former dean of Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, speaks of the changes needed to create true equality in our society and in our organizations. The answer does not lie in valuing women on male terms. In her 2013 TED Talk, “Can We All Have It All?” she advocates for workplaces creating a wider range of choices for both men and women so that family and career can be viable options for either gender. She urges corporations to value family as much as work, arguing that the two reinforce each other. Slaughter suggests that true gender equality in the workplace will not occur until organizations make this cultural shift within their own structures.
Companies should seek to understand their corporate culture across all of their locations. What happens at headquarters is not always what happens in field locations.

**How to Succeed?**

Participants are adamant that women belong in the supply chain field: “The idea that warehouses and transportation and trucking and logistics are too rough and tough for females... we just have to get over that. It’s going to take women of my generation to change that mentality. But it does require support from our companies so that we can grow into the leaders that will change the face of the supply chain.” Given this sentiment, the women were all asked what they would need to ensure their success in the organizational environment. Three topics came up repeatedly: corporate culture, mentoring, and a flexible work policy.

**Corporate Culture Plays an Important Role**

The participants all recognize the significance of corporate culture in fostering a work environment in which they are comfortable and willing to grow. As indicated in previous sections, comments such as, “When the culture is supportive and open, when my opinions are sought, that tells me I am valued,” or “I want to work in a culture that is open, with the ability to ask questions without fear of being perceived as stupid,” are important foundations to corporate cultures in which these women will feel comfortable and able to grow. Most of the organizations represented in the research have few females in senior supply chain roles. Two organizations represented by the participants did have more women in senior leadership roles than the others, and comments from one of the participants reflected positively on the organizational culture: “I don’t feel undermined because I’m a woman or that my voice isn’t heard because I’m a woman. Having a female leader sets that mindset for the entire company.”

One interesting reflection on corporate culture was the recognition that organizational culture can vary across facilities within an organization. Several participants indicated that gender bias doesn’t seem to exist within their office (usually a headquarters location); however, peers at other facilities (often a distribution center or manufacturing facility) experience gender bias. This different treatment across facilities/locations becomes part of the back-channel conversations that recent graduates have with current students.

Young professionals oftentimes are brought back to campus by their employers to help recruit for intern and full-time entry-level positions. Stories of a company’s “real culture” may be shared outside of the formal recruiting events. Thus, companies should seek to understand their corporate culture across all of their locations.
locations. What happens at headquarters is not always what happens in field locations. This discussion is raised not to offer reason to exclude women from certain roles or opportunities, but to encourage corporate executives to better understand the differences between cultures within their organizations. While operations environments in particular can be “rough” compared to headquarters environments, key aspects of corporate culture relating to gender bias need to be addressed.

**Mentoring Programs**

Mentoring programs afford opportunities to learn on the job from those who have more expertise and can often help smooth the way for newcomers. While senior mentors can provide guidance and direction geared at professional development, the participants also valued peer mentors who supply a support network. Such a peer network can relieve pressure in learning the fine points of “how we do things around here.” For those transitioning from college life to the corporate world, workplace norms can seem bewildering, such that it is possible to violate them inadvertently. One participant commented on how mentors help build confidence when they provide guidance in navigating new situations and reassuring that things will work out: “My mentor has become a real advocate for me... that’s a big thing, just knowing that my mentor is there for me; it helps me build my confidence.”

Mentoring doesn’t have to be formal, and mentors don’t have to be assigned by the company. Participants reported that their most effective mentors were often those they sought out on their own. One young woman said that she approaches mentors from the perspective of, “Who can I learn from?” She then asks them to join her at lunch or pursues other ways to build a relationship with them, in which she can ask for advice: “I pick their brains so I can learn; it also helps them to see me, so I don’t go unnoticed.”
This participant’s proactiveness is noteworthy because one-on-one meetings between junior women and senior men have become fraught transactions in recent years, such that some men may avoid mentoring or sponsoring young women. Like any ambitious or curious leader, this woman realizes it is critical to reach across areas of difference to learn and grow. This learning goes in both directions and can be a valuable source of insights and perspectives for both sides.

**Flexible Work Policies**

Flexible work policies tend to focus more on an individual’s output rather than the strict notion that work can only happen during office hours or while physically present in the office. The benefits from these policies go beyond gender and reflect growing common experiences with more flexible approaches to learning and working. “As long as I meet my deadlines and get my work done, it doesn’t really matter if all my work hours have been conducted in the office.” Another participant commented on how flexing her work locations enabled her to help care for a sick relative, because she could travel offsite several days a month and work remotely while supporting her family’s needs as well. Interviewees with flexible work options perceived their companies to be supportive of employees as individuals. These women also felt more confident about their futures at their companies than did others in the research sample.

Flexible work arrangements are a challenge in operational environments. The opportunity would be to engage teams in creating improvements in flexibility that are also pragmatic and function for the whole team. Again, taking action demonstrates commitment to a cultural change that better aligns with future work expectations. Automation is already significantly changing operational roles. The assessment starts with “what work is best done physically in the operation” and “what work can be completed remotely”. Flexibility initiatives could be a starting point for thinking differently about how work needs to be done.

**Managing the Pipeline**

While organizations should strive to improve retention of women by addressing participants’ concerns regarding corporate culture, mentoring and flexibility, there remains the issue of attracting more women to entry-level positions. The execution of well-thought-out recruiting strategies and talent pipeline planning can be a differentiator. In fact, Gartner identified recruiting and integrated pipeline planning programs as a clear path to improved results relative to diversity goals, as shown in Figure 6.
**Figure 6**

**RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION IMPROVEMENT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To Better Attract and Retain Women?</th>
<th>To Better Promote Women to Top Jobs?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Integrated Pipeline Planning (Develop/Promote/Sponsor)</td>
<td>Integrated Pipeline Planning (Develop/Promote/Sponsor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Change Cultural Values, Leadership Orientation, Behaviors</td>
<td>Change Cultural Values, Leadership Orientation, Behaviors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Better Outreach &amp; Candidate Identification</td>
<td>More Opportunities Available and Visible/ Stretch Assignments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Workplace/Worktime Shifts/ Family Policy Change</td>
<td>Better Outreach &amp; Candidate Identification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Visibility of Women Leaders/ Promote Women/Success Stories</td>
<td>Visibility of Women Leaders/ Promote Women/Success Stories</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Base: Total Answering, n=165
Q. In your opinion, what is the most important thing your organization can do to improve recruiting and retention of women in the supply chain organization/business unit?

Source: Gartner (April 2019)
Toward a More Gender-Equitable Workplace

The discussion with women in the early years of their careers provides insight for other women, as well as for the companies that hire them. Work environments can be challenging in regard to gender equity, and there is no one-size-fits all solution for achieving it. The women interviewed for this report are, for the most part, full of hope about their futures and recognize the obstacles that they may face as they progress through their careers.

When asked to provide advice to current students, they generally responded with supportive commentary such as, “Work hard, and set your boundaries,” or, “Don’t be afraid to ask for what you need, and don’t ever apologize for asking!” They advise current students to take advantage of all the soft-skills workshops and training opportunities they can while still in college because this will help build confidence for when they hit the workforce.

Confidence was a common theme for these women: “Confidence comes from having the courage to try new things, from putting yourself out there,” and “Confidence is your mindset—know that you are competent and have valuable skills to offer.” Finally, some of the best advice came from a young woman who had faced challenges in the workplace, many of them gender-related: “I no longer wait for men to give me the opportunity to succeed. I’ve realized that I don’t have to be like men to be successful. I’m successful—not because I’m better than men, but because I’m different.”

This report provides a glimpse into the world of some young women in the supply chain field, the challenges they face, their perceptions of how to navigate the business world, and their hopes for career success. Supply chain leaders reading about their world should ponder the experiences of young women in their own organizations. This is a complicated issue to negotiate. Because most firms have relatively few female senior leaders in place, it can be difficult to draw young women into the organization. Yet failing to do so will ensure gender inequity at senior levels long into the future. When women rise through organizational ranks, they become valuable role models to young women such as those who participated in this research.
To help readers process the insights gained through this research, and to help create a path forward for young women as well as organizations, the AWESOME Reach Framework has been used to align the research findings to the five “Reach” directions. AWESOME originally developed the Reach Framework to generate input from senior supply chain leaders about what actions individuals can take to further their own career, support the advancement of other women, and transform the future of supply chain leadership.

For our purposes, lessons learned from the interviews can be directed to young women as well as to corporate leaders. For each target audience, the Reach suggestions are based on the discussions from the interview participants. This is in no way intended to be a comprehensive guide for solving gender equity issues, nor is it an exhaustive list of actions for ensuring that recruitment of young women will always result in desired retention and growth. Instead, the suggestions represent starting points and discussion opportunities to accelerate diversity and inclusion initiatives within supply chain organizations.

The framework provides helpful insights for women as they transition from students to professionals, to encourage them to own their career paths as they work toward a more gender-equitable future. In addition, human resource and supply chain leaders can use the framework as a tool to learn from the experiences of the participants profiled in this report to assess how a firm presents itself to young women. Leaders should ask themselves how their organization needs to change not only to attract more women into supply chain roles, but also to foster their retention and their growth into future supply chain executives.
### Applying The AWESOME Reach Framework

#### YOUNG WOMEN

- Seek your own mentors – From whom can you learn?
- Network with managers and senior leaders so that you become known to them.
- Build a chorus of advisors within and outside of your company.
- (Current students) Help get more women interested in SCM: spread the word to your friends – your enthusiasm is infectious to others.
- Seek peer mentors – build a team of people around you who support your success.
- Seek mentors who can help you navigate challenges and grow from mistakes.
- Dive in. Ask questions of your colleagues. Recognize that asking questions and showing interest in learning is not a weakness, but a strength. Colleagues will help you learn your role when you show interest in learning/growing.
- Build relationships with your co-workers and associates. If you’re not co-located, make the effort to go meet them where they work and learn about their role in the company. This will help break down barriers, and make your job easier.
- Get involved:
  - During university years, join student clubs like NExXus or Scholars of Distinction to build confidence.
  - In your organization, join employee resource groups to make connections, fostering “fit” within the company.
  - Join professional organizations such as CSCMP to build a network of colleagues outside the organization as well.

#### CORPORATIONS

- What does your corporate culture say about your company’s openness to female senior leadership?
- How much real “walk” is in the “talk” of corporate policies that foster gender equity? Are there specific goals?
- Realize it is hard to be what you can’t see. If diversity and inclusion are valued, then they should show up in meetings and corporate events.
- Create a culture that is open to new/young employees asking questions without fear.
- Make sure that women have the resources to succeed. This ensures employees stay and grow into senior leaders.
- Employee resource groups help. Lack of support sends a clear message.
- Partner with universities – Support scholarships that improve the diversity pipeline.
- How strong is your recruitment plan for bringing diversity into your organization?
- Is your company using sites like “The Muse” to help bring more transparency to your culture?
- Has your organization accessed the tools of organizations like Catalyst’s MARC (Men Advocating Real Change) program?
- Enhance awareness of supply chain as a great career option for women.
- Build an integrated pipeline program to attract and retain high quality talent.

### Courage builds confidence. A “Yes, I can!” attitude goes a long way. Be audacious. Be ambitious. Prove to yourself that you can do it.

- Be courageous about not needing to be perfect. Learn to take risks.
- Create your own continuous improvement training plan. If you are receiving (or perceiving) feedback in a specific area, seek out podcasts or TED talks to become more knowledgeable.

### To get more women interested in SCM:

- Educate more at the high school level
- Get involved with on-campus clubs such as NExXus – recognize that, as a young professional, you are already a role model to students.
- Introduce other women to new people and experiences.

### To read more, access Seven Smart Moves to Make Bigger Waves for Women’s Leadership—available on awesomeleaders.org. AWESOME also makes available the Reach Framework for other organizations to use in their own efforts to increase diversity.
Summary

As tempting as it may be to hang the need for gender diversity – or all forms of diversity for that matter – on the desire to “do what is right” and form a more equitable society, it is the business case for diversity that remains the compelling motivator. Research and experience has shown that diversity in the workplace drives what we have termed “abgility” by creating more able and more agile supply chains through the improvements in innovation that a diverse set of perspectives brings. The promise of such diversity is to develop supply chains capable of delivering better top- and bottom-line results as well as long-term shareholder value.

The interviews with a talented group of women students and young professionals reported in this white paper identifies several specific action items for organizations to pursue as they seek to enhance gender diversity in their supply chain functions. Reading and reflecting on the perspectives of these young professional women in supply chain will help leaders to create more relevant, targeted plans to effect change to overcome the barriers to success that women perceive, including the need for perfection, the challenge of gaining respect and being valued, and the desire for work/life balance. Not surprisingly, addressing these issues for young women will also generate residual benefits for the entire workforce. Key elements of such plans should include:

1. Having specific goals and plans to ensure that open and embracing culture pervades all work sites, from headquarters to operating facilities;
2. Mentoring programs to ensure that young women have someone they can trust for advice on enculturation, day-to-day challenges and issues, career planning, etc.;
3. Exploring flexible work policies, engaging young women in developing pragmatic solutions;
4. Ensuring that recruiting and onboarding practices are effective.

The AWESOME framework, adapted using the results of the interview research, provides a helpful framework for readers to consider their own personal career plans as well as for organizations to identify specific opportunities for action.

If nothing else, readers of this white paper should take away one critical point: waiting to address ways to ensure that women can contribute to success in the supply chain workforce is not an effective strategy—the workforce is already diverse, and getting increasingly more so by the year. Understanding how to incorporate cultural change will help leaders and organizations pave the way for broader changes coming in the future and to build organizational muscle memory and strength to improve organizational resilience.
End Notes


About NeXxus

The Global Supply Chain Institute’s NeXxus initiative was launched in November 2015 at the Supply Chain Forum held in Knoxville, Tennessee. This was the same year that the institute published the white paper titled, Supply Chain Talent: Our Most Important Resource. Recognition of the significance of talent management was not only growing among the faculty and supply chain partner firms, but so was recognition, in particular, of the need to recruit, develop, and retain a diverse talent pool. While the GSCI supports diversity and inclusion across the wide spectrum of all that diversity entails, the NeXxus initiative’s primary focus has been on gender diversity. This focus was born of the recognition of the extreme gender imbalance within the student body of the Haslam College of Business, and, specifically, within the supply chain management major.

Haslam’s supply chain major has grown dramatically over the past decade. Today, there are over 1,200 students with a declared supply chain management major (this includes students at all four levels of the undergraduate curriculum), making it the largest program in the university. Yet, as the student body has grown over the years, the number of female students has remained relatively constant—virtually all of the growth has been male students. In 2014, only 22 percent of the third- and fourth-year students were female. When faculty members became aware of this disparity, they decided to address the imbalance. Led primarily by the female faculty members, but fully supported by all members of the department, the NeXxus initiative was born. The launch came officially in the form of a gender diversity panel discussion at the Fall 2015 Forum that included Meghann Erhart (Pilot Flying J, then director of Supply Chain Strategy and Customer Sales Support), Paula Hise (Kenco Logistic Services, then group vice president, Health and Personal Care), Wendy Thrasher (Kimberly-Clark Corporation, then director of International and B2B Transportation), and Kevin O’Marah (SCM World, then chief content officer). The panel session generated significant discussion among the forum participants, and its inclusion in future Supply Chain Forum meetings has been consistently supported across the partner firms who are members of the Forum.
The NeXxus initiative has grown beyond that initial panel session. Today, at least two manifestations of the initiative are being managed to increase gender diversity within the college’s supply chain management program. NeXxus is a student organization on campus solely run by female students (supported by a faculty advisor). The student club focuses on creating community and building confidence of its student members through a variety of developmental workshops, social activities, and mentoring programs offered each academic year. The club has provided leadership opportunities for female students who are tasked with setting its annual goals, developing programming, liaising with corporate sponsors (i.e. Ryder provides NeXxus scholarship funds for new and existing female SCM students), and building the community of supply chain women within the college. Launched in the summer of 2016, NeXxus now has name recognition within the Haslam student body and had over 50 active members during the 2018/19 academic year. An overview of the student club’s goals can be seen in Figure 8.

A second manifestation of the NeXxus initiative is the NeXxus Summer Academy Program, targeting high school female students across the state of Tennessee. Launched in 2018, it is a weeklong program held on the UTK campus to introduce high school students to the supply chain major. Many students (female and male) arrive in the Haslam College of Business without a clear sense of what major they will choose, and many of them also arrive with little to no knowledge of supply chain management. Those that do have at least some knowledge often think that supply chain management is about trucking, which is usually not a draw for female students. The NeXxus Summer Academy Program is designed to instill supply chain management knowledge within the high schools of Tennessee, to build a stronger base of diverse students arriving in the Haslam College of Business.
NeXxus Goals

1. **Foster Networking**: Create networking opportunities for women SCM students in the Haslam College of Business and women SCM practitioners.
2. **Provide Mentoring Opportunities**: Create mentoring opportunities between women SCM practitioners and women students in the Haslam College of Business.
3. **Build Confidence**: Enable women to “lean in”, creating future leaders in the SCM profession.
4. **Attract the Right Talent**: Educate women students about career opportunities in SCM to provide increased gender diversity among our graduates and to help address current gender gaps in the field.

NeXxus Membership

Membership is open to all Freshman, Sophomore, Junior and Senior students.

Monthly meetings and social events create community, while developing professional skills to prepare women for exciting careers in supply chain management.

- **Guest Speakers** – women executives who have “made it” in the supply chain world share their experiences and offer advice to young women.
- **Workshops** help develop networking and job interview skills.
- **Social activities** build friendships and community.
- **Networking at the Supply Chain Forum NeXxus Reception** each semester provides opportunities to meet supply chain professionals and learn about their companies.

Networking, Mentoring, and Empowering Women in the Supply Chain Major

For More info: nexxus@utk.edu

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By fall 2018, modest improvement has been achieved: 26 percent of the third- and fourth-year supply chain students are female. Progress is slow, and we recognize that the transformation to a gender-balanced student body is a long-term goal.

To help address the continuing imbalance, the NeXxus initiative has been framed as a partnership between the Haslam College of Business’ Supply Chain Management department and the forum members. Companies can only recruit diverse talent from the University of Tennessee if a diverse talent pool is created for them. Likewise, all efforts to create a diverse talent pool for recruitment are for naught if companies fail to develop and retain the diverse talent recruited from the University of Tennessee.
About This Research

The perspectives of young women presented in this report were gathered over several years and comprise two specific sample groups:

- Female graduates of the Haslam College of Business supply chain major that have been working for one to five years since graduation. A total of 14 in-depth interviews were conducted, with each interview lasting approximately one hour. The majority of the interviews were conducted by Maggie Mobely as part of her Global Leadership Scholars thesis work, under the supervision of Diane Mollenkopf. Diane Mollenkopf conducted the rest.

- Current female undergraduate students enrolled in the Haslam College of Business supply chain major. Two focus groups took place with a total of 13 students who ranged from first year through fourth year. All are current members of the student NeXxus organization.

In-depth interviews and focus group interviews are recognized tools for qualitative research methods, in which the purpose of the research is not to assess statistical patterns in collected data, but to gain insight into thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and experiences of individuals within certain contexts. Diane Mollenkopf is an experienced qualitative researcher, who collected the focus group data in the spring of 2019 and analyzed the interview and focus group data in the spring of 2019.

All participants were promised confidentiality; neither participants’ names nor the names of the companies they discussed can be shared.

The AWESOME Framework was shared by Heather Sheehan, Executive Director of AWESOME (Achieving Women’s Excellence in Supply Chain Operations, Management, and Education). Visit awesomeleaders.org for more information about this organization.
Ryder’s Focus on Diversity and Inclusion

Delivering excellence in supply chain and logistics solutions for our customers is at the heart of our vision at Ryder. Addressing challenges, as well as opportunities, for women to study and excel in supply chain-related fields is important for our business, because we understand the value of talent and gender diversity. Men and women work in different ways, bringing different strengths to the table, so it makes sense that gender diversity can lead to better business decisions.

The diverse backgrounds and perspectives of our workforce help us to better understand and respond to our customers’ needs, resulting in increased profitability and long-term value.

Diversity in the workplace also contributes to our ability to attract top talent in an industry that has not historically been diverse. Our industry has traditionally not done enough to attract and retain minorities and women. We are working to change that. In the last three years Ryder doubled the number of women in shop maintenance leadership roles.

We are proud to have been named among “America’s Best Employers for Women” by Forbes magazine in their first-ever ranking. Our partnership with Women in Trucking, an organization that focuses on increasing the number of women in the industry, and our focus on military and veteran recruiting are just two important ways in which we strive to increase our access to the best talent in the industry.

Supply chain and logistics in the U.S. is a trillion-dollar industry and growing. The ongoing work by the University of Tennessee’s Haslam College of Business to increase the number of women in supply chain fields is a valuable resource for Ryder and our industry. We are proud to support this research to help create an equal and diverse workforce.
THE GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN INSTITUTE

The University of Tennessee’s Global Supply Chain Institute (GSCI) shapes and influences the practice of supply chain management (SCM) by serving as the preeminent global hub for leading practitioners, academics, and students to learn, network, and connect.

It was in this spirit of engagement and impact that the Department of Supply Chain Management and the Graduate & Executive Education programs in the Haslam College of Business at the University of Tennessee created the Global Supply Chain Institute to serve as their vehicle to extend relationships to industry and to drive an impact on the profession.

If you are interested in collaborating to better understand and advance the field of SCM, please contact us. Ultimately, we want to partner with you to help you identify your SCM strategy and develop your people.

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