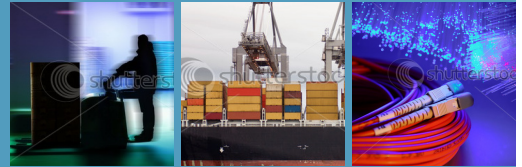


# Supply Chain and Operations Leadership

Q1 2010



## A Conversation with Gerry Smith of Lenovo— Recently Named Supply Chain Executive of the Year



**Gerry Smith is Senior Vice President, Global Supply Chain at Lenovo, based in Singapore.**

He joined the Lenovo Group in August 2006 and is responsible for end-to-end supply chain management encompassing order management, supply/demand planning, procurement, manufacturing and logistics.

Prior to Lenovo, Mr. Smith was vice president and general manager of the display line of business for Dell, Inc. where he was responsible for all development, procurement and operations worldwide. He concurrently led the start-up of the Singapore Design Centre and managed its integrated global supply chain.

Earlier in his career, Mr. Smith held positions at Definicon and EDS. He holds a bachelor's degree in Finance and Marketing from Pacific Lutheran University.

**Q. You were recently named 'Supply Chain Executive of the Year' in the SCM Logistics Excellence Awards. Congratulations!**

A. Thank you. I felt very honored, but this truly was a team effort. I am really proud of what we have been able to accomplish over the past few years. It's satisfying that the changes and operational improvements we've been driving are being recognized by the industry. We have significantly increased customer satisfaction, dramatically improved serviceability results, and simultaneously reduced end-to-end and materials costs, as well as implemented a wide range of Lean Six Sigma programs directly benefitting Lenovo's bottom line.

**Q. What part does human capital management play in being an "excellent" supply chain executive?**

A. I think the number one reason for the success of any company or a division within a company is its

At least a third of my job is talent management.

people. Once you believe that, then human capital management is obviously vitally important. Creating

the right mix of talent in a team and driving that team forward is the key to everything. At least a third of my job is talent management, and the time I spend on coaching, succession planning, and evaluations of individual and team performance, is absolutely critical to our success.

**Q. Some people think that executives like you shouldn't take time to perform team evaluations, that they should be doing "real" work ...**

A. But that *is* real work: it's your people who allow you to meet your day to day commitments, to drive for results and to deliver what you have promised. Making sure they are all focused on both short-term goals and long-term strategies is essential. Whether you are a Senior Vice President or an entry-level newcomer, you have to know your strengths and address your growth challenges. The danger is that otherwise, people

If an executive is not driving change on an individual level across his team, then he's in trouble.



plateau. They do what they have always done, despite the fact that the world around them has changed.

**Q. How did you build your team at Lenovo?**

A. The best thing I did was to assemble a team of people from different backgrounds and with differ-

Even hiring mistakes provide an opportunity to lead.

ent skillsets. I didn't just import my entire team from where I was prior to Lenovo—I trained and promoted a number of people from Lenovo's

existing team, and we also brought in team members from outside who I didn't previously know.

I feel that working with a search and assessment firm dramatically increases the pool of candidates and takes a lot of tasks off your to-do list. Once your search consultant knows your needs and your style, they become an extension of you, and that streamlines and speeds up the entire process.

I made mistakes in hiring, of course; everyone does. Sometimes a person you think will be a great fit doesn't work out. But even that is a leadership opportunity: by recognizing you were wrong and making the tough decisions that follow, you show that you are committed to what is best for the company.

**Q. You are an American living and working in Singapore. How has that experience affected you?**

A. My wife and I have four children, and back in the U.S., we were deeply embedded in the community

Taking an international assignment was without a doubt the best thing I've done for my career.

where we lived. I was active in our church, and I was always running around to soccer practices and other family activities. No one would have predicted that I would be an expat someday! But moving to Singapore was without

a doubt the best thing I've done for my career. Living in a different country changes who you are. It has helped

me to be so much more aware of different points of view and different ways to approach a problem. It helps you avoid "groupthink" and it broadens your experiences. I encourage all my high-potentials to take an international assignment, and I've built my team with people from all around the world.

**Q. Little boys and girls probably do not dream of growing up to work in the supply chain. Do you feel this profession suffers from a lack of "glamour" within companies?**

A. I suppose it might ... but it shouldn't! Today's supply chain is completely different than it was 20 years ago. It's not just about cutting purchase orders and checking off boxes on clipboards in Receiving.

A well-run supply chain has a direct correlation

to the overall health of a company; it is part of every company's strategy and business plans. I tell my team that we are running a business within the company—there's an entrepreneurial aspect to it that makes it fun. If it were just a tactical role, sure, it

A well-run supply chain has a direct correlation on the overall health of a company.

would be mundane. But it is highly strategic, and it takes brainpower. The supply chain's efficiency can contribute to—or take away from—shareholder value. What we do is very interesting, and very important.

## Supply Chain

Russell Reynolds Associates was the first executive search firm to create a team of consultants dedicated to finding functional supply chain executives, and we continue to be a leader and innovator in this field. Our Supply Chain Practice serves companies in all business segments, and we have a reputation for recruiting exceptional talent across industry lines and borders.

Our consultants have practical experience in supply chain functions. As a result, we speak the same “industry language” as our candidates do, so we can quickly evaluate and identify the right talent. As many manufacturing, technology, consumer and retail organizations globalize their operations and work to cut costs, improve service, expand their product mix and increase their product availability, they are seeking broader, more innovative supply chain talent. We are at the forefront of finding exceptional supply chain leaders who, for every industry, have global experience, cross-functional capabilities, strong communication skills and the ability to manage change.

## A Strategic Approach to Today's Leadership Challenges

The leadership challenges faced by today's CEOs, boards and senior leaders do not occur in isolation, and cannot be addressed that way. Russell Reynolds Associates' consultative approach to executive and board-level search and assessment provides leaders with tailored strategies that help drive long-term growth and success.



## About Russell Reynolds Associates

**Leadership.** In today's global business environment, success is driven by the talent, vision and leadership capabilities of senior executives.

Russell Reynolds Associates is a leading global executive search and assessment firm with more than 300 consultants based in 39 offices worldwide. Our consultants work closely with public and private organizations to identify, assess and recruit senior executives and board members. We value teamwork, serving our clients with a collaborative approach that spans our international network of sector and functional experts.

Our in-depth knowledge of major industries and our clients' specific business challenges, combined with our understanding of who and what make an effective leader, ensure that our clients secure the best leadership teams for the ongoing success of their businesses. For more information, please visit us at [www.russellreynolds.com](http://www.russellreynolds.com).

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