

# YOUNG PROFESSIONALS IN SUPPLY CHAIN

## WHAT THEY THINK ABOUT

- Their career paths
- Their education and professional development
- Their priorities and goals for the future

A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO  
CSCMP's **Supply Chain**  
[QUARTERLY]



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# YOUNG PROFESSIONALS IN SUPPLY CHAIN

Supply chain management spells opportunity for workers under 30, who point to career development and advancement opportunities as hallmarks of the field.

What do young professionals think about working in the supply chain field? Why are they attracted to the business, and what are they looking for in a career? These are questions leaders at the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals (CSCMP) and Penske Logistics set out to answer when they surveyed nearly 300 young professionals working in the supply chain—all under age 30 and either professional or student members of CSCMP. The short answer to both questions is opportunity: the opportunity for interesting work in a variety of settings, and for career development and advancement. Survey respondents stopped short of pointing to pay as a key reason they are attracted to the industry, although most agree that supply chain management is a profession that provides a comfortable living.

Of course, getting inside the minds of young professionals creates the opportunity to ask a wide range of other questions that can shed light on the best ways to attract, keep, and develop young talent. The CSCMP/ Penske Young Professionals Survey also asked for feedback on what they are looking for in a job, how they search for one, their preferred methods for delivery of training and development programs, and whether or not they think their education prepared them for their supply chain careers.

Here is a summary of the survey results:

## YOUNG PROFESSIONALS: VITAL STATISTICS

The typical young professional responding to the survey has worked in the industry for about three years, has or is pursuing a bachelor's degree, and works for a third-party logistics (3PL), manufacturing, or transportation and warehousing company.

Of the nearly 300 respondents to the CSCMP/ Penske survey, nearly 60% said they already work in

the supply chain field. Of those who are not currently employed in the field, the majority (85%) said they are looking for a job in the supply chain. Many of those are students. As for education, 70% of respondents have either earned or are pursuing a bachelor's degree, and nearly one-third have or are pursuing a master's degree. Just 12% of respondents said they have earned or are pursuing a technical or two-year degree, and 4% have or are pursuing a Ph.D. (See Exhibit 1.)

### EXHIBIT 1

Please check each of the educational degrees you hold or are actively enrolled in a program to pursue. (Select all that apply.)

Technical or 2-year degree	12%
Bachelor's degree	70%
Master's degree	31%
Ph.D. or other terminal degree	4%
None of the above	3%

Percentages add to more than 100 due to multiple responses.

More than half of technical or two-year degree holders majored in business or a supply chain management-related program (56%); a similar number of those with a bachelor's degree majored in a supply chain management-related program (54%). About half of those with a master's degree majored in a supply chain management-related program, while one-third earned their master's degree in a business-related program. (See Exhibit 2.)

There is not much of a gender gap among survey respondents: 55% are men, 45% women. On average, respondents have worked in the supply chain field for about three years, with the largest contingent (41%) employed by a third-party logistics (3PL), manufacturing, or transportation and warehousing company. The rest work in everything from education to retail to wholesale trade, agriculture, construction, and more.

### EXHIBIT 2

Please list your major.  
Among Bachelor's degree holders with a major:

Supply Chain Management, Supply Chain Analytics, Logistics, Operations	54%
Business, Business Administration, Business Management, International Business	20%
Marketing, Communications, Public Relations	7%
Accounting, Finance	6%
Computer Science, Computer Information Systems, Technology	4%
Economics	4%
Engineering (supply chain-specific)	4%
Social Science (Anthropology, Psychology, Sociology, Criminal Justice, Political Science)	4%
Arts or Humanities	3%
Nature Science (Biology, Environmental Science, Geology)	3%
Engineering (other)	2%
Math, Statistics	2%
Analytics – Business, Other	1%
General Education, Interdisciplinary Studies	1%
Human Resources, Organizational Development	1%
Other	1%

Percentages add to more than 100 due to multiple responses.

## CAREER PATH: WHY SUPPLY CHAIN?

Many respondents said they are pursuing a supply chain career because of the wide variety of opportunities and different types of jobs the field offers (20%). Others said that firsthand experience through internships and similar opportunities opened their eyes to the profession (19%), and still others are pursuing it out of sheer interest in the field (17%). (See Exhibit 3.)

But what is the supply chain to young professionals? As shown in Exhibit 4, more than half—57%—said terms such as “distribution network,” “logistics,” and “product lifecycle” are among the first things that come to mind when asked to describe the supply chain. In general, most agree that the efficient management of goods moving from one place or stage to another most aptly describes the supply chain, with other key terms such as continuous improvement, transportation, and warehousing figuring into the mix as well.

Regardless of what attracted them to the profession, young professionals surveyed agree that supply

### EXHIBIT 3

What made you interested in pursuing a career in supply chain?

Variety of opportunities, job types	20%
Firsthand exposure (through internship, job, courses, etc.)	19%
Passionate about topic, excited by it	17%
Challenging, always changing, fast-paced	11%
Impact supply chain roles/supply chain have in business, tangible impact on outcomes	10%
Personality aligned (logical, puzzle solver, process-oriented, etc.)	9%
Qualifications aligned	8%
Demand for skills, job security	7%
Industry growth, increased business focus on area	6%
Influenced (by teacher, co-worker, manager, college program's prestige, etc.)	6%
International	6%
Ability to advance	4%
Essential to business operations, necessary in business	4%
Research, learning about industry	4%
Salary, earning potential	4%
Word-of-mouth, networking, family involvement	4%
Professional organizations	1%
Other	8%

Percentages add to more than 100 due to multiple responses.

### EXHIBIT 4

When you think about the words “supply chain,” what is the first thing that comes to mind?

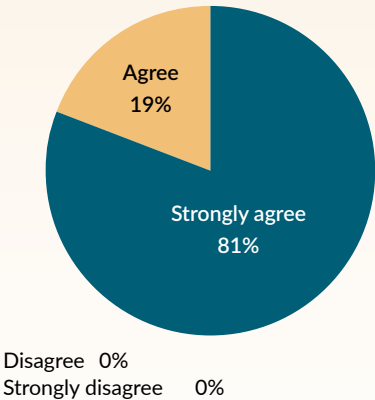
Distribution network, managing getting things from one place to another efficiently, moving goods from producer-supplier	32%
Logistics, in general	14%
Product lifecycle, from raw materials to end customer	11%
Optimization, continuous improvement, efficiencies, intelligent movement	6%
Transporting, specific types of transportation modes and/or warehousing	5%
Business-critical, essentiality, strategic business approach, competitive advantage	4%
Complexity	3%
Connecting value chain, adding value	3%
Inventory management, inventory transportation	3%
Specific product or company named	3%
Relationships (strategic business relationships, customer relationships)	2%
Sourcing, procurement	2%
Supply and demand	2%
Manufacturing or producing goods	1%
Other	9%

chain management is a good career choice, with 81% saying they strongly agree with that statement. No one in the survey disagreed. (See Exhibit 5.)

What’s more, the majority of respondents said that supply chain is a good a career choice and would recommend it to others: 69% said they strongly agree and 31% said they agree, as shown in Exhibit 6. The vast majority of respondents also said they are excited about their careers, with 97% saying they either strongly

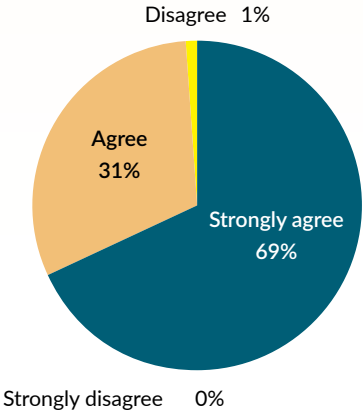
**EXHIBIT 5**  
For the following statement, please indicate whether you agree or disagree.

The supply chain field is a good career choice.



**EXHIBIT 6**  
For the following statement, please indicate whether you agree or disagree.

I would recommend others consider supply chain as a career.



Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

agree or agree with that sentiment. Young professionals also are optimistic about advancement opportunities, with 71% agreeing that it is easy to advance in the field, while 29% said it is difficult to advance.

JOB SATISFACTION: HIGH LEVELS REPORTED

When asked about job satisfaction, 86% of respondents said they are either very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their current employer; 11% said they are not very satisfied, and 3% said they are not at all satisfied. (See Exhibit 7.) When asked to rate their job in general, once again the vast majority responded positively: 88% said they would describe their job as “good,” and nearly three-quarters said they would describe it as “better than most” and “enjoyable.”

**EXHIBIT 7**  
Overall, how satisfied would you say you are at your current employer?

Very satisfied	40%
Somewhat satisfied	46%
Not very satisfied	11%
Not at all satisfied	3%

But what about the work itself? By far, the young professionals surveyed said they enjoy the work they do as supply chain professionals. The majority said they would describe their work as “good” (86%). Most also said they would use words such as “satisfying” (76%), “rewarding” (67%), and “exciting” (60%) to describe their work. Fifty-six percent said they would even call it “fascinating.” Just 17% of those surveyed said they would describe their work as “uninteresting.” (See Exhibit 8.)

There are some other key reasons young professionals report high satisfaction levels. First and foremost is the opportunity for advancement. As Exhibit 9 makes clear, the vast majority of respondents are reasonably optimistic about advancement opportunities with their current employer. Only 52 percent said opportunities are limited, while just 14% said they would describe their current job as a “dead end.”

Work environment and culture rank particularly

EXHIBIT 8

Think of the work you do at present. How well does each of the following words or phrases describe your work?

“Yes” = describes your job  
“No” = does not describe your job  
“?” = cannot decide

	Yes	No	?
Good	86%	5%	9%
Satisfying	76%	17%	7%
Rewarding	67%	24%	9%
Exciting	60%	30%	11%
Fascinating	56%	33%	11%
Uninteresting	17%	74%	9%

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

EXHIBIT 9

Think of the opportunities for promotion that you have now. How well does each of the following words or phrases describe these?

	Yes	No	?
Fairly good chance for promotion	60%	28%	13%
Good chance for promotion	54%	35%	12%
Good opportunities for promotion	53%	34%	13%
Opportunities somewhat limited	52%	42%	5%
Regular promotions	33%	51%	16%
Dead-end job	14%	79%	7%

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

high with young professionals, and no doubt contribute to their job-satisfaction levels. Relationships with managers and co-workers are a case in point. Most survey respondents speak well of their current supervisors. The vast majority (more than 80%) said phrases such as “praises good work” and “knows the job well” accurately describe their managers/supervisors. Likewise, nearly three-quarters of respondents said “tactful” and “influential” are words that describe their current supervisor; nearly 70% of respondents said they would use the phrase “up-to-date” to describe their boss. Just 20% said they would describe their manager or supervisor as “annoying.” (See Exhibit 10.)

Most respondents give their colleagues high marks as well. More than 80% said they would describe those they work with as responsible and smart, while less than one-quarter of respondents described their

EXHIBIT 10

Think of the kind of supervision that you get on the job. How well does each of the following words or phrases describe this?

“Yes” = describes your job  
“No” = does not describe your job  
“?” = cannot decide

	Yes	No	?
Praises good work	81%	13%	6%
Knows job well	80%	14%	6%
Tactful	74%	19%	7%
Influential	72%	22%	6%
Up-to-date	68%	23%	6%
Annoying	20%	71%	8%

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

EXHIBIT 11

Think of the majority of people with whom you work or meet in connection with your work. How well does each of the following words or phrases describe these people?

	Yes	No	?
Responsible	85%	8%	7%
Smart	81%	9%	10%
Slow	25%	68%	8%
Frustrating	24%	63%	13%
Lazy	14%	78%	8%
Boring	13%	81%	6%

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

co-workers in negative terms. (See Exhibit 11.)

Overall, the top three reasons young professionals said they remain at their current job are: salary and benefits, development opportunities, and work environment/culture. Figure 12 has the full list.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES: WHY AND HOW YOUNG PROFESSIONALS SEARCH

Despite the high satisfaction levels reported, young supply chain professionals are always on the lookout for the next great job opportunity. Development opportunities (32%) and a salary/benefits increase (27%) top the list of what will lure them away. A better chance for advancement, greater responsibility, location, and work environment are other reasons young professionals will look for a new opportunity. (See Exhibit 13.)



EXHIBIT 12

What are the main reasons you stay at your current employer?

Salary/benefits	25%
Development opportunities	18%
Work environment/culture or co-workers	16%
Chance of advancement	15%
Work-life balance	13%
Need experience, résumé builder	11%
Company reputation, scope	10%
Interesting/challenging type of work	9%
Manager/management	8%
Location	7%
Searching for something else	7%
Level of responsibility	6%
Efficacy	5%
Job security	5%
Industry	3%
Work schedule	3%
Travel opportunities	2%
Other	12%

Percentages add to more than 100 due to multiple responses.

What’s more, young professionals search for opportunities in much different ways than they did just a generation ago. The top methods cited in Exhibit 14 include online job boards such as Indeed, Monster, CareerBuilder, and JobsInLogistics (24%), school placement or career centers (24%), social media (22%), and searching directly on companies’ websites (21%). Other top methods include: using professional organizations (such as CSCMP), posting their résumé on a searchable database, and word-of-mouth.

On average, young professionals surveyed said they submitted approximately 13 applications when searching for a job in logistics/supply chain in the last year.

And they aren’t afraid to relocate for the right opportunity. Nearly half of respondents said they are very willing to relocate for a new job opportunity (49%), while 39% said they are somewhat willing to relocate; 13% said they either are not very willing or would not relocate for a job opportunity. (See Exhibit 15.)

Most of those surveyed said they would be willing to extend their commute for the right job opportunity, as well; 82% said they are either very willing or some-

EXHIBIT 13

What is the main reason you applied for a position at another employer?

Development opportunities	32%
Salary/benefits increase	27%
Better chance of advancement	9%
More responsibility	6%
Better location	5%
Better work environment	4%
Different work schedule	4%
Finishing school, graduated	4%
Searching for a job	4%
Better manager/management	1%
Different/more interesting type of work	1%
Unemployed	1%

EXHIBIT 14

What methods do you use to search for supply chain-related jobs?

Online job board (Indeed, Monster, CareerBuilder, JobsInLogistics, etc.)	24%
Contacted a school placement or career center	24%
Social media (LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.)	22%
Directly on company’s website	21%
Professional organization (e.g., CSCMP)	19%
Post résumé in searchable database	16%
Word-of-mouth through friends or family	15%
Word-of-mouth through professional network	14%
Contacted company directly	9%
Contacted employment agency or recruiter	7%
Company contacted you directly	5%
Print publication (newspaper, magazine, etc.)	3%
Promotion at same company	3%

Percentages add to more than 100 due to multiple responses.

what willing to do so, and the rest are either reluctant or not at all willing to do so. (See Exhibit 16.)

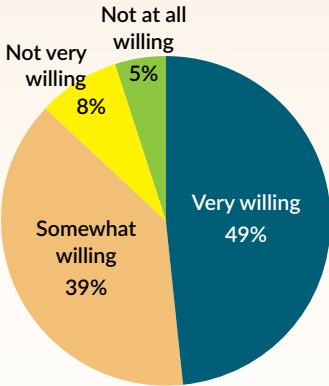
Of those willing to relocate for a job, most said it would be conditional upon finding the right position, company, location, pay, and so forth (72%).

EDUCATION: VITAL TO CAREER PATH

When it comes to their education, most young professionals surveyed said they are working in a field related to what they studied in school (54% strongly agree and 26% agree). They also said their degrees prepared

EXHIBIT 15

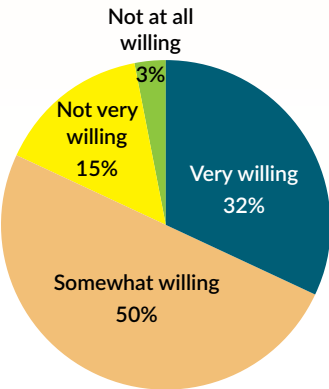
Are you willing to relocate your primary residence as a result of a job opportunity?



Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

EXHIBIT 16

Are you willing to extend your work commute as a result of a new job opportunity?



them for the work they do today: 47% strongly agree with that statement, 37% agree, and just 17% either disagree or strongly disagree. Less than 20% of respondents said their degree failed to prepare them for a career in the supply chain.

Young professionals are eager to continue their education on the job—and they want to do it the old-fashioned way. When asked whether they would like to receive training/education via online media or through in-person sessions, the majority said they prefer in-person training, delivered through mentoring or task-based activities that can be completed at their own pace (either individually or in a one-on-one setting).

THE BOTTOM LINE: GOOD PAY, WORK-LIFE BALANCE WANTED

For young professionals in the supply chain, the three most important aspects of any job are: receiving pay and benefits that are competitive with other local companies; having positive working relationships with their manager; and achieving work/life balance. Compensation is always the biggest piece of the puzzle, and although most respondents said they are “reasonably well paid” for the work they do, less than half said they would describe their current compensation as “well paid.” When asked to describe how they feel about their compensation, phrases such as “enough to live on” and “comfortable” ranked highest. Fewer than half of respondents said they would use phrases such as “underpaid,” “barely enough to live on,” or “bad” to describe their current pay. (See Exhibit 17.)

EXHIBIT 17

Think of the pay you get now. How well does each of the following words or phrases describe your present pay?

“Yes” = describes your job  
“No” = does not describe your job  
“?” = cannot decide

	Yes	No	?
Enough to live on	72%	23%	4%
Comfortable	64%	29%	8%
Underpaid	40%	52%	7%
Well paid	38%	51%	11%
Barely live on income	25%	68%	7%
Bad	13%	79%	8%

Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding.

IN SUMMARY

The wide variety of opportunities available throughout the supply chain stand out as a key reason young professionals continue to study and enter the supply chain management profession. It’s no surprise, then, that advancement and career development remain top priorities for young professionals as they seek new challenges, higher pay, and work/life balance.

