



## How to Manage a Supply Chain Project

**Supply Chain Project Management: A Structured Collaborative and Measurable Approach**

James B. Ayers  
 St. Lucie Press, 2004  
 ISBN: 1-57444-350-X  
 363 pages, \$59.95  
 To order: visit [www.crcpress.com](http://www.crcpress.com) or most major booksellers



Every supply chain manager would benefit from possessing a strong project management skill set. But as James B. Ayers points out, few actually do. To help bridge this gap, Ayers' latest book, *Supply Chain Project Management*, integrates the two knowledge areas of supply chain management and project management.

The mission of Ayers' book is to "help readers achieve a structured, collaborative, and measurable approach to supply chain management." Toward this goal, the book is presented in three sections. The first discusses what Ayers calls the five tasks of supply chain management: designing supply chains for strategic advantage, implementing collaborative relationships, forging supply chain partnerships, managing supply chain information, and removing cost from the supply chain. The second section presents the different stages and objectives of project management as outlined by the Project Management Institute's *Project Management Body of Knowledge*. The final section brings the two together in a general process for accomplishing each of the five tasks.

For example, chapter 12 provides a series of detailed flowcharts and tables that lay out the steps, inputs, and outputs needed for a project to develop a supply chain strategy. Ayers focuses on those steps that are specific to a supply chain project and may not be applicable to other projects. In the supply chain strategy development process, for example, he spends a good deal of time explaining the process companies can use to define the "sphere" (or market-product-operations combination) in which their supply chain will operate.

By showing how project management can be adapted for supply chain management, Ayers has created a very useful book. Readers who have little formal project-management knowledge are introduced to

the subject in a familiar context. This will allow supply chain practitioners to immediately see how project management concepts can be applied to their specific job. Those already familiar with project management will benefit from the book as well. They can compare how they structure their supply chain projects with the book's method—a comparison that will likely suggest improvements, refinements, and modifications to their structure.

Ayers has done an admirable job synthesizing and expanding previous thinking on project management and supply chain management. Yet at times, this synthesis of ideas causes the book to feel a little cluttered and confusing. Readers need to concentrate to keep straight all of Ayers' classifications and definitions. For example, the book requires them to understand and differentiate between five supply chain tasks, nine project management knowledge areas, six drivers of supply chain change, and three levels of project-management maturity.

Persistent readers, however, will be rewarded with a comprehensive and practical tool that will help them make good on their supply chain improvement plans.



## RFID Standards Explained

EPC Global Web site  
[www.epcglobalinc.org](http://www.epcglobalinc.org)

Whether or not radio-frequency identification (RFID) lives up to the high expectations of the pundits and analysts really depends on whether or not industry can create a truly global standard for item identification. From all accounts, the leading candidate for that standard currently is the Electronic Product Code (EPC) Network. So anyone whose company may be affected by RFID technology should check out [www.epcglobalinc.org](http://www.epcglobalinc.org). The site is main-

tained by EPC Global, the organization charged with driving adoption of the electronic product code.

EPC works similarly to a universal product code or a bar code. It is a series of numbers that identify the manufacturer, product, version, and serial number of an item. This information is stored on an RFID tag, which is attached to the item.

The Web site is a good source for introductory information about EPC and RFID. In particular, the FAQ section effectively serves as an "EPC for Dummies," clearly and concisely explaining the technology in layman's terms.

Visitors to the site who are interested in more in-depth information can read through the section on the Version 1.0 Specifications for EPC. The specifications—which are cur-

rently in various stages of completion—lay out the overall EPC system definition and provide the building blocks for implementing an EPC Network. They cover such things as: the general data structure and format of an EPC tag, the communications interface and protocol for different bandwidths, and a standardized format for data captured by EPC readers.

The site also does an excellent job of introducing EPC Global and describing its connections to other standards and RFID organizations. As the Web site explains, this not-for-profit organization comes with a strong set of credentials. In November 2003, EPC Global took over the administrative functions of the Auto-ID Center—an academic research project, based at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, that drove

early research and advocacy of RFID. The current organization is a joint venture between long-time standards organizations EAN International and the Uniform Code Council.

The Web site also contains information on joining the EPC Network and allows interested parties to subscribe on line.

Although EPC Global took over the administrative reins from the Auto-ID Center, it is still maintaining the wealth of information and resources that the Center had gathered together over the years. The site links directly to the Auto-ID Center archives, which contain a host of helpful information, including research papers on the business case for the technology and an Auto-ID calculator that will model the RFID return on investment for your company.