

LEADERSHIP SPOTLIGHT

An Interview with Dan Key
SVP, Chief Supply Chain Officer
Axalta Coating Systems



Dan Key is an accomplished senior executive with a 30-year track record in leading operations, supply chain, distribution, procurement, product management, and general management of global businesses. He is an expert in transforming, acquiring, growing, divesting, and repositioning assets throughout the world within both public and privately-owned companies. Dan is known for his approachable and inclusive style of leadership and he excels at rallying cross-functional teams around a unified vision. Over the course of his career, he has repeatedly contributed to EBITDA growth year-after-year through rigorous cost control and throughput improvements, leveraging deep experience in leading end-to-end supply chain and operations across 31 countries.

Dan is currently the Senior Vice President, Chief Supply Chain Officer, at Axalta Coating Systems. Axalta is a \$4B paint and coating company serving the transportation, refinish, and industrial markets. Dan manages 50 global sites with over 6,000 employees in 19 countries with an annual COGS spend of over \$2B.

We are thrilled to have Dan join us at the **American Supply Chain Summit**, on April 9-10 in Dallas, TX. He will be delivering a plenary session on "Risk Management: Strategies to Safeguard Your Global Supply Chain" in which he will explore how to build an anticipatory supply chain and why risk management performance must be balanced.

In advance of the summit, we spoke to Dan about how he found himself in a supply chain role, how he motivates his team and his wisdom for the next generation of supply chain leaders.



OVERVIEW

- How to grow in a supply chain role
- How to motivate your team and get results
- Why risk management should be a focus for every organization
- What drives supply chain leaders

Dan, how did you find yourself in a supply chain role?

My first role in supply chain is a very interesting story – I was working at Morton International in Greenville, SC as the Plant Engineer. We were going through a reduction-in-force on a Friday (worse day possible to go through a RIF). We were reducing close to 20% of our work force. At 2 pm, the Plant Manager asked to speak with me – my heart dropped as I feared I was on the list because I had developed someone to replace me. Instead of asking me to leave, he asked me to become the Manager of Materials Management (precursor to Supply Chain Manager). I took over a team consisting of CSRs, Procurement, Demand Planning, Scheduling, Warehousing, and Logistics. This was my first entry into Supply Chain, but probably the most important step in my career – one that I had not planned.

How do you motivate your operations, procurement, and supply chain teams?

As I have learned through numerous years of managing people, every person needs different and unique motivation. In general, I believe that most people can be motivated if managers focus on the following:

- Being open and honest;
- Sharing all information possible;
- Setting a few good, clear objectives and adjust as appropriate during the year – goals are never static;
- Focusing on responsibility and accountability;
- Creating conditions for motivation so employees can excel;
- Holding 1:1 conversations where the employee has the time to “vent”;
- Celebrate successes;
- Don’t blame people, focus on fixing the problems.

Why did you choose risk management as the topic to focus on in your session at the American Supply Chain Summit?

I chose to focus on risk management as my topic at the Summit because of several reasons. The first reason is that it is a very important topic today as there are numerous disruptions in the supply chain area, whether it be natural disasters, logistics complications, political turmoil, change in regulations, etc. So, understanding and preparing for these risks is very important to all supply chain professionals. The second reason is that contingency planning is a passion of mine. I am passionate about ensuring we have the appropriate contingencies in place to support our customers and our company.

What drives you to strive for success in your role as a supply chain leader?

I have many drivers for striving toward success in supply chain. I am extremely customer focused and know that if I can succeed in improving my supply chain, my customers will be the winners at the end of the day. I am also driven to fix my supply chain because there is always a better way to manage the process and the complex decisions made within supply chain are always fun and challenging – much like a very difficult puzzle. The final reason is that I love working with my teams from all across the globe – they are truly great people who excel at everything they do.

What advice do you have for the next generation of supply chain leaders?

I think the best advice I can give to future supply chain leaders is to work in all facets of supply chain – do not just stay in one area because supply chain has many moving parts. Understanding how to be the supplier and the customer in each part of the supply chain is critical to being a Chief Supply Chain Officer in the future.

Hear more insights from Dan Key and other leaders in the supply chain industry at the American Supply Chain Summit.

[**View Program**](#)



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