



Looking ahead

The magazine's editor, Sam Chambers, braces this year's big winner, Dr John Gattorna, on what it's like to be hailed as a visionary

Scooping the prestigious Supply Chain Asia Logistics Award for Visionary of the Year was Dr John Gattorna.

Australian native Gattorna has spent a lifetime working in and around supply chains, in many different capacities – line executive, researcher, consultant/adviser, teacher and author.

In the late 1980s, Gattorna became disenchanted with the lack of conceptual depth in the 'logistics' field; and as it turned out this did not improve much as logistics thinking morphed into 'supply chains' in the 1990s. So he started to search for a new model/framework that would better inform the design and operation of enterprise supply chains, seeking to satisfy customers and consumers. And he found it in dynamic alignment.

For the last two decades Gattorna has been working with blue chip major corporations around the world to take his new model from the conceptual stage to a finer level of granularity. It has been a complex task because it has involved learning about, and combining, several disciplines – consumer/customer behaviour; internal cultural capability of the enterprise; leadership styles; and of course the operational aspects of corporate logistics networks and supply chains. The unique thing about Gattorna's perspective

is that he presents a multi-disciplinary approach to the design and management of enterprise supply chains, and this requires an eclectic mindset.

He has written several books along the way as his thinking has evolved.

SC: What will be the watchwords and themes likely to govern supply chains in 2012?

JG: Given that Europe is sliding into recession and the US is struggling to recover – both markets for Chinese produced goods, the watchwords for 2012 are 'move forward with caution'.

Some companies with great brands, great products, and value for money will do well in any weather. I am thinking here of Ralph Lauren. However, most will struggle in what promises to be a very volatile year. So risk management will be essential.

SC: How does it feel to be declared a visionary?

JG: I'm not sure I deserve this mantle as there are many more outstanding business execs out there in the world, but I'll accept the award, with due humility.

What I can say is that leadership, vision, and innovation are all characteristics I believe in with a vengeance, and which will be needed in spades if we are to pull out of the global dive we are in right now. I'll do my small part to contribute to the recovery.

SC: What are your main activities likely to be in 2012?

In 2012 I will continue to push out my messages and suggestions about how companies can cope with the increasing turbulence in markets.

In particular, I will be leading an intense 3-day Supply Chain 'thought leadership' summit in Singapore in June 2012, designed to bring together the best minds in the world to focus on how to elevate supply chain performance.

This event is being co-hosted with the SP Jain Center of Management, and is by-invitation-only.

Beyond these speaking activities I will be continuing my research, writing, and advisory work, the latter on a fairly selective basis.

SC: What kind of opportunities present themselves to those with the leanest, nimblest supply chains in the present downturn?

Given that most enterprise supply chains are poorly designed and flawed in their operations, massive opportunities exist for those companies who take another look at their business and design their supply chains from the 'outside-in', in contrast to the current and historical method of 'inside-out'. The secrets of success lie in re-interpreting and re-engaging with customers on the one hand, and re-designing the internals of the enterprise to mirror what we find on the outside. Sound simple and logical, but few companies get it. 