

Bill's Building Blocks

Supply Chain Control Tower – The Wow Factor

Did you watch any of the Grammys? It played for more than four hours with Kendrick Lamar, Lady Gaga, Bruno Mars, Alessia Cara, Elton John, Rihanna, Dave Chappelle, Cardi B, Sting, Jay-Zee, and..., and..., and Hillary Clinton, and Subway Karaoke. There were pyrotechnics in the opening act. The colors of the ear buds matched the colors of dresses and jewelry. Grand pianos appeared and then disappeared. Microphones adjusted gracefully to the height of the next presenter. Backgrounds were flown in from above. Risers of every shape and dimension exercised able bodied dancers. James Corden, the host, didn't miss a beat. And when the cameras panned out, the size of the audience plus the multiple stages just added to the wow factor.

The term "Supply Chain Control Tower" is relatively new. Some may say that it is still young enough to be considered as more of a concept, more of marketing hype. Like control towers overseeing airport operations around the world the concept as it relates to supply chains means taking control in the face of potential disruption to ensure consistent performance. Airport control towers use their height and radar handoffs to ensuring end-to-end visibility of air and ground operations to achieve this result.

Each time the lights dimmed on the main stage and the next act appeared amid the audience on the round satellite stage, a disruption potential for Grammys performance was huge. Artists and their instruments had to be setup silently on the satellite stage, while other artists and their backup instrumentalists were changing over in darkness on the main stage. Wireless audio hookups had to be managed flawlessly throughout Madison Square Garden. Sound quality had to be perfect for each opening note based on sound checks and volume levels set before the start of the show. The whole operation had to be scripted and managed in real time by the Grammy's control tower.

Supply chains today have global reach, millions of customers, thousands of product SKUs, sometimes scores of distribution centers, sometimes hundreds of suppliers many off in distant lands. Trillions of computer cycles are spent transacting the business. What could go wrong? How many ways could such a supply chain become disrupted?

Do your customers say "wow" when their favorite product is consistently on the shelf or consistently delivered to their door? Is there room to improve operations in real time?

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