

SAPICS takes supply chain insights to ‘super-heroes’ around South Africa

The real-life super-heroes of South African business are to be found in supply chain functions, according to Olakira founder and former Shell South Africa managing director Tanya Kabalin.

As one of the speakers in an expert line-up from South Africa and the US, Kabalin told supply chain professionals at the SAPICS regional conferences that they were the backbone of most organisations – and needed to play a more integral leadership role in modern business.

She urged delegates to help improve not just their systems, processes and technology – the ‘smart’ side of business – but also their organisational health, as reflected in its morale, productivity and focus. A healthy organisation was able to multiply the value of its smart systems, she said, whereas silos, confusion and company politics would just undermine them.

Following on from the success of its annual national conference in Cape Town, SAPICS holds one-day regional events in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape – as part of its drive to build capacity, networking and professionalism.

Another highlight at the regional conferences was leading scenario planner Clem Sunter; covering the ground with topics from religious extremism to the rise of China, Sunter sketched the various ‘flags’ that are guiding global trends. Closer to home, he warned that

Cape Town’s taps could run dry by February if more rain did not fall by the end of September. This, he said, could lead to “mass evacuations” from the city.

Addressing recruitment trends in supply chain, Tech-Pro lead executive consultant Zach Mogotsi said that employment opportunities in this field are likely to remain strong despite the difficult economic times, as companies realise that they can improve their bottom lines through more efficient supply chain management.

Presenting the results of a recent survey of salaries in supply chain, Mogotsi said the best payers were probably mining and heavy engineering, followed by fast moving consumer goods and manufacturing. As a placement company, the demographics for which Tech-Pro recently found jobs were 58% black, 26% white, 13% Indian and 2% coloured – with the 30-39 year age group making up 45% of placements, against 40% for 20-29 year olds and just 14% for 40 years and over.

Two well-known US supply chain experts on the conference podium gave delegates some practical lessons and principles to take away. Keith Launchbury emphasised that many classical supply chain techniques were simply no longer effective in today’s economy – especially given as markets had evolved in favour of buyers, and supply chains had lengthened as a result of global trade.

This was leading many demand planners to make extensive use of data that was not

accurate; so the results of their work, he said, were often ‘precisely wrong’ – and should rather be ‘roughly right’.

Launchbury said they needed to move from a cost-driven model to a product flow-driven model for planning purposes, emphasising the need to put SMART (strategic, managed, adaptable, robust and tolerate) buffers in place that would absorb the variability of supply and demand.

US-based master practitioner Claire Bloom also gave delegates a practical lesson – putting them to the task of tackling challenges in a fictional company through assuming the various management roles. Bloom stressed the importance of integrating resources so that quality and processes could be improved, silos could be brought down, and flow could be maximised.

SAPICS took advantage of the Gauteng regional event to announce the winners of the SAPICS Supply Chain Management Education Excellence Awards for 2017, sponsored by TETA. These annual awards, now in the 10th year, recognise excellence in South Africa by organisations and individuals in supply chain education. The prize for Corporate Educator of the Year went to Imperial Logistics, while Sasol was runner-up. The Centre for Logistics Excellence (CLX) was voted top Training/Education Provider of the Year, Chené Scholtz from the University of Johannesburg was named Higher Education and Training Student of the Year, and Victor Leeuw of Pick n Pay was Vocational Student of the Year.