

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

What is the “new normal?” The “new normal” is a term used to coin a radically new and fundamental business model. It is driven by consumer values such as home, family and health with a focus away from the cavalier spending model of the past. The new normal is leaner and meaner. Thrift is the new style. People are emerging from the current state of economic uncertainty poised to make spending reductions permanent. This [video on YouTube](#) reflects these changing values and sums up the challenge of the new normal to us all.

There is little doubt that the green/sustainability trend will continue to impact us in this new normal. As we adjust from our “buy, buy, buy” default position to refusing to add to our debt load, we are essentially changing our identity as a consuming society. Remember that fourth, often ignored R? Dropped rumour has it because it was unpopular. Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and REFUSE? Refuse to purchase... just say no... It is no longer enough to buy the cheapest widget. It is how do we do without the widget?

Everyone is talking about the new normal, and its implications for business. The [July-August issue of *Harvard Business Review*](#) is dedicated to understanding the post-crisis landscape and managing in this new world. From the rise of Asia to the strain on natural resources, the magazine dissects the most important new realities that we face. The issue also examines the kind of adaptive leadership that will be required going forward. Adaptive leaders use the present turbulence to reshape parts of their organization and redefine the work that people do.

As the value system of society changes, so we all must change. We must ask ourselves, as supply chain management professionals, “How much better could we leverage our position as subject matter experts in the new normal?” Our difficulty continues to be in singing the praises of our work. If we are lean and mean and if thrift is the new style, how do we communicate our message? How do we get the ear of the C-Suite and show that this is work that we have always done? But we can’t just rest on our laurels, we need to continue to adapt our unique knowledge and skills to meet the evolving demands of the marketplace.

In my own role, I find that I am delving much deeper into policy than ever before (more regulation to avoid the over-leveraged risky behaviour of the past) and into waste reduction for processes and maximization of human capital. In a nutshell, the new normal has shifted my priorities away from widgets and more towards policy, process and people. These are the areas where I can create the most value for my organization and support the values of the new normal demanded by our *beyond-consumerism* society.

Mass customization, globalization, shifting market consumption, sustainability and technology are at the forefront of this time of great risk and, therefore, great opportunity. Do you understand the market forces that will decide your organization’s viability in the new normal? What opportunities can you create by being thoughtful of the values of the market and their eventual pressure on fixed and precious resources? How can you make a difference and give your organization a competitive advantage?

Remain true to the innovative nature of our strategic field. Question every decision, even best practices, to ensure that they are still relevant. Focus not just on short-term goals but value what is important in the grander scheme. Vision the supply chain, not just procurement. The whole process, not just a piece. You may find yourself involved in areas that you haven’t been before; it’s the “new normal”.

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Yours truly,

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