

Welcome



Welcome from Mark

Welcome to Your Guide to the Supply Chain

I'm glad you're here. Whether you're exploring a new career, switching industries, or just trying to figure out what Supply Chain even means, this guide is a great place to start.

When I first got into Supply Chain, I didn't know what I was walking into. Like a lot of people, I fell into it. What I found was a career that challenged me, rewarded me, and opened doors I never expected. And now, over a decade later, I want to help others find that same kind of path..

Intentionally.

This guide was created for people who are curious but don't have all the answers yet. People who have experience but may not know how it translates. People who are ready to get started, they just need someone to show them how.

Inside, you'll get a beginner-friendly look at what Supply Chain Management is, the kinds of roles that exist, the tools people use on the job, and what it really takes to break in, even if you don't have a degree or direct experience.

This is about giving you clarity and direction. You'll also find links to free resources, weekly content, and if you're ready to dive deeper, a full course built for professionals just like you.

Supply Chain Management changed my life. My goal is to help it change yours too.

Let's get started.

Mark Potts

Founder, SCM Career Hub

Instructor, CourseCareers Supply Chain Coordinator

Host, SupplyChain_Potts on YouTube

What Is Supply Chain

What Is the Supply Chain?

At its core, the Supply Chain is everything it takes to move a product from idea to doorstep.

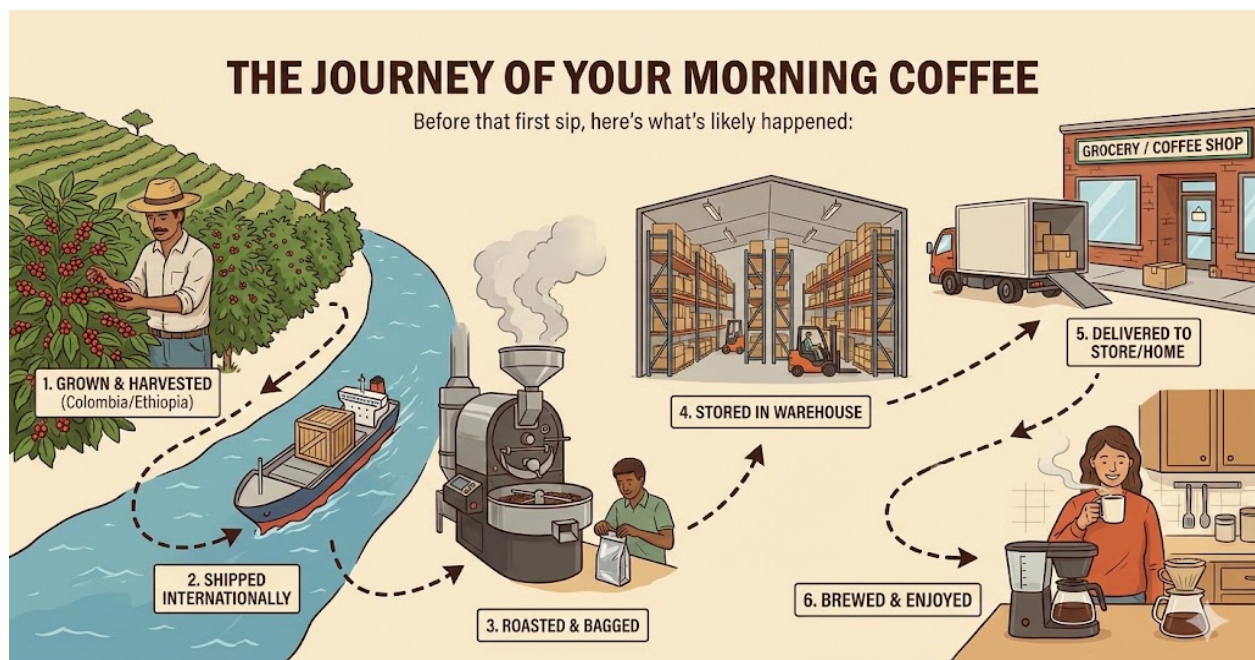
It includes sourcing raw materials, making the product, storing it, moving it, and getting it into the hands of the customer. It's the behind-the-scenes system that powers the global economy, most people don't see it, but it touches nearly every part of their lives.

Take your morning cup of coffee. Before that first sip, here's what's likely happened:

- Coffee beans were grown, harvested, and processed in a country like Colombia or Ethiopia
- Those beans were packed and shipped across international borders
- They were roasted and bagged by a food manufacturer
- The product was stored in a warehouse or distribution center
- It was shipped to a grocery store, coffee shop, or directly to your home
- Then finally brewed by you, or someone else, just the way you like it

Every one of those steps involved people, planning, tools, and transportation. That's the Supply Chain. It's not just trucks and warehouses. It's systems working together to make everyday life happen.

What makes it exciting is how much room there is for different skill sets. Whether you're into data, operations, people, or technology, there's a spot for you. And because Supply Chains are always moving, there's always something new to learn, improve, or fix.



Why Its a Smart Career

Why It's a Smart Career

Supply Chain careers aren't just in demand, they're essential. They span every industry and support the movement of goods across the world. From groceries to sneakers to medical supplies, there's a network of Supply Chain professionals making it all happen.

And the opportunities are growing fast.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, roles like logisticians are projected to grow 19 percent through 2033, which is much faster than average. That translates to more than 26,000 job openings every year in just one corner of the Supply Chain. And that doesn't even include related roles in planning, procurement, and operations.

The average salary for professionals in this field is strong too. The Association for Supply Chain Management (ASCM) reports an average total compensation of over \$96,000, with entry-level positions often starting around \$55,000 to \$65,000 and growing quickly with experience.

But what really makes Supply Chain a smart career choice isn't just the numbers, it's the versatility and impact.

Over the course of my career, I've worn a lot of hats, and each one taught me something new about how the Supply Chain works.

I've worked on the shop floor in Operations, led capital equipment installations as a PMP Certified Project Manager, and driven process improvement through Lean Six Sigma projects and Kaizen events. I've managed the fast-paced world of Logistics, helping move life's essentials through the Supply Chain. And I've partnered with some of the world's largest brands as a National Account Manager.

Each of those roles came with a different challenge, a different rhythm, and a different perspective on how products move and how businesses run.

That's the beauty of Supply Chain. There's room to explore, room to grow, and room to find your niche. Whether you're into systems, strategy, teamwork, or tools, there's a spot for you. And once you get started, the learning never stops. That's where the fun happens.

Common Roles In Supply Chain

Common Roles in the Supply Chain

The Supply Chain might sound like one big machine, but it's really a network of different roles working together to keep things moving. It's similar to a relay race for business, where raw materials are the baton passed from suppliers to manufacturers, distributors, and retailers.

It is the entire, interconnected journey of transforming resources into a finished product for the final consumer. These are some of the most common starting points, and the good news is, many don't require a degree or prior experience to break in.

Supply Chain Coordinator

What they do:

Acts as the point of contact between teams, helping shipments move on time, solving real-time issues, updating systems, and keeping everyone aligned. It's a mix of logistics, communication, and problem solving.

Common tools:

TMS (Transportation Management System), Excel, ERP systems

Transferable skills:

Customer service, scheduling, communication, staying organized under pressure

Logistics Specialist / Logistics Coordinator

What they do:

Focuses specifically on moving goods, booking freight, tracking shipments, working with carriers, and managing delays.

Common tools:

TMS, shipment trackers, dashboards

Transferable skills:

Retail, dispatch, transportation, managing moving parts

Inventory Analyst / Inventory Coordinator

What they do:

Keeps tabs on what's in stock, what's running low, and what needs to be reordered. Supports warehouse and planning teams to reduce shortages and overstock.

Common tools:

WMS (Warehouse Management System), Excel, ERP

Transferable skills:

Attention to detail, data entry, organization, reporting

Demand Planner

What they do:

Forecasts what products customers will need, how much, and when. Works closely with sales and supply teams to make sure the business is prepared for future demand.

Common tools:

Forecasting software, Excel, ERP systems

Transferable skills:

Pattern recognition, analytical thinking, working with data

Supply Planner

What they do:

Translates demand forecasts into actual production and inventory plans. Makes sure there's enough supply in the right place at the right time.

Common tools:

ERP, Excel, planning dashboards

Transferable skills:

Scheduling, prioritization, decision making, systems thinking

Supply Chain Analyst

What they do:

Looks at data to uncover trends, improve operations, and support decisions across logistics, planning, or inventory. Analysts help make the Supply Chain smarter and more efficient.

Common tools:

Excel, Power BI, Tableau, SQL

Transferable skills:

Data analysis, reporting, problem solving, curiosity

Operations Coordinator

What they do:

Supports daily workflows in warehouses, distribution centers, or manufacturing plants. Helps teams hit targets, solve bottlenecks, and stay efficient.

Common tools:

On-site systems, SOPs, dashboards

Transferable skills:

Time management, people skills, troubleshooting, leadership

Procurement Assistant / Buyer

What they do:

Helps purchase goods and materials the company needs to operate. Works with vendors, tracks

pricing, and places orders.

Common tools:

ERP systems, supplier portals, email

Transferable skills:

Negotiation, admin, vendor communication, cost awareness

Each of these roles opens the door to career paths in planning, management, analytics, or strategy. You don't need to know everything to start, you just need to get in the game and keep learning.



The Supply Chain Lifecycle

The Supply Chain Lifecycle

The Supply Chain isn't just a straight line. It's a cycle, a set of interconnected functions working together to plan, source, make, move, and deliver products to customers. Each department plays a specific role, and when they collaborate well, the entire business runs more smoothly.

Let's break it down:

Planning

Forecasting customer demand, aligning inventory and production needs, and setting strategy.

Common roles: Demand Planner, Supply Planner, Supply Chain Analyst

Key questions:

- How much product will we need?
- Where should we position inventory?
- How do we avoid running out or overstocking?

Procurement (Sourcing)

Buying the raw materials, packaging, or finished goods the company needs.

Common roles: Procurement Assistant, Buyer

Key questions:

- Which suppliers do we trust?
- Can we get better pricing or lead times?
- Are we managing risk and quality effectively?

Operations (Making)

Turning materials into finished products—either in-house or with manufacturing partners.

Common roles: Operations Coordinator, Production Planner

Key questions:

- Can we meet demand efficiently?
- Are production lines optimized?

- How do we reduce waste and downtime?

Logistics (Moving & Delivering)

Storing, shipping, and tracking products from warehouse to customer.

Common roles: Logistics Coordinator, Warehouse Manager, Transportation Planner

Key questions:

- Are shipments on time?
- Are we using the best carriers?
- What happens when things go wrong?

Customer Service & Returns

Supporting customers and managing returns or service issues post-delivery.

Common roles: Customer Service Rep, Reverse Logistics Coordinator

Key questions:

- How do we make things right when something breaks?
- How do returns impact inventory or planning?

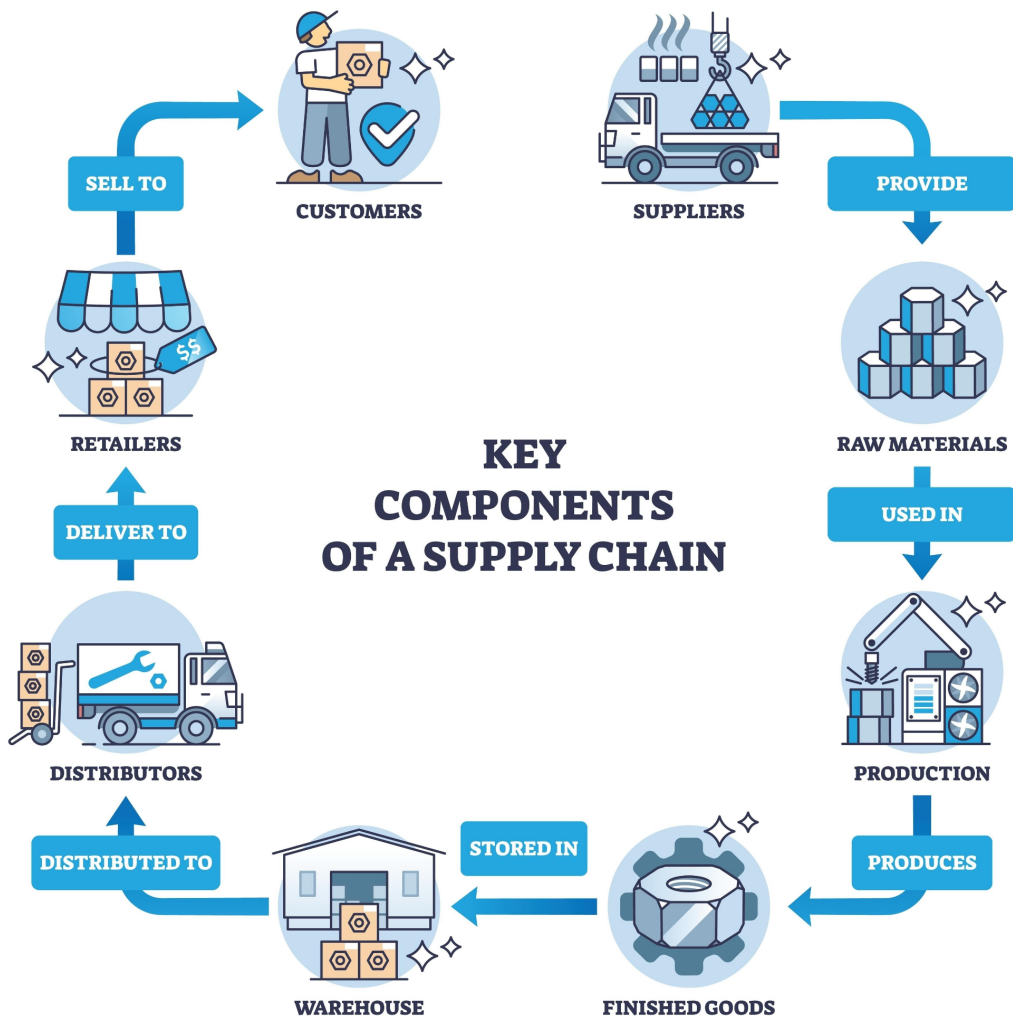
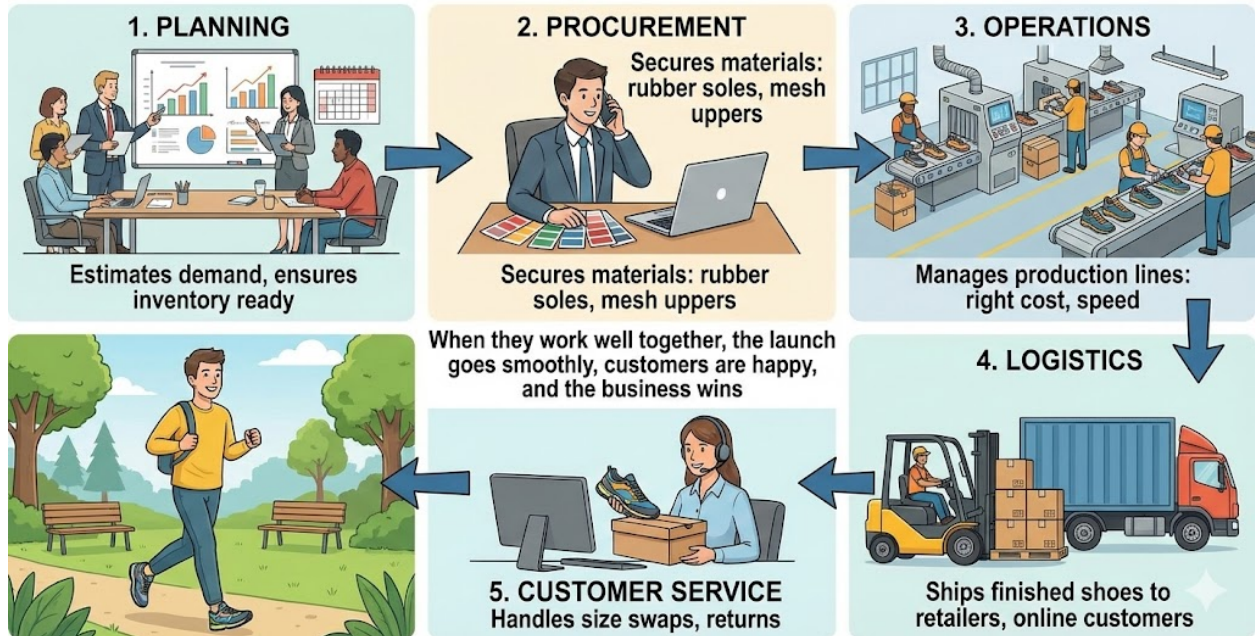
Case Study: Launching a New Product

Let's say a sporting goods brand is launching a new line of trail running shoes.

- **Planning** estimates demand and ensures enough inventory is ready for launch
- **Procurement** works with suppliers to secure materials like rubber soles and mesh uppers
- **Operations** manages production lines to build the shoes at the right cost and speed
- **Logistics** ensures finished shoes are shipped to retailers and online customers
- **Customer Service** handles any size swaps or returns from early buyers

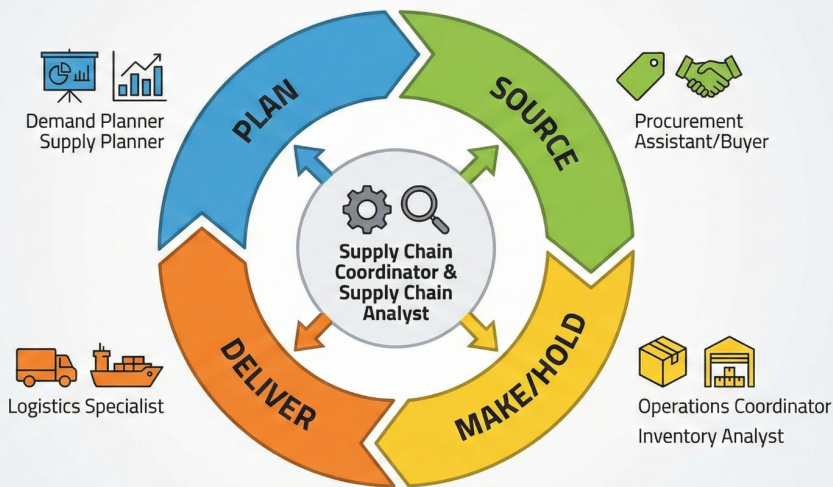
Each department plays a part and when they work well together, the launch goes smoothly, customers are happy, and the business wins.

Real-World Example: Launching a New Product - Trail Running Shoes



Supply Chain Lifecycle

Supply Chain Product Lifecycle Workflow



Key Terms

Key Terms You'll Hear

Every industry has its own language. In Supply Chain, you'll run into a mix of acronyms, systems, and shorthand that might sound overwhelming at first, but don't worry. Most people learn it on the job, and this guide will give you a head start.

Here are some of the most common terms explained in plain English:

TMS – Transportation Management System

A digital tool used to plan, book, track, and manage shipments. Helps make sure the right freight gets to the right place at the right time.

WMS – Warehouse Management System

Software that tracks where products are in a warehouse and helps organize storage, picking, and packing.

ERP – Enterprise Resource Planning

A company-wide system that connects purchasing, planning, finance, and more. Helps businesses make data-driven decisions.

SKU – Stock Keeping Unit

A unique identifier for every product. Think of it like a product's fingerprint in inventory systems.

DIFOT – Delivery in Full, On Time

A key performance metric in logistics. It tracks whether orders are delivered completely and on schedule.

Lead Time

How long it takes from ordering a product to receiving it. Shorter lead times = faster delivery.

3PL – Third-Party Logistics

Companies hired to handle shipping, warehousing, or fulfillment for another business.

Just-in-Time (JIT)

A strategy that keeps inventory levels low by having materials arrive right when they're needed. Helps reduce storage costs but can be risky if things get delayed.

Supply vs. Demand Planning

Supply planning focuses on what's available and how to deliver it. Demand planning forecasts what customers will need.

Continuous Improvement

An ongoing effort to make processes better, faster, and cheaper, often using tools like Lean or Six Sigma.

These are just the basics, but learning the language gives you a huge advantage when applying for roles, interviewing, or networking with supply chain professionals.

How to Break In

How to Break Into the Supply Chain

If you're reading this guide, chances are you're ready for a career change, or you're curious if supply chain could be the right path. The good news? You don't need years of experience or a specific degree to get started.

Here's how to break in:

Learn the Language

Start by getting familiar with key terms, common roles, and how the supply chain works. (If you've read this far, you're already doing it.)

You don't need to master every acronym or system, but being able to speak the basics will help you stand out in applications and interviews.

Translate Your Experience

You may already have supply chain skills, even if you didn't call them that.

- Managed schedules or bookings? That's logistics.
- Worked in retail or food service? You've dealt with inventory and customer fulfillment.
- Solved problems or led teams? That's operations.

The key is positioning your past in a way that connects to where you want to go.

Build Targeted Skills

You don't need a four-year degree to be job-ready. Focus on the most valuable, practical skills:

- Excel for reporting and data
- Basic supply chain systems (TMS, WMS, ERP)
- Communication and cross-functional collaboration
- Intro to planning, logistics, and inventory flows

This is exactly what I teach inside the Supply Chain Coordinator course. It's built for people like you, smart, motivated, and looking to launch a career with real upward mobility.

Apply to Entry-Level Roles

Focus on job titles like:

- Supply Chain Coordinator
- Logistics Specialist
- Operations Assistant
- Inventory Analyst
- Procurement Buyer

These are often the gateways to bigger roles, and many companies will train you if you show potential.

Get Support

You don't have to do this alone. One of the biggest boosts is having a coach, mentor, or learning community.

That's why I created **SCM Career Hub**, to give people like you a clear, guided way into this industry.

Starter Checklist

Break Into Supply Chain: Starter Checklist

Use this list to track your progress and build momentum:

- ☐ Learn how the supply chain lifecycle works
- ☐ Get familiar with key terms like TMS, ERP, and lead time
- ☐ Identify which entry-level role fits your skills and interests
- ☐ Reframe your past experience to match job descriptions
- ☐ Practice Excel basics (sorting, filtering, formulas)
- ☐ Create or refresh your resume with supply chain language
- ☐ Start searching for coordinator, analyst, or logistics roles
- ☐ Join a community or find a mentor for guidance
- ☐ Enroll in targeted training to accelerate your path
- ☐ Apply confidently—you don't need to know everything to get started

Free Coaching Offer

You've Got This

Breaking into a new field can feel overwhelming. I know what it's like to look at job descriptions and wonder if you're qualified, or to hear unfamiliar terms and question if you belong.

But here's the truth, every supply chain pro you know started somewhere. Including me.

I didn't come from a fancy background. I didn't even know what "Supply Chain" really meant when I stepped into my first Operations job. What I found was an industry full of opportunity, impact, and people who wanted to solve real problems.

And I want that for you.

Whether you're switching careers, returning to the workforce, finding your way during your collegiate studies or just trying to find a better path, this field has room for you. It rewards curiosity, teamwork, and the kind of grit you've already shown by getting this far.

Keep learning. Keep showing up. You are more prepared than you think.

Let's build your Supply Chain career, step by step, together.

[Book Free Career Roadmap Session with Mark](#)

— Mark Potts

Other Free Resources

Resources to Keep Learning

One of the best things about the supply chain field is how much you can learn on your own, especially when you know where to look.

Below are some of my favorite beginner-friendly tools and resources to help you build confidence, grow your skills, and get job-ready faster.

Free Learning Tools

SupplyChain_Potts YouTube Channel

Real talk about jobs, tools, and career tips straight from the industry.

→ youtube.com/@SupplyChain_Potts

SCM Career Hub Newsletter: Saturday is for Supply Chain

Weekly tips, job insights, and stories from people breaking into the field.

→ Sign up at SCMCareerHub.com

Glossary of Terms

Bookmark-worthy: [ASCM Supply Chain Dictionary](#)

Job Boards to Watch

LinkedIn Jobs – Filter by “Supply Chain” or “Logistics Coordinator”

Indeed & ZipRecruiter – Use filters like “entry-level” or “no experience”

SCM Career Hub (coming soon) – We’re building a curated board just for you

Skill-Building Tools

Excel Basics – Try free practice at Excel Easy or GCF LearnFree

TMS & WMS Simulations – Watch walk-throughs on my YouTube channel

Google Sheets & Templates – Build your own order tracker or inventory sheet

Ready to Go Further?

If you're serious about breaking in, and want a clear path forward, check out my self-paced **Supply Chain Coordinator Course** through CourseCareers.

It's built to teach you the systems, terms, and tools hiring managers care about. Plus, it comes with resume templates, coaching, and job search support.

→ Explore the course and get \$50 dollars off at:

[Supply Chain Coordinator Free Introduction Course](#)

