

Strengthening the Supply Chain through Partnership

As a partner in the pharmaceutical supply chain, it is our responsibility to have expertise in the many aspects of procurement, development, manufacturing, storage, and distribution to properly serve clients. In addition to our own expertise, we must also rely on our external partners' expertise, to provide the highest level of service possible; it is the collective expertise of both parties which provides the greatest benefit to the client and the end-user (the patient).



Evaluate

While properly auditing our potential supply chain partners' capabilities is important, it is equally important to see how their strengths will work when coupled with those of our own facility. At Singota Solutions we had to ask ourselves:

- To what degree would bringing this new partner online affect our current processes?
- How much change would be required on both sides to accommodate the relationship?
- Are there similarities in our processes that would allow for a seamless transition?

By performing this evaluation upfront, we ensured that the partnership would be beneficial to both sides and not purely built on favorable metrics. Knowing how metrics are reached is as important as the metrics themselves. If the process has to change to fit your needs, the metrics will most likely change as well.

Define

Quality agreements have long been used to ensure that partners are providing a service suitable to meet the quality standards our company requires. What has not always been included is our accountability to our partners. By re-structuring our quality agreements we were able to provide a document which not only outlined what our partners will do for us, but also what they can expect from Singota. One-way accountability is a thing of the past, and those attempting to focus only on their own efforts will struggle to provide the level of service required by the pharmaceutical industry.

Utilize

As a supply chain facility specializing in international temperature controlled distribution for a wide variety of clients whose products and temperature ranges vary greatly, Singota is tasked with the challenge of having a qualified shipping solution available at all times to meet every need. However, simply having a solution in place is not the end of the challenge. We had to ask ourselves if our partners are equipped to handle our solutions during transport. Should the need arise for intervention, are our solutions playing to our partners' strengths?

In some cases, we found that our service providers have equally robust solutions which were already covered in their existing procedures. By evaluating, and when possible, approving these solutions for usage, we have allowed our partners to work within their areas of expertise to provide a more repeatable process and better quality service. It is not enough to utilize a solution that works well for us without giving the proper amount of consideration to the effects our choices may have to our downstream partners.

Results

As a result of using these three simple tools at Singota we have been able to forge long-lasting working relationships with our existing partners, as well as bring in very capable new partners as needed. If the relationship is purely transactional in nature, it is likely doomed to fail, whereas a relationship built on a foundation of truly working together and taking each other's needs into account is sure to succeed.

Not only is it important for your facility to feel confident in your partner's abilities, it is equally important for them to feel confident that you are going to set them up to succeed. The benefits realized from forming these strong partnerships have greatly exceeded any of the time and effort used in creating them.

Conclusion

These are just a few examples of the type of partnerships which can greatly increase the quality of movements of material through the supply chain. It is important for all parties to realize that their piece of the process does not begin when materials arrive at the dock or end when materials are loaded onto the truck. It is the responsibility of all supply chain partners to ensure that processes are in place to both help strengthen their own handling of materials and aid upstream and downstream partners in moving products safely and seamlessly throughout the pharmaceutical supply chain.