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Epicor eBook

The Supply Chain Of The Future

How disruptive technologies and
megatrends will shape distribution



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Introduction

It's no surprise that technological trends are profoundly impacting distribution organizations all around the globe.

These life- and business-changing megatrends benefit distributors in many ways, enabling them to:

- Improve efficiency
- Reduce cost

By recognizing these trends and leveraging these technologies, you will be able to stay competitive and—most importantly—deliver greater value to your customers. But first, let's take a look at the numbers.

The Numbers

By 2020, there will be 30 billion connected devices on Earth

These connected machines offer \$1.9 trillion of added value

Gartner Research, 2016

Increased connectivity between devices and consumer products greatly increases the opportunity to gain market share. The information that can help your company grow is out there, and it presents a tremendous business opportunity.

55% of businesses will see ROI from the Internet of Things in two years or less

PriceWaterhouseCoopers, 2016

Your slice of the pie is getting smaller. Businesses that put Internet of Things (IoT) technologies to work are already realizing their return on investment. In other words, it's likely your competition is leveraging these new and emerging technologies and that your share of this new value is fading fast.

90% of respondents believe convergence will drive fundamental changes in business

Convergence of Technologies Survey, 2014

From all indications, we are in an era of significant convergence—where information technology, operational technology, and global megatrends are on a collision course. This will drive fundamental and foundational changes in how we do business and how we interact with customers and suppliers.

By 2020, there will be 30 billion connected devices on Earth

Gartner Research, 2016

It's not the number of smartphones and tablets and wearable technologies that's alarming—it's the sheer volume of data generated by these devices. Machines communicating with people and other machines are creating so much information that—according to one study—we will have generated more information in the past two years than in the previous 5,000 years of human history.



Supply Chain Megatrends

If you're surprised by these megatrends, you haven't been paying attention

Megatrends are global, sustained, and macroeconomic forces of development that impact business, cultures, and personal lives. By their very nature, these trends define our future and the increasing pace of change.

They aren't, however, anything new.

These supply chain megatrends have been on the horizon for years. As we face the next few years, they'll have an exponential impact on your operations.

Megatrend #1— Demographic shifts

By the year 2030, there will be 8.4 billion people in the world—most of whom live in massive urban centers. Developing countries will be growing, while populations will shrink in developed nations. How will this impact distributors?

- A growing middle class will open new opportunities for new markets and new customers
- Consumer markets will shift from the West to the East and highlight the need to be part of a global supply chain—or at least have access to far-away markets
- More skilled workers will continue to retire while fewer people enter supply chain management
- With less people entering supply chain management roles, demand for automation is increasing

The world is getting larger and customers are getting farther away, but technology continues to make everyone easier to reach.

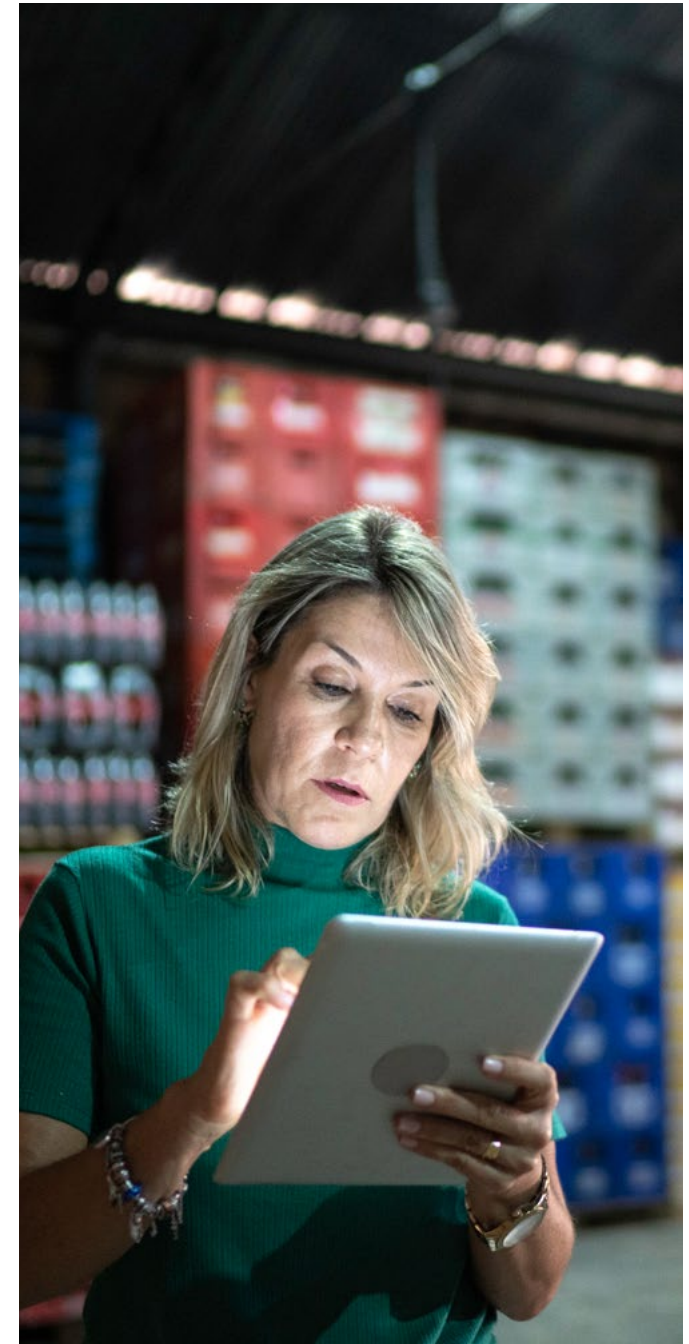
Megatrend #2— Globalization of future markets

As our population grows, companies will reach farther and farther around the globe—worldwide exports are expected to triple by 2030. More notably, exports from emerging and developing countries will quadruple, and regional and bilateral trade agreements are likely to open the world's borders even further.

Developing countries will account for an estimated 57% of global GDP by 2030.

Developing countries will be home to 440 of the world's fastest growing cities—generating 47% of global GDP through 2025.

As we dive deeper, the share of GDP generated specifically by Brazil, Russia, India, and China (BRIC countries) will grow from 27% in 2013 to 38% in 2030. We'll also see a new cluster of countries on the horizon known as the "Next 11" that will become a significant force. In particular, the sub-cluster countries known as MINT and MIST will start to outperform those of the advanced world.





Megatrend #3— Scarce resources

We're going to need more power.

The combination of an increasing population and GDP growth centered in developing countries will be the main drivers for a boost in energy consumption. We will continue to be a world characterized by scarce resources, and despite the focus on climate change and sustainability, the majority of worldwide energy demand will continue to be met by fossil fuels. This demand means 17 gigatons of oil-equivalent energy each year by 2030.

- The need for energy will increase 23% by 2030
- The majority of that energy will come from fossil fuels
- The majority of critical raw materials will be supplied by China

Additionally, the majority of raw materials critical for manufacturing and rare earth metals will be sourced outside the traditionally stable economies of the United States and Europe. More recycling and innovative recycling technologies could potentially decrease the dependence on China, but this will take significant focus and effort, some of which has already begun due to the spread of COVID-19.

Megatrend #4— Knowledge and gender gap

As we become a more educated world with greater percentages of the population earning post-secondary degrees, manufacturers will still continue to see the challenges of a decreasing talent pool. Simply put, there won't be enough skilled people to perform the jobs of the future.

- Enrollment in formal education will continue to rise
- The talent shortage will continue, and it will hit developed nations particularly hard
- The gender gap isn't being addressed at a pace that will close it

What's even more alarming is the fact that the available talent pool of workers will likely not come from our own backyard but from developing countries. Additionally, an ever-increasing mobile workforce will continue to present challenges to employers and may lead to a global struggle for talent. Lastly, the social and demographic issue of women and gender inequality in terms of education, participation in the workforce, and disposable income is likely to continue to be unresolved.

Distribution is Changing

The global megatrends discussed here—when combined with new and converging technologies—will require distributors to transform themselves and even consider new business models. The overarching takeaway is this— distribution as we know it is changing radically.

We are quickly entering an era of a new type of customer—one who is global but isn't in the geographic areas where we've traditionally focused. This new customer is more mobile, more aware, and more demanding. This customer demands more products and services that are highly personalized, and wants them delivered where and when desired.

In addition to the changing demographic of our consumers, new game-changing business models will cause continued disruption. Just take a look at what Uber has done to the taxi and transportation industry, Airbnb to the hotel and hospitality industry, and Amazon to the retail and distribution sector. The frantic pace of change in every industry forces a new norm and demands business owners to adopt new ways of thinking and execution.



Embracing change

If you want to take advantage of the challenges and opportunities that come with distribution in today's global economy, you will need to be:

- Customer-centric
- Vertically specialized
- Services-oriented
- Collaborative
- Efficient
- Distinctive
- Innovative
- Agile
- Automated
- Data-driven
- Cloud-enabled

This is what it takes to be a future-proof distributor. That's why technology and automation must be a critical focus.

The risk of waiting

There is a tremendous opportunity at hand for distributors. This will only be realized by using emerging informational technologies like social, mobile, analytics, and cloud alongside operational technologies like sensors, machine-to-machine communication, and robotics.

The future—and your global competitors—won't wait for you. Tomorrow's distributor needs to be a leader when it comes to adopting technology. Those who want to run the supply chain of the future will need to shed the old mindset of waiting for a new technology to become the norm before embracing it.



Trusting technology

Future-proof distributors who have adopted key disruptive technologies will provide the foundation for a new type of factory and a new type of end-to-end operation.

The future-proof manufacturer will be able to provide highly personal, flexible products—where and when the buyer needs them—versus large quantities of homogeneous products.

They'll do this through strong, external, customer-focused, and interconnected networks and organizations where they are more predictive than reactive to customer requirements. This will allow them to focus on service after the sale and the related value opportunity that provides—rather than simply being viewed as a parts supplier by their customers.

Build a plan for success

Many distributors are struggling to fully understand recent changes and make sense of where to start. The sheer number of technologies that are changing and converging—combined with the pace of that change—is confusing and quite challenging. Therefore, the key to success in this highly disruptive and everchanging world is to take a step back and answer a few fundamental questions:

- Where am I today?
- Where do I want to be in 3–5 years?
- How can I take advantage of innovation and automation?

Distributors then need to develop a strategic methodology and roadmap for the future. If you don't, you won't be able to take advantage of the opportunities that lie ahead. In some cases, missing these opportunities means your business may become irrelevant.



Epicor—Your Future-Proof Partner

With more than 45 years of knowledge and experience in business technologies, Epicor has become the trusted advisor to thousands of distributors like you. They use Epicor technology to be more agile, work smarter, and improve their operational efficiency.

Epicor understand distributors want to grow their businesses. Because of our commitment to the industries we serve, Epicor continues to be recognized by Gartner and other analysts—and more importantly, our customers—as:

- Understanding what's next
- Having a passion for distributors—helping them make sense of and take advantage of new norms and collaborative business models
- Following a cloud-first mentality that enables customers to not only transition to and from the cloud, but also fully leverage other emerging technologies



Key factors for success:

1. Understanding the over-arching strategy to transform into—and benefit from becoming—the distributor of the future
2. Leveraging cross-functional teams
3. Engaging trusted technology providers
4. Identifying and deploying high-return, low-risk capabilities
5. Constantly evaluating and adjusting



Get ready for what's next

Learn more about futureproofing, the supply chain of the future, and a host of other topics covered in white papers, testimonials, and other industry presentations on [epicor.com](https://www.epicor.com). Talk to an Epicor representative to schedule a one-on-one presentation focused on your key challenges.

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We're here for the hard-working businesses that keep the world turning. They're the companies who make, deliver, and sell the things we all need. They trust Epicor to help them do business better. Their industries are our industries, and we understand them better than anyone. By working hand-in-hand with our customers, we get to know their business almost as well as they do. Our innovative solution sets are carefully curated to fit their needs, and built to respond flexibly to their fast-changing reality. We accelerate every customer's ambitions, whether to grow and transform, or simply become more productive and effective. That's what makes us the essential partners for the world's most essential businesses.

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