Strategic Connections

Leveraging telecommunications to gain a competitive advantage in manufacturing

Christopher Horner
Jeff Wilson
Executive Summary

The manufacturing industry serves the needs of an ever-demanding, increasingly informed and organized consumer. The industry has long worked to improve efficiency, keep prices and cost down, and respond to customers’ needs. After nearly a century of initiatives, programs and projects, much of the value has been squeezed out of the plant walls. Manufacturers must extend the value creation process beyond the enterprise, engaging both suppliers and customers.

This collaboration requires more than good intentions, hardware and software. It requires a network that enables the real-time sharing of information and insight across the entire value chain.

Telecommunications can offer that collaborative network — it is no longer an infrastructure afterthought, but is rather the very nervous system of an organic, growing and evolving value chain.

Leveraging the Sprint network, the firm’s penchant for collaboration and flexibility, and a proven history of dependability and reliability, manufacturers can tap a new source of competitive advantage — the advantage of strategic connections.

The Sprint approach to strategic connections

There are a number of characteristics and capabilities that make for a good strategic telecommunications partner. Among them: a commitment to an industry-solutions approach; an integrated offering; a relentless flexibility; a collaborative personality; dependability and reliability. Sprint is a telecom provider that can consistently hit on all collaborative cylinders.

Industry-solutions approach. First, Sprint is committed to an industry-market approach and continues to make substantial investments in manufacturing industry solutions. It understands the business of manufacturing and the industry trends at play. Rather than seeing hardware, application software and communications infrastructure as discrete elements, Sprint integrates information and offers complete industry solutions that specifically address areas such as supply chain management, product lifecycle management, customer relationship management, and plant floor and warehouse management technologies.

The value a strategic telecommunications provider like Sprint offers is a seamless integration of industry-specific solutions. Rather than loosely holding together piece-parts of a solution, Sprint recognizes that it is the relationship between those solution components that can deliver real value.

Integrated offering. To leverage telecommunications as a strategic advantage, the telecom provider selected by the manufacturer must offer industrial strength capabilities across all technologies and purposefully place itself on the forefront of technological innovation and discovery. It must strive to deliver today’s technologies flawlessly, demonstrating unerring quality while simultaneously exploring tomorrow’s technologies to offer its customers a constant state of uninterrupted readiness.

Sprint has a history built on many industry firsts, including the pioneering of a 100 percent digital, fiber-optic nationwide network. Sprint offers integrated wireline and wireless services and has narrowed the gap between what has been historically local service and long distance. Sprint offers one of the most advanced networks, managed network services, business continuity services, security services and mobility features available today. And, Sprint is one of the leaders in mobilizing enterprise applications and putting real-time data in the hands of frontline employees.
The Sprint suite of telecommunications services rides on one of the industry’s most advanced, secure and dependable network infrastructures. While some other telecommunications companies have given voice communications short shrift, Sprint recognizes the importance of voice in the collaborative value-creation process and continues to invest in voice services, and specifically, in voice collaboration services, such as personal conferencing and online presentation tools.

Relentless flexibility. This element enables the manufacturing firm to evolve its value chain dynamically. As communication requirements change, so must the services that the telecommunications provider offers. As manufacturers continue to expect and derive greater value from their suppliers, they must share more information about their company and operations with those suppliers and, increasingly, they must share that information in real time to allow suppliers to adjust and respond to changing conditions.

The telecommunications provider becomes the seldom-played card in this game. Collaboration is often constrained not by an unwillingness to share information but by an inability to share it — at least at the time and in sufficient measure to maximize the manufacturer/supplier relationship.

By enabling connectivity of virtually any application between any set of trading partners, Sprint can support and, in effect, operationalize the flexibility the manufacturer needs to get information, and collaboration, to virtually wherever it needs to be.

While the services Sprint offers are important and impressive, the essential element they demonstrate is flexibility — that ability to adjust dynamically to meet the needs and opportunities of the manufacturer. Another strategic benefit is the built-in flexibility of the Sprint network. Since it is protocol agnostic, companies can integrate the full gamut of technologies. This means that legacy networks can be transitioned to more cost-effective packet technologies all at once or in a phased approach. Further, far-flung business units, alliance providers and new acquisitions can be quickly connected through the Sprint network. This can enable faster sharing of information and insight, collaborative intelligence, and lead to more rapid innovation and faster times-to-market.

Collaborative personality. A strategic telecommunications provider recognizes its dual role as both an enabler of the value creation network and as a member of it.

A provider must understand and embrace collaboration as a way of doing business and add value to the manufacturer. Again, Sprint exemplifies this attribute. Committing itself to serving the specific business needs of targeted vertical markets, like manufacturing, Sprint demonstrates its penchant for collaboration. Resources are allocated and organized to identify the unique needs of the manufacturing industry and then to develop innovative solutions for addressing those needs. This process itself is done in collaboration with the industry and specific customers.

While secondary market research is important and has its place, the Sprint approach to strategic connections is really an ongoing dialogue between Sprint and key players in the manufacturing industry. Sprint is committed to having targeted solutions that can help meet the needs of the manufacturing industry both now and in the future. To do that requires continuous conversation with the industry. It means learning what works and what doesn’t; what Sprint does well and how it can better serve the needs of the industry. It means engaging the industry in a roll-your-sleeves-up approach. It means spending time on the shop floor as well as in the boardroom.

In many cases, the account teams at Sprint are manufacturing industry veterans, bringing in-the-trenches experience to bear on collaboration issues that their customers face. Sprint account teams participate regularly in industry-specific training to ensure their continued currency with manufacturing trends and issues. By understanding the challenges of the industry, Sprint sales, marketing and technical professionals are
poised to conceptualize, deliver and support higher-impact telecommunications solutions.

A collaborative personality is difficult to describe but fairly easy to see. The collaborative enterprise promotes open dialogue, welcomes criticism without defensiveness, shares information willingly and proactively, and solicits points-of-view from its employees, suppliers and customers.

Characteristics of the collaborative enterprise are a spirit of continuous improvement and a pervasive receptivity to doing things differently if different means better.

In partnering with suppliers and customers, the collaborative personality is expressed as an open-mindedness that at least modulates preconceived notions. It approaches the relationship with the intent of developing a shared perspective and realizing an outcome whereby all parties benefit.

**Dependability and reliability.** Finally, a strategic provider is someone you can count on to deliver premium service day-in and day-out — no exceptions. Sprint can bring that dependability and reliability to its relationships, offering some of the most aggressive service level agreements in the industry.

**Conclusion**

The strategic connections approach to telecommunications used by Sprint can help provide competitive advantages for manufacturers. By providing powerful and flexible voice and data interconnectivity between manufacturers, their trading partners and other stakeholders, Sprint can enable companies to innovate rapidly, hear and respond to customers, keep prices in check, and rise to the challenges and opportunities of global markets.

Please contact your Sprint Sales Representative or Authorized Sales Agent

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