

# Research panel identifies key SA priorities in supply chains

Following the Association for Operations Management of Southern Africa (SAPICS) recent conference, a research panel identified three research priorities in the profession; logistics infrastructure, supply chain integration and operational capabilities.



SAPICS director Cobus Rossouw says the panel concluded that the key objective of research into logistics infrastructure would be understanding the challenges and development requirements associated with this area, in order to increase the competitive advantage of the SA industry and economy. The panel cited projects like the "State of Logistics" (which is sponsored by Imperial Logistics), CSIR initiatives and university initiatives, as contributing to research in this area.

The second key research area defined by the panel is supply chain integration and the objective of this research would be to share innovative management approaches towards leveraging supply chain integration as a strategic enabler of the competitive advantage of companies. Initiatives like Barloworld's "supplychainforesight" are already committed to this objective, the panel noted.

The issue of operational capabilities is the third research priority and the aim of research in this area would be to define the requirements for skills development to support the internal capabilities required for organisations and industries to address operational management. SAPICS education is playing a crucial role, the panel concluded, along with university initiatives and company projects, but research into operational capabilities remains a priority in the Africa supply chain profession.

## 'Just the start of an on-going initiative

The association's participation in the recent MIT Centre for Logistics and Transportation's global Supply Chain Risk Management Survey represented a milestone in the association's research function. "It's just the start of an ongoing initiative that will see SAPICS facilitating interaction between academia and industry to align efforts in the profession and provide a platform for discussion," adds Rossouw. Imperial Logistics will continue to sponsor the project in South Africa.

"Global research like the MIT survey is extremely significant for the association and for the local supply chain community. It presents an invaluable opportunity to learn from the rest of the world, and for them to learn from South Africa. A global survey like this - particularly one run by a renowned and credible institution like MIT - really enables us to give something

meaningful back to the profession. It's a chance for our opinions to be expressed and for our voices to be heard on a global level."

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