What is a supply chain, let alone what is a good one, or as some like to say, best in class? The term can spark debate, and opinions will differ depending on your point of view. This book presents various case studies of supply chains, each with its own unique geographical, environmental, or political backdrop to showcase how these factors drive the end result.

Many years ago when early in my career we were introduced to this new craze, “TQM,” Total Quality Management, it functioned on the premise that the quality the products and processes was the responsibility of all involved in the creation or consumption of the products or services offered by the organization. Soon after we were uncomfortably exposed to time and motion studies and activity based costing projects. Since then we have heard of a myriad of terms and methodologies put forward by supply chain players, most known today would be Six Sigma, Lean, and even a combined derivative to create Lean Six Sigma. The new buzz today aptly focuses on the environment and terms like ‘Sustainable Supply Chains,’ prevalent in all levels of socially responsible and caring organizations.

The one common theme throughout my exposure to the industry, albeit in roles in a global logistics organization, management consulting company, or in the industry has remained constant, which is: the desire to continually improve, improve competitiveness, improve efficiencies, improve profitability, and of course, improve customer satisfaction. The case studies presented illustrate how this search for perfection to overcome challenges and constraints has created what can be termed leading example of a supply chain. There is no perfect supply chain, no one has the best supply chain, but the continual drive to improve is the motivating factor that makes our job interesting and excites us to get our hands dirty trying to find new innovative ways to be better than we were the day before or to be better than our competitors to give us that advantage.

What makes Singapore or Dubai the best location for a hub? The term logistics is derived from a French word arising from the Napoleonic wars where managing the army’s food supply was just as important as the armaments to win successful campaigns. This collection shows how military supply chains differ from commer-
cial supply chains and the lessons that can be learned from this. Also food supply chains with fruit and rice provide other fascinating insights of distinctive challenges. The automotive supply chain is perhaps considered the most end-end integrated with strong collaboration within the industry, but how will the future demand drive change and how can sustainability now provide another dimension to create a new perspective on optimal supply chain? RFID was touted as the next force to drive supply chain, and whilst it did not have the impact that was expected, there are many examples of where it was successful, and it clearly can play a major role in some industries; read how it can benefit healthcare in this volume.

Having been exposed to many supply chains and organizations of various sizes, complexities, and geographical and cultural boundaries, there remains one core fundamental. All contain the physical logistics elements, to Pick, Pack, Ship, and invariably along the way, Store the items. Everything else is a derivative of these 4 very basic elements. Depending on the scope of the logistics definition it may involve other elements like Make and/or Buy and Return items. When you read this book, think of these primary elements and see how ingenuity has been applied to overcome strange and diverse fulfillment conditions.

All today’s innovation and advances in supply chain improvements start with the core elements repeated many times depending on the length and breadth of the supply chain fulfillment requirements. Once the processes are in place and documented, various methodologies can be applied to improve it. Implementation of automation can be utilized to improve the various picking, packing, and storage functions. Knowledge of stock levels in the supply chain entities integrated into business planning processes can be used to significantly improve inventory levels depending on what other processes and systems are in place, like forecasting, planning, distribution, transportation, inventory systems, et cetera. All these provide the opportunity for creating a streamlined and efficient supply chain, but the question then becomes: what are your core functions, should you outsource, or what functions can be outsourced? And ultimately, with an understanding of your supply and demand drivers, is the network the most appropriate? With increased globalization, more and more supply chains need to consider factors like duties, fees, incentive programs, labor costs, et cetera, and where best to position sales and logistics activities to provide required service levels. How can application of modeling techniques assist in determination of the optimal infrastructure… for today, but what about your business strategy and projected growth, what is the optimal infrastructure for tomorrow 1 year, 3 years out, et cetera?

Clearly one can see that what starts out as a simple Pick, Pack, and Ship fulfillment task can soon become a complex global supply chain…

There is arguably no one best supply chain, but certainly many interesting and great ones do exist.
Enjoy reading this book; the case studies presented will stimulate ideas and hopefully will make you question how you can improve your supply chain.

We all challenge you to make your supply chain greener and better!

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*Donato Caporole* is recognized as a Visiting Fellow at the NUS TLI-AP and with his industry and consulting insights likes to donate his time to assist the team by providing outside perspectives to supply chain topics and opportunities at hand. For the last 4 years he was based in Singapore as a regional director of supply chain design and innovation group for a global logistics company. Prior to this he had over 15 years experience in supply chain management consultancy mostly with Tier 1 global organizations. During his career he has been fortunate to see and work on some amazing supply chain projects, predominantly in Asia. He likes to take very hands on approach to working with others and gains satisfaction in seeing everyone improve their supply chains and knowledge. Donato is now an active proponent of driving the message of sustainability for the betterment of future generations.