

## The language of logistics

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Whoever first coined the phrase 'two nations divided by a common language' when talking about the relationship between the UK and USA could just have well been talking about the language of logistics.

Maybe its because its still a relatively new discipline or perhaps because there are so many self taught practitioners who have had to develop their own terminology. Or maybe its we Consultants who like to come up with new names to make it look like we've suddenly had a brilliant idea. The truth is that logisticians do not use a common language and this can cause confusion, getting in the way of real progress.

For example, whilst you may say tom-ay-to and I might say tom-ar-to, you may equally say value chain whilst I might say demand chain or supply chain or even simply logistics. Sure there may be some merit in making the phrase more meaningful and reflective of what we are trying to achieve but does it really matter? Put half a dozen logisticians (or supply chain professionals, or whatever) in a room and ask them to define supply chain management and you will probably get eight or ten answers.

Now I'm not advocating coming up with formal definitions for all things relating to the supply chain. The EU has had a go at that with little effect. I do think we need to take more care over our use of terminology and be aware that we may not always take the same meaning from the terms we use. Particularly in more formal documents and in presentations we should try to take a little time to define some of the terms we use so that confusion can be kept to a minimum.

And yes the onus is probably on us consultants as much as anyone to improve matters. Lets focus more on getting on with it and driving continuous improvement and less on coming up with new terminology when we've done it.