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Their Companies are Lucky to Have Them

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I once again had the pleasure of speaking at the [2011 New England Supply Chain Conference and Exhibition](#) in Marlborough, Massachusetts last week. My talk was on supply chain leadership and I focused on the organizational and management issues within businesses today. I was pleased to speak to about 75 supply chain professionals.

The key topic I covered was change... change in the workplace, change in our career, and change in our jobs. For the record I teach a lot about change but I really don't like it. My wife hears about it when she rearranges the pictures of the kids on top of the television. But it was quite evident that change was afoot in most of the organizations represented. Some was positive change that addressed some performance issues. But most was change caused by uncertainty. Change caused by economic factors, changes in markets or customers, and changes in management. This is the kind of change that made us most uncomfortable.

We also chatted about stress and how we manage it. Most worked it off at the gym and others tried to bury their stress in a bowl of ice cream. Still one other said he used drugs and while the crowd chuckled, for some it may hit close to home. It was obvious by the look on their faces that stress was a normal part of their lives. And according to many, it was getting worse due to the unending change in the workplace.

I opened with a question that I ask most groups. I asked for a show of hands on how many of their departments were fully staffed. No hands went up. I thought that they didn't hear me so I asked again, and I got the same response. Sadly, staffing had been an issue for as long as they could remember. And they were also quick to tell me that help was not on the way. Ever.

So, let's tie these three issues together. I was speaking to a group of understaffed, stress-out supply management professionals who were trying their best to manage the never ending change in the workplace. But they were a pleasant and affable bunch, attending this conference to learn as much as they could about current trends in supply management. Dedicated professionals all.

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Endicott College Assistant Professor Rich Weissman teaches management courses for the School of Business and the Van Loan Graduate School. He is also the director of corporate education, which includes the Center for Leadership, Endicott's management development institute.

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