



efm Supply Chain Insights

Talent & Capability

→ The human advantage in
high-performance supply chains



Technology has transformed logistics, improving visibility, coordination and control.

**But systems
alone don't drive
performance.
People do.**



High performance comes from combining powerful technology with the right people.

People with the judgment to act on imperfect information, the agility to respond when plans shift, and the awareness to balance data with operational reality.

As the scope of logistics expands and expectations rise, the demand for human capability is increasingly important.

The skillsets now required go far beyond process and execution. They span analytics, planning, optimisation and commercial acumen, but also demand critical thinking, collaboration, project management, and the ability to work through ambiguity with confidence. It's a rare and evolving mix, and one that's hard to find.

This white paper explores how businesses can respond to that challenge. By building, accessing and enabling the right capability, businesses stand to strengthen their supply chain performance and carve out competitive advantage.



Businesses are experiencing **“an acute shortage of talent”**. This is prompting a re-evaluation of the skills and structures required to meet evolving demands and to manage disruption.ⁱ

– McKinsey & Company

Capability drives performance

For a long time, talent in logistics was defined by operational experience and strong industry relationships.

Success relied on knowing the right people, understanding freight flows, and keeping things moving. While these skills still matter, they're no longer enough.

Logistics has become more data-driven, customer-focused and commercially complex. The pressure to reduce costs while meeting rising service expectations, such as same-day delivery and real-time visibility, has redefined what capability looks like.

It's no longer just about operational execution; it requires innovative ways of thinking, solving problems creatively and working across systems and silos. Yet many organisations are struggling to make this shift.

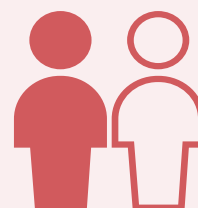
89%

of organisations have **increased investment in advanced analytics** over the past three years.ⁱⁱ



52%

of organisations say they are held back by a **shortage of people with the right skills**.ⁱⁱⁱ



Today, supply chain performance depends on people who can interpret data, anticipate issues, model scenarios and collaborate across business functions and with key stakeholders.

The shift to relationships that deliver results

Account management has evolved from relationship maintenance to include continuous improvement, performance insight and cross-functional coordination.

Relationship management remains critical, but rather than relying on one or two preferred carriers, logistics professionals must now manage a carefully selected panel of providers.

This allows them to ensure the right carrier is engaged for the right scenario, build flexibility into the network, and respond effectively when disruptions arise. Doing this effectively requires deep industry knowledge, strong carrier relationships, and the ability to make data-informed decisions at speed.



Customer service is now a pro-active, insight generating role, rather than a reactive one. But now also requires confidence using systems technology so they can:



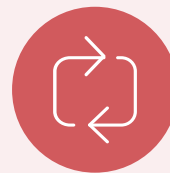
Access and interpret real-time data



Track Performance



Spot Trends



Escalate Effectively



Communicate with Customers

This systems fluency allows teams to identify recurring issues, flag exceptions and share emerging trends with account managers who will investigate the root causes and work to prevent similar problems in the future.

In turn, account managers provide broader customer context, such as shifts in business priorities, changes in delivery profiles or seasonal pressures, which enable service teams to proactively manage expectations and anticipate how external factors might impact freight movements.

This two-way exchange ensures a coordinated response and a more seamless experience for the customer.

Commercial, account management and customer service work closely together to ensure pricing structures, service performance and customer expectations remain aligned.

Meanwhile, technology specialists underpin the whole process, enabling visibility, automation and system integration across the carrier network.

A co-ordinated response in action

Consider a national retailer facing rising delivery costs and a surge in complaints in major metro areas.

These issues threaten both margins and brand perception, prompting a swift investigation.



1

The customer service team raises the alarm, account management traces the issue to one under-performing carrier.

2

Commercial conducts a cost-to-serve analysis, evaluating carrier performance against SLAs, service quality and cost benchmarks.

3

Meanwhile, the technology team enables this analysis by **consolidating multi-carrier data into a visual dashboard**.

4

Together, the teams rebalance the carrier mix by shifting volumes strategically, applying performance incentives and piloting alternative delivery models in high-impact areas.

5

Within weeks, the business sees a **sharp reduction in exceptions and an improvement in customer satisfaction**, all without increasing customer spend.



When the right expertise comes together, challenges are solved faster, opportunities are seized sooner, and logistics becomes a driver of growth.

Critical team skills for high performance:



Customer relationship management

Managing daily enquiries, escalations and service expectations with a customer-first mindset, balancing meeting short-term needs with providing long-term value.



Problem solving and continuous improvement

Identifying root causes, resolving issues quickly, and driving operational efficiency over time, always with an eye on broader business impact.



Commercial acumen

Negotiating carrier rates, managing margins and aligning logistics spend with business objectives.



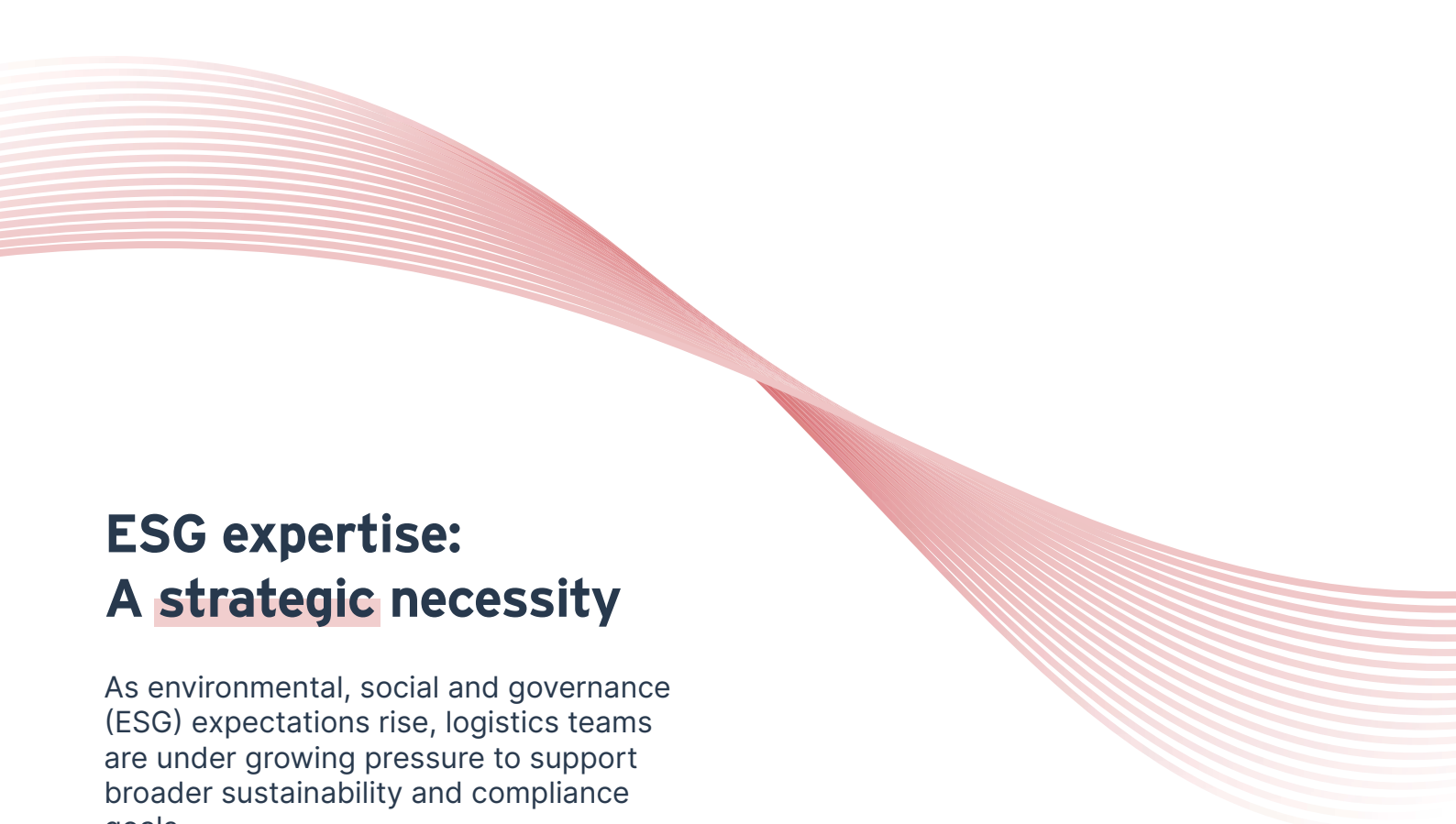
Data and systems expertise

Consolidating multi-carrier activity, enabling real-time visibility and using insights to support value-based decisions around cost, performance and service levels.



Strategic thinking and collaboration

Coordinating across functions and making informed decisions that support broader business goals.



ESG expertise: A **strategic necessity**

As environmental, social and governance (ESG) expectations rise, logistics teams are under growing pressure to support broader sustainability and compliance goals.

It's no longer just about delivering on time; it's also about doing so responsibly.



ESG capability is one of the most in-demand yet hardest-to-fill skillsets in the sector.^{iv}

Emissions reporting, ethical sourcing, and supply chain transparency are fast becoming core customer and regulatory requirements.

Yet the expertise required to manage these demands, such as interpreting emissions data, navigating modern slavery legislation, and supporting ESG audits, is highly specialised.



Most businesses don't have specialist ESG capability in-house, nor should they be expected to.

It takes dedicated professionals to ensure compliance, credibility and meaningful impact.

Working with a logistics partner that brings specialist ESG knowledge to the table helps businesses reduce risk, strengthen reporting and align operations with long-term sustainability goals.

What to look for in a logistics partner

Creating the right culture internally takes time. And even with the right environment, assembling all the skillsets required can be challenging.

For many businesses, whose core specialisation is not logistics, partnering with a provider that already brings this high-performance mindset, along with the structures, systems and talent to support it, is a more effective path to impact.



The right partner should operate as an extension of your team, providing access to dedicated experts in areas like



Transport
Optimisation



Commercial
Strategy



Data
Analysis



Systems
Integration



ESG

This breadth of capability allows businesses to **scale quickly, respond to disruption and make better decisions**, without needing to build out multiple roles internally.

Look for a partner that offers a dedicated account manager as your central point of contact. This person should understand your business, co-ordinate service delivery and lead structured performance reviews.

They are responsible for surfacing opportunities for improvement and tracking key metrics such as cost-to-serve, exception rates and carbon emissions.

Supporting them is a broader team of specialists, including customer service for day-to-day pick up and delivery requirements, as well as analysts, planners, commercial specialists and technology experts who contribute to continuous improvement.

Above all, the right partner acts as an extension of your business.

They improve not just logistics performance but also supporting your sales strategy, product ordering approach and delivery model to drive better end-to-end outcomes.



Questions to consider

Consider these areas and questions when evaluating a provider:

1 Proactive problem solving

- Is your provider raising issues before you do?
- Do they challenge assumptions and bring options to the table?

2 Consistency and tenure

- Does your team stay consistent over time, or do you have to re-explain your business every quarter?
- What's their depth of experience?

3 Understanding your business

- Are they curious and commercially minded?
- Do they take time to understand your goals and pressure points?

4 Access to specialists

- Can they bring in the right people at the right time, including commercial leads, customer service experts, technology specialists and operations leads at the right time?

5 Feedback loops and review rhythms

- Are performance check-ins, QBRs, and deep dives part of the rhythm, or are you chasing them?

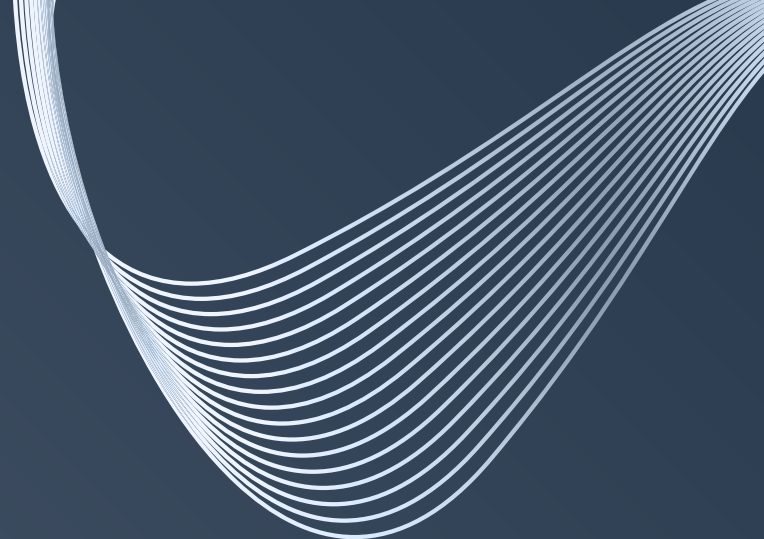
Creating your competitive advantage

Ultimately, high performance in logistics doesn't come from tools alone. It comes from people who are energised by challenge, aligned to values and committed to delivering better outcomes.

By uniting every function behind shared goals, capability becomes more than the sum of its parts. It can become a platform for resilience, continuous improvement and long-term performance.



When the right mindset is paired with the right mix of skills, supported by a strong culture and the right partners, logistics can become a source of strategic advantage.



Take the next step with efm

At efm, our team works alongside our customers' to identify challenges, strengthen capability and deliver better outcomes across the supply chain.

Whether you're seeking to improve transport performance, redesign your network or reduce cost-to-serve, our model is designed to bring the right people, tools and experience to help you move faster, act smarter and perform better.



Contact us to explore we can
strengthen your supply chain
efmlogistics.com.au/contact

References

- i. <https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/operations/our-insights/taking-the-pulse-of-shifting-supply-chains>
- ii. <https://www.supplychainbrain.com/articles/41040-solving-skills-gaps-in-supply-chain-analytics>
- iii. <https://www.supplychainbrain.com/articles/41040-solving-skills-gaps-in-supply-chain-analytics>
- iv. <https://supplychain360.io/talent-drought-supply-chain-2024/>