

SUPPLIER DEVELOPMENT: A CHANGE MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates supplier development strategies from a change management perspective. The authors propose that companies' ability to gain the relationship strategy commitment of all boundary-spanning employees with direct customer or supplier contact is an important behavioral aspect of the implementation process. Hypotheses are developed suggesting factors which impact upon individuals' relationship strategy commitment. The hypotheses are tested in a study that traces the change process of the relationships between a retailer and

40 of its suppliers over a period of three years. The findings suggest (1) that the companies' involvement in managing boundary-spanning employees has the same impact upon the individuals' strategy commitment as their personal job attitude; (2) that the individuals' commitment to the relationship strategy is influenced by the quality of the internal working relationships between strategic and operational level employees; and that (3) the buying company's involvement in managing boundary-spanning employees is significantly lower than the suppliers' involvement. Implications for theory and practice are discussed.

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