OPERATING MODEL & DECISIONS

Supply Chain Planning: From Variability to Orchestration

Christian Kroschl · 23 September 2025

Article on kroschl.com · Read on LinkedIn

Supply Chain Planning Recruiting

Supply chains don't fail because of missing algorithms. They fail when plans don't connect to execution, when systems are implemented without stabilizing processes, or when data lacks the governance to be trusted.

And no – AI won't fix this. The real differentiator is the combination of process understanding and technology skills. These capabilities cannot be replaced by hype. They are the foundation on which AI, machine learning, and advanced analytics can actually deliver value.

We see this every day:

A pharmaceutical manufacturer had invested in a state-of-the-art APS. Still, batches were delayed, inventories piled up, and service levels dropped. The issue wasn't the tool. It was the missing link between forecasting, campaign planning, and S&OE. Only when buffers and escalation rules were introduced, and parameters were dynamically adjusted, did stability return. **A consumer goods company** ran textbook S&OP cycles. On PowerPoint, everything looked perfect. On the shop floor, nothing matched reality. Order confirmations failed because Response & Supply logic was static. By shifting to range-based planning and embedding Finance into the cycle, plans became executable. **A chemicals player** relied on Excel for campaign scheduling. Variability cascaded through the network, amplifying bullwhip effects. Only by combining SAP PP/DS with buffer-driven decoupling points and real-time feedback did they regain control. The real game changer wasn't the system alone – it was the ability to map processes to technology and orchestrate across functions.

These stories underline a point we keep making: **Supply Chain Planning is not about tools. It is about orchestration – stabilizing, synchronizing, and dynamically adapting across end-to-end processes.**

What the Work Is About

At EY, we don't just implement systems – we design and deliver transformations. That means:

Diagnostics & Vision Building – understanding variability hotspots and defining the north star for planning. **Software Evaluation** – assessing APS, ERP, and specialized tools to determine the right fit before committing to a roadmap. **Concept & Roadmap Design** – translating strategy into processes, roles, and planning concepts. **Process & Organization** – embedding new ways of working across S&OP, S&OE, and end-to-end orchestration. **System Implementation** – configuring SAP IBP, PP/DS, OMP or other technologies to bring concepts to life. **Sustain & Improve** – ensuring governance, data quality, and continuous learning loops for long-term success.

This is transformation work in the truest sense: shaping vision, aligning organizations, and connecting processes with technology to enable resilient supply chains.

What it Takes

To design planning that works in reality, different capabilities must come together:

Analytics & Operations Research – understanding variability, stochastic effects, inventory optimization. **Technology expertise** – hands-on with SAP IBP, SAP PP/DS, OMP; but always paired with the ability to advise technology-agnostically. **Architectural thinking** – integrating processes and IT landscapes, from campaign planning to order confirmation. **Data & Governance** – creating the trust layer that enables AI, automation, and reliable decisions. **Execution alignment** – embedding S&OP and S&OE into daily routines, with clear playbooks and escalation rules. **Demand Planning expertise** – combining process design, stochastic models, and machine learning to move from baseline forecasts to regional and local reconciliations. **Inventory Optimization & Multiechelon** – calibrating stocks globally to balance service levels, protect manufacturing, and optimize working capital. **Production Planning & Scheduling** – optimizing campaigns and production lines, ensuring flow and linking planning to execution constraints. **Process & Technology orchestration** – a capability that will not be replaced by AI hype, but instead forms the foundation that makes AI truly valuable.

These are not "skills for tomorrow" – they are what's needed right now to help clients move from firefighting to resilience.

The Right Talent for Real Transformation

Most supply chain transformations fail quietly. Tools get implemented, but processes stay fragmented, teams are misaligned, and the firefighting culture persists. What's missing is not software – it's the right talent to guide clients through their journey.

Our clients need consultants who:

Operate at eye level, challenging assumptions and acting as true sparring partners. Coach planning teams while designing the right process and IT architecture. Decide where planning capabilities belong – local, regional, or global. Define data strategies that give real visibility into demand and supply. Understand modern tools deeply enough to know what they can do – and what they cannot.

This multi-faceted strength hardly exists on the market today. It is why so many transformations fail.

At EY, in our Supply Chain Planning practice in Germany, we work differently. Our mission is not to "install systems." Our mission is to **orchestrate processes, people, and concepts** to truly steer and control supply chains globally – and to bring our clients to the next level of maturity. That's how we create long-term value.

Why EY

What makes EY unique is the combination of **substance and scale**:

Global reach: We work with the world's largest companies in Pharma, Chemicals, and Consumer Goods – and with hidden champions who often set the benchmarks in their industries. **Technology partnerships**: We collaborate with leading software providers such as SAP and OMP to design and implement best-fit solutions. At the same time, we engage with **startups and emerging players** to explore new approaches and accelerate innovation. **Building the foundation for AI**: By strengthening processes, data, and governance, we create the trust layer that allows AI to move from hype to real impact in supply chains. **End-to-end integration**: Supply Chain Planning at EY is embedded into Finance, Tax, Risk, and Sustainability. **Community**: A strong global SCM network, where expertise is shared and sharpened.

Join Us

We are expanding our Supply Chain Planning team **in Germany** – and we are looking for consultants **based in Germany** who are fluent in **German and English**. This is essential, as our work is deeply embedded in German-speaking client organizations and requires day-to-day interaction in both languages.

From **Consultants to Senior Consultants and (sub-)Project Leads**, we are searching for people who want to connect processes, technology, and execution into something that really works.

If you want to move beyond firefighting and design supply chains that truly orchestrate complexity – let's talk.

Whether you are **early in your consulting career** and eager to grow, or an **experienced Senior Consultant or Architect** ready to take ownership – we are looking for people who want to shape transformations, not just deliver tasks. At EY you will find both: the platform to **learn and grow** through international projects and a global community, and the opportunity to **lead and architect** end-to-end solutions that make supply chains truly resilient.