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Clay Jackson,  
VP, Supply Chain Planning,  
TRACTOR SUPPLY CO.



**Operations:** 1,700 stores with 15,000 SKUs per store, in 49 states, with a store support center in Brentwood, TN. TSC has over 1,200 suppliers and 26,000 employees.

**Manhattan Solution:**  
The DC Game

## HUNTING FOR UNEXPECTED TREASURES AT TRACTOR SUPPLY COMPANY

One way to describe a visit to a Tractor Supply Company's (TSC) retail store is a treasure hunt because you never know what you're going to find. But with 15,000 SKUs per store and 1,700 stores, TSC needs to know exactly what its customers are going to find, down to the SKU number. It carries everything from live chickens to kayaks to tractor parts, and its goal to be the most dependable supplier of rural lifestyle products means it needs top-notch supply chain processes.

Tractor Supply Co. opened in 1938 as a small mail-order house for tractor parts. The first retail store opened in Minot, N.D., and the company has expanded every year since. Today, Tractor Supply Co. (TSC) operates stores in 49 states and an e-commerce website at TractorSupply.com. It is the leading rural lifestyle retailer, supplying basic maintenance products to home, land, pet and animal owners, with annual revenues of approximately \$7.3 billion. As the inventors of the "do it yourself" trend, TSC provides products that help its customers handle practically every chore themselves, from repairing wells to building fences to welding gates together to constructing feed bins to taking care of livestock and pets to repairing tractors and trucks to building trailers for hauling.

TSC believes strongly in its retail stores and continues to open stores and add new products all of the time, which requires meeting ambitious supply chain goals and preventing costly bottlenecks. It wanted to emphasize to employees the importance of communication, coordination and overall flow of a distribution center.

"All groups should move as one, and we can only move as quickly as our weakest link," said Clay Jackson, VP, Supply Chain Planning. "Inside a distribution center, it doesn't matter how fast each individual function moves. It matters how fast it all moves together." To effectively teach sometimes complex supply chain concepts through hands-on experiential learning, TSC chose to have its team play Manhattan Associates' DC Game. Why a game?

"A game is a good fit. I'm a game nerd, and I've always enjoyed them," Jackson said. "Games create teachable moments and establish camaraderie, plus they're fun. Playing a game beats learning from spreadsheets and flip charts any time."

TSC gathered 30 employees in various leadership roles, such as general managers and representatives from HR, transportation, engineering and planning, to play the DC game. The goal was to share information about Tractor Supply Co., teamwork, communication and supply chain concepts. The gamers were employees who would

### CHALLENGE:

Team building in distribution operations leadership, identify opportunities for improvement, alignment and strategic focus for the coming year.

### SOLUTION:

Engage in a leadership working session, where leaders play the DC Game, facilitated by Manhattan Associates.

### PROGRESS & RESULT:

The game focused the TSC team on supply chain issues, brought everyone up to speed on the warehouse management system upgrade, and engaged leaders in collaboration and teamwork conversations critical to success.

not normally interact with one another in person, which was energizing, according to Jackson. Their personalities were varied, including people who were analytical, assertive, encouragers, leaders and followers, and Jackson said the game nicely demonstrated the value of their differences while highlighting ways they could interact most effectively with each other.

Jackson said. "It showed that working at the same pace was more beneficial than pulling out ahead of others. Thousands of people work together in distribution operations. To be most effective, it's important that everyone is working to the tune of the same beat."

## "The DC game really demonstrated the value of teamwork"

TSC was pleased with the results of the DC game. It gave the company a golden opportunity to communicate the larger supply chain initiatives and get employees involved in the direction TSC is moving. The event brought together employees in varying roles who do not typically interact with each other and gave them a mutual goal to accomplish through teamwork. Jackson was particularly pleased that the game opened the door to get TSC employees more supply chain-focused and brought them up to speed on their warehouse management system upgrade. It created an informal environment to ask and answer questions, drive supply chain initiatives and share information. "The game achieved exactly what you hope to achieve when you bring folks in from the field," Jackson said. "You don't want them to feel like they are out on an island. It's important that they hear what's going on across the company, gain exposure to different leaders and understand the customer perspective from the stores."



Jackson praised the skills of the Manhattan game facilitator in wrangling 30 strong personalities and said his company intends to use Manhattan games to onboard new employees and further train its workforce in supply chain concepts.

Tractor Supply Co. strives to offer the best quality and service in a convenient way, and it knows its customers rely on it to have in-stock products to care for animals, land, homes and farms, plus new products to delight them on their "treasure hunt." Using the DC game to enhance the team's approach to supply chain ensures that TSC is treasure hunters' destination of choice for all of their rural lifestyle needs.