



**Debbie Haseley**  
General Manager  
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## Bio:

Debbie Haseley is an executive with diverse expertise in operations management, global supply chain, and planning initiatives that accelerate performance, maximize efficiencies, reduce costs, and ensure strategic flexibility. She has led supply chain and operations for medium and large-scale corporations such as FedEx, The Coca-Cola Company, Beanitos, and Eastman Kodak.

## Intro:

Debbie shares her career journey starting with two decades at Coca Cola where she moved from financial services to the North American Supply Chain, to the global supply chain. Then her time as COO at a smaller food company. Debbie talks with us about seeking out a variety of challenges. About commercializing innovations, infrastructure planning, and support she received along the way to pursue diverse experiences. Plus learning how to lead and how to establish a great culture of performance.

**Mike Ogle:** [00:01:23] Debbie, we're very happy to have you with us today. Welcome.

**Debbie Haseley:** [00:01:27] Thank you. Thanks for having me.

**Mike Ogle:** [00:01:30] So how did you get started on your supply chain career journey? What were some of your greatest influences that got you started and helped you along the way?

**Debbie Haseley:** [00:01:40] Well, I got started, at Coca Cola with supply chain management through a transition that I had from financial services over into a North America supply chain. At Coca-Cola, what that meant is I was responsible for a function. And at that time there was quite a few innovations that was occurring and we

needed to set up a new program management group that helped commercialize a number of innovations. And so, I was brought in as a leader of the program management team in commercialization. So, that was my first position coming into that form of a supply chain. I spent about 10 years of my background in North America. And about 10 years in global supply chain doing a number of diverse positions.

**Mike Ogle:** [00:02:39] In the positions that you had as you transferred from one to the other, were there any influencers along the way that inspired you or opportunities that you saw that you could talk about.

**Debbie Haseley:** [00:02:52] Oh, for sure. So as part of my career plan, I wanted to really experience a lot of diverse activities and functions. And so personally I sought out a number of different areas. So, not only the initial position, but also going into supply and demand planning, really learning that function and helping support that side by side when doing the innovation piece.

But then also extending my career and the experience into some of the strategic planning of supply chain. So, looking at infrastructure planning, where do we want to put new plants and warehouses, particularly, maybe in the Southwest area. I also looked at the infrastructure from a capability standpoint. So, one of my roles was to actually build up our co-packing organization in North America from the start. That included bringing on a number of co-packing locations to do new technologies, whether that was dairy or coffee, or maybe even powders. And to build that capability through third parties where we did not want to invest in it in the bottling system.

And so that infrastructure work was fascinating to me in really understanding not only the strategic plan of the company and where we were headed a number of years down the line, but also building the capability out for the near-term innovations. So that type of diversity was very important to me in my career to really continue multiple paths and not be in one functional area for very long.

**Mike Ogle:** [00:04:41] Good. And did you have people along the way that also provided career advice as you were moving from one position to another or encouragement to be able to go after those steps.

**Debbie Haseley:** [00:04:52] For sure. I received a tremendous amount of encouragement through the leaders that I reported to. It was all around getting that diversity of experience. And I was very vocal about wanting to not only have domestic experience, but also global experience. When I had development conversations with my leadership, we really set plans in place to make sure that I could get the type of experiences that would be valued in the global organization. So, the support was tremendous over time and through different leaders. It wasn't just a single leader. It was multiple leaders that really listened and made those opportunities happen. That started from the very beginning at Coke, not only in the supply chain area, but some of my financial backgrounds.

As a corporation, the company was very supportive in helping me grow and advance and particularly within supply chain, once I made it known that I wanted to go global, there was facilitation that happened between leadership teams, to help me get there, help me make that transition happen.

**Rodney Apple:** [00:06:11] And speaking of Coke, we worked together for several years there and I know you were part of building out that supply chain center of excellence. Could you give us an explanation of what you did to set up that supply chain center of excellence.

**Debbie Haseley:** [00:06:25] Sure. I think what worked well is that I was one of a handful of subject matter experts that work together as a very collaborative team to share our expertise. I in particular had the expertise in infrastructure planning, end-to-end optimization. There was another individual known as the expert in logistics and distribution, et cetera. And we work together seamlessly as a team to share and build not only a learning curriculum of how to do our functions on a global basis, for implementation, but then outside of the curriculum, actually the execution. So, we started a project in China where we came together. We worked with one of the plants in one of the remote towns of China, and we optimized that particular plant. So, if it was demand and supply planning, we made sure that the processes and the procedures and everything that went into each one of those functions was the very best that it could be through using tools like operational excellence and lean manufacturing, all of those tools at your disposal. We stood up a center of excellence in an integrated way, so that it was standalone not only for China to learn from, but we build it so that the rest of the globe could come and learn from that center of excellence. We continued that thought throughout the globe. I believe there was a handful of sites that ended up being set up over time. But I think the best practice around it was using all of the tools that you would in a plant or an operation in a singular way, and really coming together collaboratively to integrate all the functions together, to make sure that you had a comprehensive solution and a learning base for the rest of the world.

**Rodney Apple:** [00:08:34] And then once that was established, from there it's continuously improving. I would imagine there could have been some benchmarking from country to country to see who's performing the best and then trying to get the other countries up to that level of performance. I've seen that in other companies.

**Debbie Haseley:** [00:08:49] We had metrics. We had dashboards and metrics that not only watched that per country, but we could see across the globe, the entire bottling operation, improving their level of performance over time. But it wasn't only day to day performance. It was the integration of the long-term planning. It was what does it look like today and what does it look like 10 years from now around how are they set up for success? So, for instance, do they have their plants located where they need to be and their warehouses, or their route to market, is all of that correct to be ready for 10 years in their long-term planning. We created the training curriculum so that new people coming into supply chain and wanting to learn the global aspect could be tested, could understand all the aspects of supply chain leadership. And we did that actually in conjunction with Georgia Tech and they helped us build that learning curriculum, and we had someone assigned for the learning curriculum as well. So, it was meant to be foundational and to be able to grow over time through those metrics and dashboard reviews. But we also put in a number of tools and systems, so it wasn't just processes and procedures. It was a holistic view.

**Rodney Apple:** [00:10:09] I know working across countries and different cultures can be a bit of a challenge. How did you go about that? Especially around the change management aspects, was there kind of a well-oiled machine around how to influence desire, behaviors and so forth?

**Debbie Haseley:** [00:10:25] No, I think honestly that took a lot of work. It took open and transparent communication and appreciating the different cultures, really valuing the Coca-Cola system, of the leaders that were in place in the business units globally. And understanding their business because every location was different obviously, and their route to market and their customer base and their competition, everything was uniquely different. And so, you not only had to understand it, but you had to value it. You had to build those relationships with the leadership in all of those locations and be able to share your expertise in a reciprocal fashion so that you were learning at the same time that you were sharing those learnings and when you create those value based relationships globally, that's where success comes in, because then you're able to tap into, basically you have the entire globe at your disposal, to help and learn from. And that's exactly what we did to spread the center of excellence, but also to create a learning environment. It was uniquely different to have that kind of a scope.

**Rodney Apple:** [00:11:41] When you look at Coca-Cola, it's the sheer volume and scale. It's a very complex business, operating and shipping product into what 200 countries. So I know that was a monumental effort and I'm sure that took years to get to full maturity.

**Debbie Haseley:** [00:11:55] That's one of the true successes of Coca-Cola is being able to manage globally those unique settings and being so effective from a distribution and a logistics standpoint. People might think of the company as a marketing type of engine, but at the same time, there's a tremendous amount of expertise in supply chain to make that happen around the world. So that expertise is needed from a career standpoint around the world in every business unit.

**Rodney Apple:** [00:12:28] When you left Coca-Cola, you did a major transition to a small food company and went in as the COO of that company. And eventually took the company through a sale through private equity. So, we'd love to learn what experience you may have pulled from Coca-Cola to make that transition. I can tell you that in my years of recruiting, you don't see that happen too often. So I'd love to hear that story and how you made it successful and the key learnings.

**Debbie Haseley:** [00:12:57] I think going into it, I had the mindset that because I had built my career with a diversity of experiences, that it was important to me to be ready, to help run an operation like that. The readiness comes in that I needed to feel comfortable in my own skillset that I was bringing to the table, that I could do any one of those functions myself before I ask others in my team to do it and feeling good about being able to communicate what success looks like, because many small companies, whether they're startups or mid-sized companies, some of the talent has not experienced what success looks like and what good metrics look like in supply chain and what operational excellence means. And so, I had to feel comfortable. Number one, that from a leadership standpoint, I could go in and teach supply chain to the

individuals if they didn't already have that skillset. And be able to develop the team. So that was step number one, feeling comfortable that I had built the level of experience to do that. Step number two was the desire to really want to run an operation. Coming into a small company like that, one of the first things I was able to do with that background is to assess an overly complex supply chain and simplify it and very quickly get a lot of cost structure out of that supply chain and be able to, from a procurement standpoint, and negotiate with suppliers on new raw materials, shut down warehouses, bring on new co-packers. And so, the level of complexity was reduced from a network design. That whole phase of assessment. And being able to really look at a supply chain end to end and being able to map it out and know what today looks like and what tomorrow should look like from an execution standpoint, but also being cognizant of the fact that in a small company, the cashflow and the financials need to be there to support any change that you need to make in the supply chain.

So, had to really be prepared mentally to know what we needed to do, but then be able to phase it in at the right time, based on the cashflow and the capital that was available, given the investment funding. So quite challenging, definitely a roll up your sleeves type of environment, where you have to know how to do each of those functions in order to really execute and guide the entire team towards what needs to be done in an optimal way.

**Rodney Apple:** [00:15:57] And speaking of the team, what was the key to success coming into a role like that? Did you have to make any major changes to the organizational structure over time?

**Debbie Haseley:** [00:16:06] Yeah, it was a small team. Did have to bring in a director of supply chain that was a much more versed on demand and supply planning, production planning, being able to work in a very basic Excel environment, with an absence of an ERP system and being able to integrate that with an S&OP system. So, one of the learnings and the talent that we had to bring in is integrating an S&OP process with our sales organization. So, the company was operating without that. And as you can imagine, it was quite fractured and broken, as far as meeting demand and fulfillment metrics. And so, in order to fix all of that, from a development standpoint, I brought in the head of supply chain, but I also did a lot of cross training between the manager of logistics and distribution, and then supply chain and order fulfillment because of the small team size. And so that cross training was quite instrumental all the way to the end of the company to the sale so that we were nimble and we could back each other up in times of just clear vacations or absences or any gaps. Being lean is definitely critical in these smaller companies.

**Rodney Apple:** [00:17:32] Absolutely. We have to wear a lot of hats. And then lastly on this topic, from what I gather after the sale, you were still at your asked to stay on and help with integration into the new ownership. What did that entail?

**Debbie Haseley:** [00:17:44] So that went into the early part of the year. From a supply chain perspective, I worked with the existing team to cross train them with the new company's team, as well as help assist them personally, moving on to their next venture. So, it was the short-term integration with the existing company's procedures,



policies, et cetera, and then moving it into the new operation.

What it also included was relationship passing. Our co-packers, logistics carriers, our warehouses, really doing the introductions and the explanation of how we did business to the new players. And so really helping build the relationships between the two companies so that seamlessly they could take it and run forward without any hiccups.

**Mike Ogle:** [00:18:41] Debbie, what kind of mixture of hard and soft skills do you really value?

**Debbie Haseley:** [00:18:47] Well, I think leadership at any level is extremely important. Doesn't matter what position you're in, it matters how you go about your work and what's important to you and whether you're willing to extend yourself beyond today and into tomorrow. And so, are you willing to learn things you don't know? Are you a transparent communicator? To clearly know what your skills are and know where your gaps are and how we can work together. So really, looking for that integrity, looking for the transparency and the leadership aspect, regardless of the level.

I would say some of the hard skills is truly looking at each of the functions. So if I was hiring a logistics person, really looking at their experience around RFPs and how had they switched carriers? How had they made improvements to the cost structure? How were they innovative in potentially starting to use, in our case, in the smaller company, Uber freight as a cost cutting measure. And so, their creativity around their functional skill. So, it's a great question because I think those two things need to go hand in hand, clearly for the individuals to be successful. And just like myself, I think it's very important in a supply chain career to have experience in other segments of the supply chain so that you're not narrow in your vision of how you perform your own responsibility. So, I'm real big in making sure that people understand how the entire end to end supply chain works.

[BREAK MESSAGES]

**Mike Ogle:** [00:20:54] What do you think are some of the keys to success as people try to work and partner with people across countries and cultures?

**Debbie Haseley:** [00:21:03] Well, I think what's important is understanding the culture where you're going and what you're meant to be a part of. And, also knowing if you're in a large corporation, really relying on the people within the organization that are in those countries. They know the routes to market, they know the commercial aspects of the sales and how the revenues made and the P and L. And so, it's really getting to understand the business in each of those countries before you start to embark on looking at changes in a supply chain or looking at optimizing a supply chain, because if you don't understand the business and the route to market and the customers and why you're even delivering your supply chain, It really isn't very important, is it?

At the end of the day, you're delivering some type of product or service for an end consumer or customer. So really understanding that business in that country. In the environment that you're meant to work. And the relationship piece is very important, really working together side-by-side as to what you bring to the table, and then also what they're bringing to the table in order to really partner. I don't use those words lightly around partnering. It is very important when you're working virtually across

countries that you have to see each other and really trust each other from a relationship standpoint, to be able to partner and to really deliver results together.

**Mike Ogle:** [00:22:43] Looking back. What do you wish you had known as a student? Both at the beginning as an undergraduate, and then as you were graduating?

**Debbie Haseley:** [00:22:54] I think if I would have been more exposed to the different types of careers. There was not really a lot of internships and opportunities. When I got my degree, whether it was my electrical engineering degree or my MBA, and I think taking advantage of those internships, which is very common today, to get hands-on experience and really understanding what a particular job looks like. Because supply chain is a very exciting and interesting career that you can have. And I think if I would've known what some of the aspects of that were, it would have been something I would have sought after initially instead of engineering. Knowing what I know now, I think new students coming into choiceful selections in college, I think supply chain is a great area, particularly what COVID and some of the new aspects of our economy and our situation has brought to light how important supply chain is regardless of the industry that you're in. Getting those experiences in supply chain, but also in different industries, I think is very invaluable.

**Rodney Apple:** [00:24:13] What's your philosophy on mentorship? Have you been a mentor before? Have you had a mentor? What would you advise someone that is seeking out their first mentorship?

**Debbie Haseley:** [00:24:23] Start early. I think one of the things that I realized in my career is I started way too late. I would have started it as soon as I had the opportunity, I think in all the companies that I was with, because there's so much to be learned from people that are already in the business, from a leadership perspective, they are capable of connecting you from a networking standpoint and they're also very good at pointing out and helping you develop. They can actually look at it from a third-party view, particularly if they don't know you as deeply as maybe your direct leadership does. And they're very capable of helping you develop as an individual. And so, if I had the opportunity, I probably would have done that probably 30 years earlier.

I have been a mentor and I've been a mentee and, as being a mentee, I was afforded opportunities to be in some executive leadership classes that probably wouldn't have happened if it wasn't for that mentorship. I was given opportunities that probably wouldn't happen unless the connections would have been there between leaders. For me, it was the guidance that was provided sometimes in not being overly anxious about your next role or being prepared for your next role and making sure that you were ready and given the experiences that you need.

As a mentor, I took the situation extremely serious, because of the fact that I felt like my input should be a guide and should be helpful but not overbearing. I wanted to be more of a coach and more of an assistant to them, but I didn't want them to feel like I was telling them exactly what to do at any time. Based on my experience. I wanted them to learn based on their own career path and their own situation, but I also wanted them to know that I was here for them to actually continue to develop the way that it made sense for them.

**Rodney Apple:** [00:26:42] And speaking of learning and development, the career aspect of supply chain continues to change. It's hard to keep up with all the innovation that's going on, but from your perspective, what are some of the things that you see changing in the years ahead as it relates to the career aspect and career paths within the supply chain space?

**Debbie Haseley:** [00:27:03] Well, I think technology's playing a big role in that. Clearly, the change has evolved quite dramatically with e-commerce and AI and some of the other technology platforms. The advice is to stay up with that be a part of seminars and learnings and learn the technology yourself, really be a part of the solution because it's rapidly changing. And, it's not the typical footprint that we're used to seeing in warehouses and distribution centers. I had the fortunate opportunity to really change in the last business that I was in from a typical 3PL warehouse environment to a consolidated warehouse where I could piggyback on shipments through e-commerce with other suppliers, et cetera, reduced all structure, and also hit my metrics in a much more efficient way. And so that's typical supply chain optimization. But I think where technology is going to continue to evolve is taking that to the next level of being able to do the demand sensing. I think that's going to change quite a bit.

**Mike Ogle:** [00:28:18] As you're talking about people learning and improving and finding what is new and what's next, how would you advise people to keep up on their own continuous improvement overall. And how do you do it?

**Debbie Haseley:** [00:28:35] One of the things that I've learned, in some of the transitions that I've been in is it's critically important to be a part of industry forums and learn from your network. The way I do it is learning from others that are in different spaces. For instance, I wanted to get up to speed as far as what is different in a supply chain environment in healthcare and the pharmaceutical industry versus normal CPG. And the way I did that was reached out into my network. And got connected to people that were actually running the supply chain, VPs of ops, VP of supply chain, and had conversations with them and actually walked the floor with them on certain aspects. And so really, I found that people were very receptive from a networking standpoint of sharing their knowledge and their expertise in different fields.

Particularly if you show the interest. I found that that was extremely effective for me because I was able to really be reciprocal to them in the CPG world with those people in healthcare. One of the interesting things I found is that the military, for instance, is doing a lot of AI work. On forklift, training, something as simple as that. And they are able to virtually teach forklift drivers, how to teach without actually being onsite training, curriculum, trainers involved, et cetera. So that translation into the business world is a very simple example, but just learning that it existed and translating that as to how we could actually use it as well,

**Rodney Apple:** [00:30:24] Turning to leadership, having been in executive search for a couple of decades now, what I found is what separates good leaders from the great leaders that really rise up to the top is their ability to field a high performing team, as it relates to both the hiring, as well as developing and retaining top supply chain talent. From your perspective, what do you look for when you're evaluating talent for your



openings and what do you do on the development side to truly bring out the very best in your employees?

**Debbie Haseley:** [00:30:57] Well, the search is important, knowing exactly what you're looking for. What's important, your top skills that you will not give on, and that you have to have in the organization. So being very precise on what are the key functional skills that you need. And then once I really have understood that and realized what type of leaders I'm looking for and what type of individuals, then really giving them an opportunity to work on something at the beginning of the process, even before hire, I'm very big in giving a project, very simple project, that you can see how someone approaches a problem, whether it's a business problem, a supply chain problem, et cetera, so that I can get a sense for how they think and how they approach a particular aspect of the business.

I feel as if I need to spend some time developing those people, getting them onboarded very well, because I think a lot of times we skip the very initial phases of getting someone into a company and getting them acclimated to how you do business. That if they only see a piece of that, then they can only contribute in a very minor way. Whereas if you expose them to the business and you teach them how they fit into the business and the value that they bring to the business, I find that from a talent standpoint, people want to stretch and they want to do more than they were initially hired for. And quite honestly, they ended up doing a different job than what they were hired for anyway, because the scope of the job changes over time and you're really hiring for the future, not just for today.

If you spend the time upfront and the employee feels as if you're there beside them and that you are there to support them and develop them that it's a win-win for everyone. But as I mentioned before, I also feel it's important to cross train. That you cannot stay just functional in one area, that you should really learn how to do other aspects of the supply chain. So, from a development standpoint, I think it's important to do that. And then of course, based on your self-interest, where a person wants to go and develop their career, I think it's important to support them in either advanced learning or future experiences, just like I was provided in my career path.

**Rodney Apple:** [00:33:38] Debbie, can you share some examples of the very best, let's say memorable, supply chain, career advice you've received along the way. And do you have a couple of your own that you would like to offer our audience?

**Debbie Haseley:** [00:33:54] The career advice that I got was to learn the different aspects of supply chain. Become versed in how each of the functions work. So, the advice is create that diversity and take on some projects that are in addition to your current work, whether it's sustainability or understanding water conservation, or whether it's understanding, quality and regulatory pieces that is not in your scope. It's really important to understand that. And so, grab on to all those experiences that are either in addition to what you're doing or is your next step that you want to take in your career. It's really led to a much more enriching career for me. And I hope that's the same as some of the people that might be listening to this in your audience.

**Rodney Apple:** [00:34:54] I would also add, I've worked with companies that don't

have that type of philosophy, and they may kind of hold you into one area. So, I think it's important to work for companies that are a bit more progressive with their approach to talent management or development, as opposed to those that really want you to be specialized and they don't allow you to step outside of your sandbox. If you're aspiring to be a broader end to end supply chain management type leader, you've got to get in with the right company.

**Debbie Haseley:** [00:35:23] And for those people that don't want to go global, and that's not an aspiration for them in their career, I think another piece of advice would be, to focus on becoming really an expert in your field. So, whether it's a project manager that should get certified in PMP in order to handle large scale supply chain initiatives. Grab onto those certifications that are meaningful, that will be translatable over time, because it's never going to hurt you. And the cost of getting those certifications are so minimal in the whole scheme of things, in your career advancement that with most companies offering tuition reimbursement and those types of things, it's very important to get those certifications where people can turn to you as an expert and you can be seen as a very valuable part of the organization.

**Mike Ogle:** [00:36:20] Debbie, thank you for a great conversation and insights about supply chain careers.

**Debbie Haseley:** [00:36:26] Thank you for having me. I appreciate it.

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