

Plenary Session

Saturday, April 21, from 10:00 am – 11:00 am, Ballroom D & E

“The Business Case for Sustainability in the Supply Chain”

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Abstract: Businesses are under significant pressure as the Global economies pass through this period of turbulence and recession. Not since the Great Depression has there been so much widespread uncertainty and concern in the market place. In this environment, there are great demands on business leaders to find profits and maintain healthy margins. Yet at the same time there is an ever-growing awareness that we must have sustainable and environmentally sensitive business practices to ensure that we don't do irreversible damage to the world we live in. While consumers are making ever more vocal demands that their services and goods are delivered in a sustainable and eco friendly manner, they are also saying that they are not necessarily willing to pay more for these. How do businesses balance these two seemingly opposing demands and thrive in this period of uncertainty? This presentation reviews the key characteristics of a sustainable supply chain and at the same time make the case that sustainability can be both a profitable business strategy and a competitive advantage.

Biography: Until April 2010 Edwin was the Chief Operating Officer and Senior Vice President of Wal-Mart Global Procurement. He managed offices in 20 plus countries and sourcing activities in 50 plus countries. Apart from acting as the supply chain spokesman on numerous occasions, Edwin helped put together the Oct 2008 Global CEO Summit on Sustainability in Beijing China.

Prior to Wal-Mart Edwin managed a consulting group that has done work for companies on supply chain, manufacturing, and product design.

The practice also did work for non-profit organizations and charities. His commercial clients included Berkshire Hathaway and Payless Shoes Australia among others. His non-profit work took him to Burma, N Thailand, the Philippines, Laos and China where he worked with schools, orphanages, tribal peoples, and people afflicted by leprosy.

Edwin had a career as senior executive with several US consumer goods and retail companies. He was the Managing Director of Payless Shoesource International, Donna Karan International, and Country Road Australia. He did the start up sourcing for Abercrombie & Fitch and Structure stores.

Prior to graduate school, Edwin worked for the United Nations High Commission for Refugees as an editor and resettlement lobbyist.

Edwin graduated from Whittier College with a BA in Political Science, Sociology, and Urban Design. Since Whittier Edwin has done graduate work at Claremont College's Drucker School.

Edwin currently is on faculty at The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania. His research interests include retail and supply chain operations in Greater China, sustainability, and decision-making frameworks. He is also working with Yale and Harvard on a new initiative on governance and capacity building in Africa. He serves as Trustee on the board of Whittier College, California. He is on the Board of FACE, a shoe industry charity, and Handa, an NGO that serves the needs of people afflicted with leprosy in China. He advises several social enterprises. He has delivered keynote addresses or taught recently at industry events and at multiple universities in Asia and the US.

Edwin is the 2011 recipient of the Production and Operations Management Society's *Martin K. Starr Excellence in Production and Operations Management Practice Award*.

Edwin lives in Hong Kong with his wife Claudia who teaches at the HK University of Science & Technology. They have 3 sons.

