

# MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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## Comparing Buyer-Supplier Relationships: How to Improve your Supply Chain

The purpose of the Michigan State University Supply Chain Research is to analyze strategies used to improve buyer-supplier relationships. Specifically, the research will develop a deeper understanding of relationship structures that support supply chain integration as well as how the costs and the resulting performance benefits vary across relationship structures. Results are expected to yield insights into the relationship structures that support supply chain integration strategies and identify best practices in buyer-supplier relationships.

There are two questionnaires and respondent bases associated with this research. The first questionnaire will be sent to individuals with procurement responsibilities. These buying participants will be asked to consider a relationship that they have with a supplier who is providing a functional product/service (e.g., standard/commodity product with available substitutes) as well as a relationship that they have with a different supplier who is providing an innovative product/service (e.g., customized/unique product with limited to no substitutes available). The buyer will be asked to provide contact information for each supplier relationship and then answer a series of questions regarding each relationship. The second questionnaire will be sent to the supplier contacts provided by the buying firm. The supplier will be asked to complete the survey with respect to the specific buying firm, and will be given the same series of relationship questions asked of the buying firm.

The questionnaires will be sent via email. The buying firm survey takes about 15 minutes to complete and the supplier firm survey takes about 10 minutes to complete. Participants can return the completed survey via email, fax or regular mail.

The results will compare responses across relationship management constructs, such as commitment, trust, cooperation, and information sharing, as well as performance and satisfaction constructs. Additionally, the research will assess similarities and differences in perspectives on relationships by type (i.e., functional or innovative) and by position (i.e., buyer or supplier).

Participating firms will be provided with the results aggregated across all companies taking part in the research to preserve privacy in publications. Results are expected to yield insights into successful and high performing relationships. Key outputs of the research will examine the following:

- Relationship structure assessments and comparisons;
- Best practices from both a buying and supplying firm perspective; and
- Factors that lead to greater satisfaction and relationship performance.

For further information or to seek participation, please contact Ken Boyer at 517-432-6437 (boyerk@bus.msu.edu) or Judy Whipple at 517-432-6407 (whipple@bus.msu.edu).