



COVID-19 Health Care Supply Chain Solutions

Volunteer Efforts to Source Critical COVID-19 Supplies

A small community hospital in Connecticut with few resources had to move quickly, like all providers, to obtain needed PPE and medical supplies to combat the COVID-19 pandemic. With little automation and even less human capital, the organization took matters to the community and created a grassroots volunteer effort to locate and obtain the needed supplies.

The organization developed a quick and effective process to identify legitimate supply sources using their own friends and family. The organization's system director of supply chain emailed close friends and family asking them to contact second and third tier suppliers to determine the amount of critical supplies they currently had in-stock (email template on page 3).

Volunteers contacted those on a list of current and potential second tier suppliers developed by the supply chain department using various sources such as ECRI, the state various entity's vetted suppliers, hospital associations lists, and referrals. This shared document also included the list of needed supplies and a page to document the supply chain department's follow-up and product delivery outcomes.

The information below outlines the shared spreadsheet and how it is used by volunteers and the supply chain department.

Product Need and Information

Volunteers accessed a shared Google sheet to contact suppliers and document conversations and outcomes. The document included three sections outlined below:

1. Tab 1:
 - a. List of vetted suppliers (includes organization's account number (if applicable))
 - b. Types of products of each supplier
 - c. Contact information
2. Tab 2:
 - a. List of needed supplies (ones that are running low or are scarce)
 - b. Links to manufacturers' product page, general price ranges, and purchase UOM to help identify potential price gouging
3. Tab 3:
 - a. Volunteer enters available items (also emailed Procurement inbox)
 - b. Organization completes disposition columns (PO placed, order date, expected delivery date, notes, etc.)
 - c. This list is used to fill the gap between the distributor monthly allocated quantity and the quantity identified as required by the organization's Covid-19 leadership team

Supply Chain Considerations For Volunteer Sourcing Development

1. Only allow volunteers that you know and trust
 - a. Access to confidential details like account numbers
 - b. Don't create any appearance of agency
 - c. Volunteers do not make commitments on behalf of the organization
2. Assign volunteers to specific vendors to avoid duplication of calls
3. Ask volunteers to commit to a certain number of calls per day
4. Volunteers look for red flags when contacting potential sources:
 - a. Large minimum orders
 - b. Payment up front
 - c. No guaranteed delivery dates

Further reading

[Too Good To Be True? How To Spot a Possible Supplier Scam During The COVID-19 Crisis. Intalere. 4/21/20](#)

[Fake protective equipment sold to hospital at center of coronavirus crisis in N.J. nj.com. 4/21/20](#)
[Counterfeit Respirators / Misrepresentation of NIOSH-Approval. CDC. 4/21/20](#)

Grassroots Sourcing Email Template

Dear XX,

Thank you very much for your offer to help us find supplies during this difficult time. The best way you could help us is to reach out to smaller health care vendors that may have products in spurts. We don't have the manpower to do it ourselves, but these types of spot buys are the only way we can bridge the gap between what our main suppliers can get us and what we need each month.

I have attached a list of those secondary suppliers, and a "hot" list of items that we are currently in short supply of. I also included the purchase UOM, typical price, and links to each product so you can get an idea of what it is. Both the list of suppliers and supplies are fluid.

If you could identify which suppliers you can commit to calling each day by entering your name in the "Owner" column, then start to contact the suppliers to see if they have any of our hotlist items daily, or at an iteration you determine is best after initially making contact. If one of these suppliers has what we're looking for, please shoot an email to us via our shared inbox - (please cc me as well).

Some red flags to look out for when suppliers require them: sourced directly from China without an established medical supply vendor in the US, requiring upfront payment, wire transfers or credit card payment, and large minimum order quantity. Below are a few links on counterfeits and scams so you'll have an idea of what we're culling through.

Thanks again for your help, we'll take it as long as you're able. The Supply Chain team is cc'd on this email, and their names and phone numbers are below.