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2026 SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT RESOURCE GUIDE
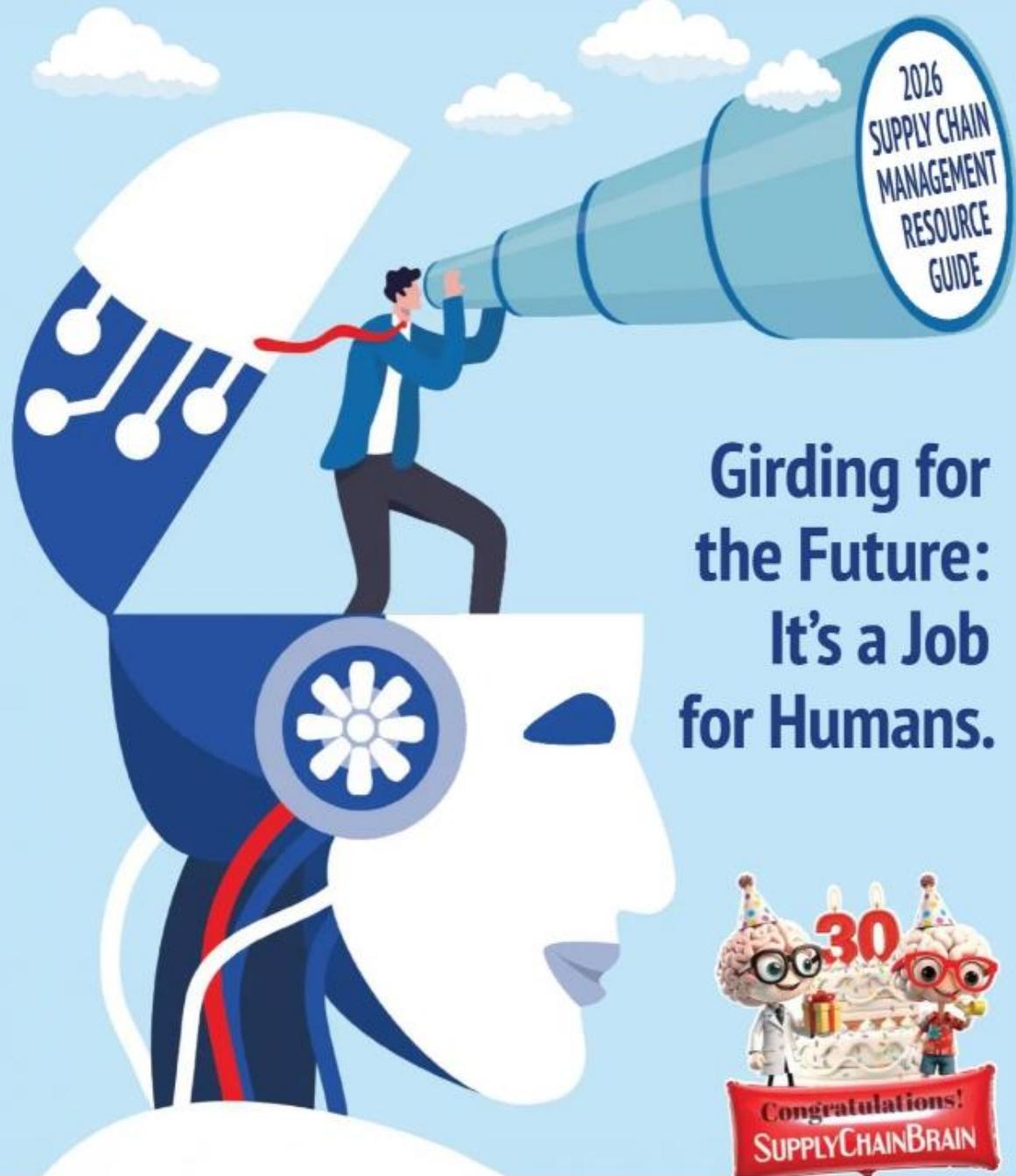
Girding for the Future: It's a Job for Humans.

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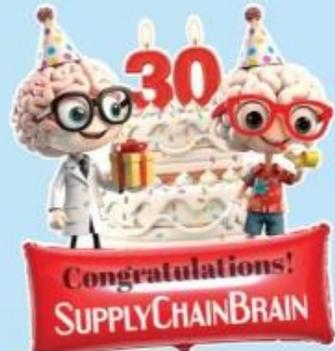
Will AI Eliminate the Need to Teach SCM to Students and Supply Chain Professionals?

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Analyst Insight: Students need to embrace artificial intelligence, and become facile with AI tools so that they can use them effectively in their future professional lives. To do so, however, one must have a thorough understanding of the supply chain management discipline. This is true for supply chain professionals also. The availability of tools such as generative AI doesn't obviate that need.

Generative AI has rapidly become a dominant topic of discussion throughout industry, and among supply chain professionals. The technology is on a path of rapid adoption, with multiple use cases reported in different industries. Which demands the question: Why do we still need to teach the fundamentals of supply chain management and analytics to students, and why do we need supply chain professionals who have a deep understanding of the discipline? Can't any bright professional with limited supply chain knowledge successfully use AI to guide their management of supply chain functions?

The short answer is no. While generative and other forms of AI have demonstrated extraordinary promise, AI is just another decision-support tool that requires supply chain understanding, experience and expertise to harness it for productive purposes. As is the case with any decision-support tool, effective supply chain management requires individuals who can intuitively understand and assess a supply chain problem or need, determine the appropriate decision variables that must be considered, develop the appropriate data, and evaluate the outputs of their management decision-support systems (DSS).

An important first step of evaluating the output of a DSS is to assess the validity and practicality of a recommended action or analytic solution. This requires that a supply chain professional possess the knowledge and understanding of SCM fundamentals, principles and practices. Without this skill set, one can't assess the validity and practicality of an AI-recommended action or solution. For example, is there a basic flaw or gap in the logic or premise underlying the AI generated answer? Did the AI tool have a hallucination, or not consider all appropriate variables?

To make effective use of modern AI tools, the supply chain professional must be facile in working with AI tools, just as a user of Excel must develop expertise in order to use that tool productively. This necessitates that the user possess the knowledge base to frame a problem or question, and understand the variables that affect the solution. And it requires a deep understanding of the subject matter in question.

Resource Link:
www.rider.edu

Outlook: The implementation of generative and other AI tools will advance rapidly. The capabilities of readily available AI tools to provide valuable analytic and managerial support, and to execute transactional decisions, will advance steadily in the coming years. However, this will not replace the need to have well-trained supply chain professionals to manage operations. The road to becoming a seasoned, productive supply chain professional will continue to start with academic training in the field, and many years of on-the-job training.