

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

ScholarWorks@UARK

---

Supply Chain Management Undergraduate  
Honors Theses

Supply Chain Management

---

5-2023

## Supply Chain Management Thesis Internship – [The Clorox Company]

Tara Colligan

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/scmtuht>



Part of the [Business Analytics Commons](#), and the [Operations and Supply Chain Management Commons](#)

---

### Citation

Colligan, T. (2023). Supply Chain Management Thesis Internship – [The Clorox Company]. *Supply Chain Management Undergraduate Honors Theses* Retrieved from <https://scholarworks.uark.edu/scmtuht/32>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Supply Chain Management at ScholarWorks@UARK. It has been accepted for inclusion in Supply Chain Management Undergraduate Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UARK. For more information, please contact [scholar@uark.edu](mailto:scholar@uark.edu).

**Supply Chain Management Thesis Internship – [*The Clorox Company*]**

**By:**

**[*Tara Shea Colligan*]**

**Advisor: [*Stephanie Thomas*]**

**An Honors Thesis for the degree Bachelor of Science in Business Administration in  
Supply Chain Management.**

**Sam M. Walton College of Business  
University of Arkansas  
Fayetteville, Arkansas**

**[May 2023]**

## **Table of Contents**

Introduction and Company Background	Page 3
Personal Learning Objectives	Page 4
Project/Assignments/Responsibilities Details	Page 6
Analysis/Implications for the Company	Page 7
Conclusion and Personal Evaluation	Page 9

## Thesis Outline

### **Introduction and Company Background:**

#### ***Introduction***

Consumer Packaged Goods (CPG) play an essential part in our lives. There are countless stock keeping units that have unique codes internally at a company as well externally for their customers. These companies sell their product into large retailers and manage their supply chain network for multiple brands in their portfolios. I had the opportunity to not only learn how a global CPG company operates their supply chain every day, but to work on the supply chain for the largest customer account. Last summer, I was a Product Supply Operations intern with The Clorox Company in Bentonville, Arkansas. My thesis will detail my internship experience and key learnings.

#### ***Company Background***

Clorox has been a household name since 1913. The original Clorox product was bleach, but now with an expanding portfolio, it is more widely known. Clorox has diversified itself and owns the brands Hidden Valley Ranch, Brita, Burt's Bees, Fresh Step, Scoop Away, Glad, KC Masterpiece, Liquid Plumb, and Kingsford. People associate the Clorox name with cleanliness and safety. This was evident with The Clorox Company producing disinfecting wipes, cleaners and sprays during the height of the COVID pandemic. The Clorox Company is headquartered in Oakland, California. The corporate jobs operate mainly out of Oakland, California and Alpharetta, Georgia. The divisions are split so that Sales resides in California and Supply Chain is in Georgia. There are many plants, DCs, and remote workers scattered across the nation, and even across the globe. Clorox breaks its customers into groups, the most important being Leading Edge Retailers or LREs. Regional offices exist around these LRE headquarters, which is why my Product Supply Operations internship took place in Bentonville, Arkansas to accommodate Walmart.

#### ***Company Culture***

This internship was an in-person experience two years after the global COVID pandemic hit. Clorox is always aiming at building better people. I felt this to be true as an intern working in a smaller office. As an intern, I filled out the same goal forms as my bosses. I always felt my learning was the primary focus for my assignments. The Clorox Company is an inclusive, fast paced environment in every office. I witnessed this firsthand in my home office in Bentonville, Arkansas, working for the Walmart account. I was able to see similarities when I visited headquarters in Oakland, California. Here, interns were able to listen to executives and directors' stories while participating in team building exercises. We also heard from employee resource groups (ERGs) and the importance of bringing your whole self to work.

## Personal Learning Objectives

This thesis summarizes my learning objectives for my internship. These objectives were:

- Exposure to a business-to-business supply chain
- Personal and professional growth through networking
- Build software skills such as Excel use, Retail Link, Power BI, SAP

### *Exposure to a business-to-business supply chain*

As a consumer, I am familiar with a business to consumer supply chain. This is something I interact with each day when I go to the grocery store. My internship was an experience to see something new with businesses selling to other businesses – a business to business supply chain. Clorox sells into numerous retailers, and each relationship is different. Some Clorox customers are viewed as very strategic and always get their full product orders. Others are not viewed as strategic and will be put on allocation first. Allocation means there is a set amount of goods, in this case finished product, that is assigned to a particular customer. I was lucky to work with the team that manages the largest customer account, Walmart. This means Walmart is viewed as strategic and finished product is reserved for them, rather than receiving a smaller, allocated, amount. The Customer Operations Managers or COMs are responsible for communicating to Walmart's replenishment managers (RM) for one of the 6 brands Clorox owns. One challenge I witnessed firsthand during the internship was Brita pitchers not arriving on time for a back to college display. Walmart has modular resets during the season, and for Brita, back to college was their most important one. Brita is produced in The Dominican Republic and shipped to New York City, then put on rail to our Chicago Regional Distribution Center (RDC). Brita had been held up in customs, something I learned about in my transportation class, but was able to witness in real life. If Clorox was not agile with their supply chain, these items would never be at Walmart on time. Instead of using rail when shipped into New York City, the freight was shipped less than truckload (LTL) to RDC to be picked up by Walmart trucks. Yes, this costs more, but it would've been a larger fine to show up not on time. A business to consumer supply chain might not have as much stress about this, but when you sell into another business, the timing must be perfect. This supply chain view is different from what is taught in classes where the focus is on a singular company's holistic supply chain to a consumer. This view helped me understand how the business operates. I learned a lot about other functions and what they do as well as the reasoning behind it. For example, I interacted with the research and design team within Clorox to see if Hidden Valley Ranch could get a label on more than one side of the case. I was able to see the end to end of our internal supply chain and then watch the product enter a whole new supply chain when sold to Walmart. Having a tangible product that I use was a cool way to see that my work made a difference. I really enjoyed having Walmart as a client. My boss took me on store walks to Walmart and into inventory rooms to see how hectic sorting can be. Overall, I really enjoyed the relationship with the client aspect of the business-to-business supply chain.

### *Personal and Professional Growth*

With the pandemic happening during my undergraduate career, I found it tough to build the soft skills needed for a business setting. Through this internship, I was able to understand office dynamics and learn how to communicate to superiors. I feel confident that I have grown personally because I was surrounded by so many successful people. Even the small things like learning how to use an Outlook calendar and send a professional email were huge skills I was able to build throughout the summer and continue to use. Soft skills are emphasized in school through lots of presentations and group projects. I found this helpful for giving presentations and working with different functions in my internship. Some skills require practice, and I found working for Clorox helped me practice in the best way. This aided in my professional growth. I was always being introduced and connected to people which requires relational skills. I would not have the LinkedIn connections nor personal connections I have now without the help of this internship. These kinds of skills are something I never think to practice but being exposed to the office environment really helped build my personal and professional skills.

### *Building Software Skills*

Something I wanted to learn and understand better was the software used by large companies. Clorox was able to provide training for interns that taught us valuable skills for doing the job as well as benefiting our learning. Early on, interns were able to sign up for a beginner's class using Power BI (PBI). This laid the groundwork that made later work much easier. I was able to build dashboards, but the real benefit for me was in being able to read further into the data others reported on. In PBI, there are drill down options and filters that help narrow down the data. The most helpful feature is an export button that lets you take the data to Excel. Clorox uses Excel the most every day for work. PBI was close behind to view reports and automate refreshes. Excel is really where I saw my skills grow. I was familiar with lots of formulas through projects at school but wasn't confident. At the beginning of the internship, I would ask my boss to check my formulas right after I did them, but at the end I trusted myself to know they were right. Most notably I use the VLOOKUP function with my work whereas I saw it typed out in classes. I am able to perform my academic tasks within Excel with ease and confidence now. SAP is a program Clorox uses to internally track location and inventory of stock. I was briefly exposed to this program. Getting access to it was very difficult, but it provided everything someone would need. I used this program mostly to check if stock was in transit from an RDC to a Walmart store, and when inventory would run low in RDCs. The final software I regularly used in this internship was Walmart's supplier portal, Retail Link. This is a web application that I had to be granted access to. It allowed me to perform my main internship duties and showed how well Walmart viewed Clorox's performance.

## **Project/Assignments/Responsibility Details**

Over the course of this internship, I had various tasks regarding cost savings in the form of fines coming from Walmart. The Clorox Company has lots of customers, and each has specific rules for suppliers. I focused on the largest number of fines coming from the largest customer, Walmart. Walmart has specific fines that come in two categories - supplier quality excellence program (SQEP) and on time in full (OTIF). SQEP includes damaged goods during transport, incorrect labeling, and other fines from the quality of the goods. These SQEP fines can be charged at the PO (purchase order), case level, pallet level, and load level. OTIF is defined as being "On Time In Full" for delivery meaning the shipment is complete based on what Walmart ordered and is delivered on time. During the time I was there, Clorox's manufacturing of sanitizing wipes was recovering from COVID. Because of high demand and unpredictable circumstances, Walmart granted Clorox a break from OTIF fines for a period of time. This meant my work was focused on lowering SQEP fines. I learned the rules and searched through Walmart's portal Retail Link that showed images of the product receiving the fine. My main project dealt with Advanced Shipment Notice (ASN) fines that are charged to the entire Purchase Order. An ASN fine means the shipping notice that the Clorox goods are on the way was not sent to Walmart, but the truck arrived with Clorox goods anyway. The question to answer was why would there be an issue that the entire truck was charged a fine? I was tasked with finding which regional distribution center (RDC) these ASN fines were coming from internally. Clorox has 7 RDCs that provide product to over 4,000 Walmart stores with shipments happening every day. Since Clorox consolidates shipments, these fines were coming from all business units (BUs). To accomplish this, I had to sort through mass amounts of historical data from the Walmart portal Retail Link and use Excel to organize and create value. I needed to split up the data to see which RDC was having ASN problems and how often. I needed to also see if there was a pattern on days of the week these fines were happening. The data wasn't easily available, or in one place. One export from PBI would not include the shipment number so I had to pull in another export that would include it. The use of excel pivot tables and formulas like VLOOKUP was very helpful with this. An unexpected task this project provided was communicating with different divisions. Before I started, I thought this would be an easy fix that an email could resolve. This was far from reality, and I learned how to communicate with superiors who reside in different functions and geographic locations. I found that most everyone I reached out to was more than willing to help an intern better understand a process and answer questions. This really helped me understand what other functions in the company do, and how they all affect each other. I set up meetings and described the problem to people in transportation, sourcing, and DC operations.

## **Analysis/Implications for the Company** ***Advanced Shipment Notice (ASN) Project***

### *Business Problem*

The company was facing many fines from Walmart concerning supplier quality excellence. This meant we were not following the policy set by Walmart and were getting fined for a variety of reasons. Some were very straightforward, the product was damaged, or the case did not have the appropriate number of labels. My task was to address why there were charges for the entire order with the title “ASN not downloaded”. This information came from Walmart’s internal portal, Retail Link and was a cost of \$25 per PO.

### *Potential Value*

The value of fixing the ASN fines is huge to The Clorox Company. This would be benefitting the Walmart account and in turn, the whole company through:

- I. Better understanding of fines
- II. Streamlined communication for future problems
- III. \$25 savings per PO
- IV. \$1 million in savings in annual fines

From this project, many Clorox workers, including myself, better understood how the fines at Walmart work. When I started, the SQEP fine project was new for Walmart suppliers. Lots of my superiors saw the fines rolling in but didn’t even know what they meant. Now, they can investigate fines further to see if there is a possibility to improve internally. A big issue I saw happen was making a case for fixing the fine. Another SQEP cost savings project that was in the works when I left was adding a label to more than one side of a case. If Clorox must make a big investment into adding another label machine, the annual savings must be worth the investment. I had to make sure the fines I chose to show my boss were attainable. I saw a presentation about adding a label maker to the Hidden Valley Ranch cases to reduce fines, but executives said the time and money to stop production in order to add it in were too great to justify the savings from fines.

This project brought better communication to other functions for my team. At the beginning of the summer, I would ask who I can go to for the data I needed. No one really knew the answer and I found myself going to 3 different people before I found what I needed. When I had to talk to transportation, they followed up with my team to see if they could help and made connections that help them today. The same is true with DC Operations. I was able to talk to the manager of the RDC because someone on my team vaguely knew him, and now my team includes him on emails about supply issues. This project and the questions that came from it really helped my bosses to reach out and make connections with other functions they might not have done on their own.

The savings brought to Clorox from this were very beneficial. This was a real cost savings project that my boss could show to their boss to implement immediately. The \$25 per load might not sound significant, but when nearly 40,000 loads with this error are shipped a year, it adds up.



Annually, Clorox could be saving close to \$1 million solely from this defect type of SQEP fines. This is a very easy fix since Clorox doesn't have to make a big investment and could be happening for other LREs. The process could be automated and have no costs associated or could result in a new hire and have costs of a salary. Since Walmart is the biggest customer for Clorox, it is also the largest contributor of fines for the company. When there is a cost savings for Walmart, it makes a big impact on the rest of the company's bottom line.

## Conclusion and Personal Evaluation

My overall experience from my internship with The Clorox Company was great. I learned so much about how a global business runs and saw how processes I learned about in school operate. I didn't realize how important working for the largest retailer in the world really was until after the fact. I fulfilled my desire of wanting exposure to a business-to-business supply chain. Having the Walmart account on my resume has really benefitted me when it came to future offers. People wanted to see I had experience with Walmart terms like OTIF, SQEP, and that I had experience using Retail Link. I feel way more valuable, especially in the Northwest Arkansas area since so many companies have offices near Walmart headquarters.

The Clorox Company helped me to build lots of software skills using Power BI, Excel, SAP, and Retail Link. These are skills I am able to put on my resume and bring up in interviews. I feel very competent talking to future employers about my expertise in these programs because I can walk them through my project steps with each program. I've done projects in school using Excel and even Power BI, but I think this internship helped me truly learn the reasoning behind those decisions. It really helped me to have meaningful data to use that directly helped other people make decisions. After being exposed to a work environment compared to school, I think classes could put more emphasis on Power BI and Excel. Since this is the Sam M. Walton College of Business, I think having a class that explains Retail Link and other new Walmart programs like Luminare would give students a leg up. I also was able to increase my soft skills and build a network I know I can rely on in the future. Given that, I also think college has prepared me for professional workspaces. Group projects are utilized in almost every class I have taken, which teaches students how to work with other people. I didn't have to delegate work in my internship, but I did have to learn to ask and explain my problem to others and manage my time on projects. Presentations from class really aided me in my presentations throughout the internship. I felt prepared to speak in a professional manner and received feedback about doing well on this. The learning for me came through deciding what information is important. In school, there is a rubric that tells you exactly what to put on a slide, but in an internship that is not the case. I eventually figured out how to cater my slides to who I was presenting to, but this was a process. It taught me how to give background and clearly state what the problem, solution, and implications are and is something I use in school now. I've built a strong network from working at The Clorox Company that has helped me advance my career already.

When it came to my project, I was able to identify that the automated weekend shipments were not being approved manually until the following Monday. Clorox was able to automate this process, but it was not a quick fix. One of the downfalls of working in a corporate environment is the chain of command. Though the problem had been defined and solution in place, the decision could not be made until it reached the right people. A helpful part of this internship for professional and personal reasons was being assigned a mentor. My mentor helped me connect my seemingly simple tasks to her work and made me feel valued. She helped me fill out a five-year career map that I continue to work on. She has been a great mentor and connection that I've kept up with even past the internship experience. Clorox surprised me with the information transparency they gave to interns. I felt very respected when I asked questions and was asked my opinion on multiple occasions. When problems arose, my boss walked me through how they handled them, and why they happened. This was where I was able to see the importance of networking. When my boss needed to check on the status of a product, they would call on their

friends in other functions to help get information. I learned I need to stay in touch with my peers who end up in different functions, or even companies because everyone needs help now and then.

I wouldn't be at the Excel and Power BI skill level I am without this internship. I also wouldn't have half of my connections or be exposed to a business-to-business supply chain. Overall, I feel I am a better student because of the skills I gained from this internship. My education at The University of Arkansas has been integral in preparing me for my internship. The PSO internship at The Clorox Company taught me how to connect everything I have learned in school. I feel very prepared for the future and able to grow from my experiences at the Sam M. Walton College of Business and The Clorox Company.

## **Addendum**

### **Week 1 Summary:**

The first week has been such a learning experience. The corporate onboarding with all of the interns was not as effective as it could have been and then having no one to ask questions to was difficult (the people in my office didn't know what we were referring to and we didn't have "acceptable" credentials for the first few days). Slowly more acronyms are making sense. We were introduced to what our projects would be at a high level. I am working on resolving fines on retail link and creating a DC report as well as a truck optimization dashboard through power BI. We were able to sit in on a Walmart buyer meeting and many other team meetings internally. It's so interesting to sit in on so many meetings and really understand all the moving parts of a large company. I was able to sit in on or have 8 meetings (green highlights) as an intern the first week. My boss is very accommodating and ensures we have something to do, even if it's just watching her work and her daily tasks. She gave us a quick look at retail link (Walmart) and some of the helpful apps we would use like FIXit (fines), CPFR (Collaborative planning forecasting and replenishment), OTIF (on time in full), and NOVA (Walmart ordering).

## Week 2 Summary:

Going out to California was a great experience to meet people. The actual work and learning could've been done at any office. I was surprised how transparent the company was with inclusion and diversity goals and questions. I learned a lot of personal skills from the trip and made many connections with other interns on LinkedIn. I also found from going in the office, a skill I feel the SCM department or more so my ISYS class could touch on more would be using power BI. We only got a brief tutorial but will have a more in depth one later.

### Week 3 Summary:

Another short week, no work on Monday, but I felt I got to see a lot. It is almost the end of the FY (June 30th) so everyone is going crazy. I am still impressed with how much transparency the company gives the interns. I find my boss lets me sit in on whatever she is doing which helps me understand the work when I am then asked to do something minor. I did pull a report with my fellow intern through retail link on the OTIF & SQEP dashboard to find fine charges invoiced and projected. I am also in the process of getting access to SAP which is just lengthy. I have access to all the slippage, case fill rate, and other dashboards on PowerBI, but don't really know what to do with them yet. Another helpful meeting was with Natalie Lenz, where we worked on a career map. This was a high-level outline of where we want to be and what positions we would ultimately want to hold in Clorox. We'll hopefully meet again and update the map throughout our time of learning more about the company. We were ultimately introduced to our projects but haven't worked in detail on them yet. I think after the year ends there will be more time and less stress.

#### Week 4 Summary:

Had a beneficial one on one meeting with my mentor and sat in on lots of meetings to fix a Brita Wm issue. Got to see a team change their transportation ideas to expedite a feature for Walmart. Brita Back to college is a mess and has to change normal paths to get it to MODs in time. I understand the pathways of this item from the Dominican Republic to NY to Chicago to the warehouse to the DCs. I also was tasked to pull a report of invoiced and projected charges from retail link for on time in full and supplier quality excellence program to create a dashboard on power bi for my boss to quickly address cost saving measures. This is in the works and I will get to see it end to end. I was able to get an in depth tour of the Glad plant in Rogers, lots of trash bags and proprietary information since there is a joint venture with P&G. I also was able to sit in on a JB Hunt transportation meeting and listen to issues being resolved regarding truck drivers who caused problems.

## Week 5 Summary:

Week of 4<sup>th</sup> of July, so a pretty easy-going week. I learned how to pull a report on Decision Support through Retail Link and started looking in depth on SQEP fines. Sorting fines by pallet, case, PO, and load. An upcoming issue is that the entire PO is receiving fines for not sending an ASN to Walmart. Found out the ASN fines are coming from 7S, our largest RDC and specifically on the weekends. Started a Power BI beginners class hosted by an internal Clorox worker. Brita is now dealing with customs coming from DR to USA. Will miss first wave of back to school for Walmart but will make second wave. This is not good and WM might not give us the main pallet in the store next year.



#### Week 6 Summary:

I was able to sit in on a pricing meeting where Clorox raised prices for Walmart in Litter and Ranch. WM took the pricing, but very reluctant. Found out Brita had been sitting in a shipping container for 75 days waiting for customs to get started, but no one knew it was there and is now getting started too late. Met with regional transportation manager to understand why Advanced shipment notice fines would be coming through on PO level. He sent me to the DC ops planner for the largest RDC (Atlanta) since that issue would come from this.

### Week 7 Summary:

Got to visit the Walmart Home Office and sit in on a buyer meeting for bath, toilet, drain. I'm making lots of connections in my own company as well as Walmart. I am manually pulling the OTIF reports from Retail Link as excel sheets and saving them in a shared drive to be uploaded to PBI. I set up a meeting with the DC ops manager of 7S to understand more about ASN processes and if the fines are something we can fix. We had a field day which was so fun and a great networking opportunity for the interns.

## Week 8 Summary:

I'm finding in a large corporation there's confusion in chain of command. You know what info you need but not who has the info or who to go to. It feels like a very well-rounded internship, I experience so many meetings that help me better understand the whole business and communication. I do tasks that build my hard skills like using SAP, Excel, Retail link (SQEP, OTIF, OMS). I also learn how to think in a GM mindset by asking questions like: How will this affect the whole business, Is it feasible before we go to the boss to ask? There is a unique perspective working with Walmart. I learn WM specific tricks and must adjust to their calendar and needs. I've got to meet with a lot of directors and execs who come into the office on a monthly or quarterly basis. It's very nice they take the time to eat lunch with the interns and let us ask questions. My ASN project is going a little above my head because now the EDI (electronic data interchange) is getting involved. They say ASN is an automated process that gets started by a push of a button and no one is coming in on the weekends to start this process.

## Week 9 Summary:

Very open conversations with managers and with 1:1s. Gina helped me understand how the internal changes are changing our team and went over pay structure. Very easy to approach anyone and be invited to meeting – the Walmart buyer we previously met invited us back to see a follow up meeting. I feel my work is valued – I am pulling daily reports to hand off, and helping where I can with ad hoc projects. My ASN project is getting worked through, but might not be finished by next week so I get to “train” another member of the team on it in case it has to be handed off. I finished the PBI class which laid a lot of ground work of setting up a report. I would like to use it with real data so it feels like it has meaning behind it.

### Week 10 Summary:

Final week of the internship. I feel like I have made great connections with my colleagues and am sad to go. I did receive an offer to work indefinitely throughout the school year. I can confirm the ASN issue was from the automatic sending during the work week and didn't have anyone to simply approve the weekend send outs until Monday. The implications of this are annual savings up to 4 million. SQEP is a fairly new measurement and WM hadn't even been checking every shipment, so our fines would have only gotten bigger.

## References

*Timeline*. The Clorox Company. (2023, January 25). Retrieved March 5, 2023, from <https://www.thecloroxcompany.com/company/our-story/timeline/>