

A japanese company

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Ulstar Plc is a Japanese company aiming to create a new concept in mobile computing which it expects to sell in market worldwide. The product, which is a Personal System Unit (PSU), will be about the same size as a PDA and effectively offer the processing power of a Personal Computer powerful enough for day-to-day uses; with the benefit of voice recognition hence no keyboard is needed.

By virtue of its fourth generation communication chip, the product will perform the normal communication of a mobile video phone along with satellite controlled global positioning information giving it the ability to tell the user his/her exact position and by subscription to proprietary mapping software, can give direction to local destinations. The product is expected to cost about 1100.00 in UK retail market due to its similarity to high-end laptop computer. This price is however likely to fall as higher volume sales are achieved.

The objective of the report is to put in place a number of operational issues ranging from evaluation of supply chain, principal planning and communication issues, logistics, distribution, quality assessment and management, and also the handling of end-users support competently in whatever market they happen to reside in. The supply chain will be involved with the sourcing/procurement of materials from various suppliers for use at the two assembly plants in ordered or unordered manner. The procured materials are then transformed into finished products which are to be distributed for use by end-consumers (Slack et al, 2004).

See Appendix 1 for illustration the supply chain. There are various tiers involved this chain - the materials to be used at the two Assembly Plants are sourced from first-tier suppliers from different countries with the possibilities of them to have sourced some of the materials from second-tier suppliers (Wikipedia, 2006a).

The customer side is also multi-tier of possibly up to three, with products moving from retailers' distributing outlet through to retailers and onward to the end-users.

There are instances when the product can be procured directly by the end-users from the manufacturer's headquarters or from the distributing outlets. (See Appendix 1 for illustration). The planning process, i. e. the formulation of what is intended to happen at some time in the future, has to be coordinated from the headquarters in Japan. This process involves making a programme of action to achieve a set of objectives. (Huczynski et al, 2001). After the planning stages have been executed, operations activities must be closely controlled to be able to cope with results and deflection from original plan. (Slack et al, 2004).

This is the management of inbound materials and outgoing product/ finished goods which involve activities such as ordering of materials, production scheduling, inventory control, product allocation and transportation, end-user support, etc. In order to achieve all these effectively, adequate measures have to be put in place and the use of Supply Chain Management Tool administered at the company's headquarters in Japan will be an ideal way out as it will have accurate information. This tool is best launched as an

extranet, i. e. a collaborative network that uses internet technology to link businesses with their suppliers and customers. Read about Carson Container company

The extranet will serve as a form of electronic catalogue/ database where every aspect of running the supply chain from ordering of materials, invoicing, arrangement of delivery time, return of products, tracking and payment are made - it also gives an easier indication of stock level. The working pattern of the extranet is attached in Appendix 2. The added benefits of the extranet include the use of uniform terminologies, avoidance of variances, under-charging, over-charging as well as other system and inventory errors that could have occurred at any level of the supply chain.