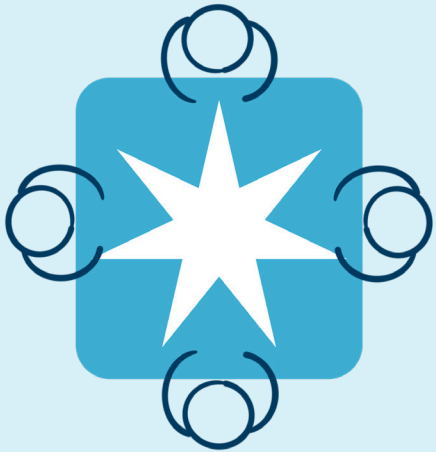
Integrated customer service

A workshop guide for aligned communication channels



Concept and design by Tesse Wolthaus
Designed for Maersk

Version May 2026

Great communication begins with connection

- Oprah Winfrey

Dear workshop host,

For companies serving customers, integrated customer service is crucial. By internally aligning the departments serving the customer, operational efficiency can be increased, because costs are reduced and customer satisfaction is increased. Communication is important within all companies, especially at Maersk, where extensive supply chains involve many stakeholders. Strong communication channels support an integrated customer service, making it important to develop and sustain these.

This workshop guide is written as part of my master's thesis, in which I analysed the foodgrade container supply chain. The research included an analysis of the full supply chain, its goals, and regulations, as well as the perspectives of both internal and external stakeholders involved.

The aim of this guide is to create integrated customer service within supply chains by alinging communication channels. Through the workshops, this internal alignment within Maersk is created, which leads to better customer service and improved communication with external stakeholders, such as the customer, depots, and terminals.

Have fun hosting the workshops and let it surprise you!

Tesse Wolthaus

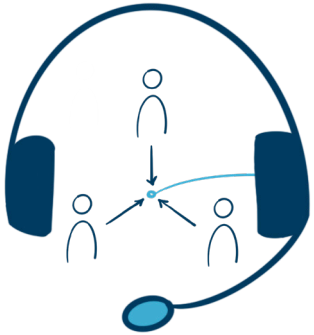
Table of contents

1. Purpose & scope	6
2. Context	10
3. Workshop overview	14
4. Deliverable	20
5. Example	24
6. Workshop preparation	28
7. Variances	36
8. Recommendations	40

1

Purpose & scope

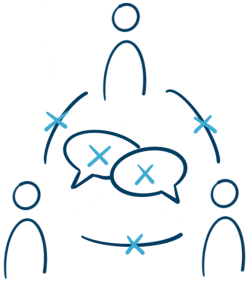
Why & when to use this guide



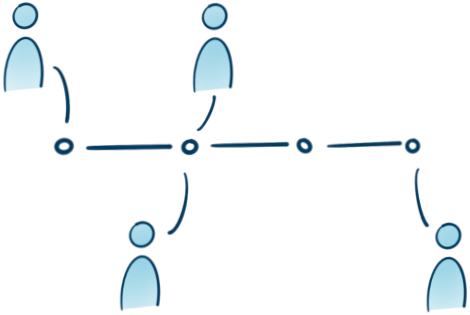
Integrated customer service

Purpose

The goal of this guide is to create integrated customer service by improving internal alignment across internal supply chains that serve customers with ongoing contracts with Maersk. Through stronger communication and collaboration resulting from this alignment, Maersk can strengthen its position in the competitive field. This is achieved by creating internal alignment, which provides clarity for external stakeholders and customers, leading to an overall improvement in customer satisfaction.



Miscommunication among stakeholders



Employees involved in the same supply chain

When to use

This workshop guide supports the creation of integrated customer service within Maersk. The workshops are especially useful when there are miscommunications internally, with customers, or with other stakeholders. In such cases, the workshops build clear communication channels. The supply chain addressed in these workshops should involve multiple internal departments to optimise internal communication and create alignment.

Target group

The workshops are designed to involve employees from different departments within Maersk who are collectively involved in the addressed process. Since customer contact is discussed, Sales and CX should always be involved. Furthermore, operational departments can be invited to the workshops, depending on their involvement.

2

Context

What is the problem and why is this relevant?



Unclear communication channels

Problem

Maersk manages many extensive supply chains, all involving multiple stakeholders. Across these stakeholders, communication channels become complicated, leading to fragmented customer service. However, clear communication supports employees in achieving the best results, which increases both operational efficiency and customer satisfaction. The problems obstructing this clarity should be addressed within the relevant processes. Therefore, these workshops are designed to improve the communication channels within these processes.



Increased customer satisfaction



Cost savings

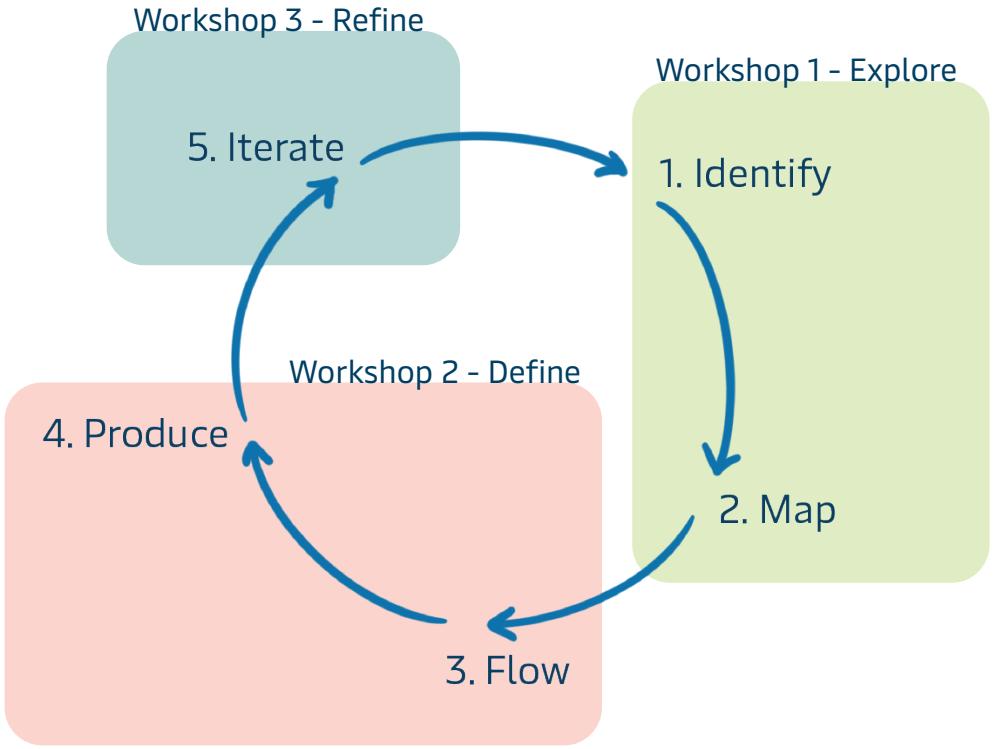
Relevance

The workshops can be applied to all supply chains that involve multiple internal departments and a customer. Integrated customer service leads to increased customer satisfaction, which strengthens Maersk's position in the competitive field. Additionally, clear communication channels enable quick problem detection and solving. This creates opportunities for cost savings.

3

Workshop overview

Connecting the workshops through theory and across sessions

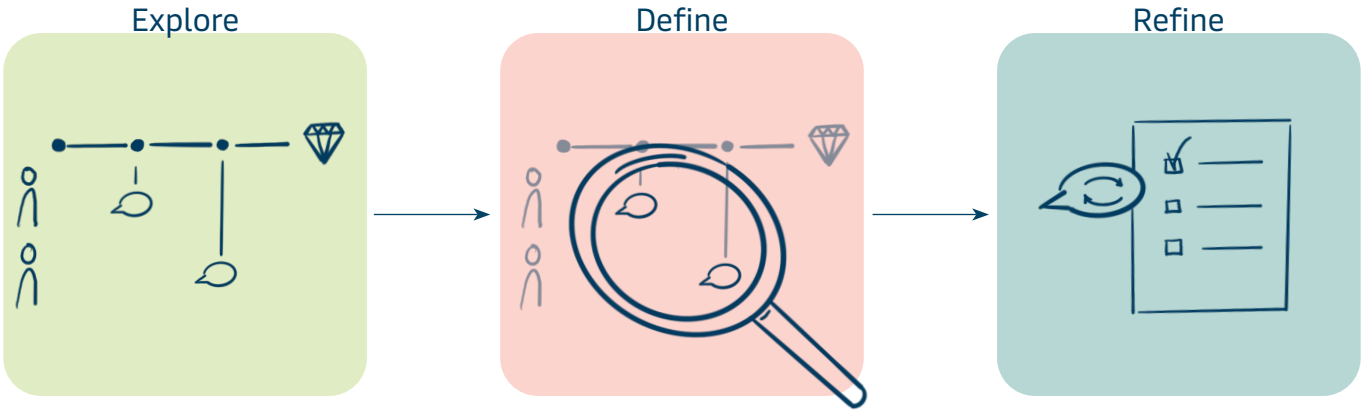

Workshop 3 - Refine
5. Iterate
Workshop 1 - Explore
1. Identify
2. Map
Workshop 2 - Define
4. Produce
3. Flow

Lean supply chain management

The workshops series is grounded by the theory of lean supply chain management. This theory focuses on enhancing efficiency across supply chains through the optimisation of specific streams, such as the information stream, by eliminating waste. This waste is anything that does not add value to the process and, ultimately, to the customer.

The approach consists of five steps: identify, map, flow, produce, and iterate. Identify means that the ultimate goal of the supply chain needs to be determined, followed by mapping the supply chain to create an overview of the process. Flow focuses on ensuring that the essential flows work well, and produce is about only producing when there is a customer demand. The last step, iterate, focuses on iterating on the process to continuously improve it.

The steps of lean supply chain management are applied to the workshops. Identify and map will be executed in Workshop 1, followed by flow and produce in Workshop 2. Workshop 3 will focus entirely on iteration.


Explore
Define
Refine

Connecting the workshops

The communication channels in the supply chain, chosen by you (p. 22), are addressed in the workshop sessions. The workshops build on one another, ultimately working towards an agreement among the different departments at the end of the third workshop.

Explore (1,5 hours)
During the first workshop, the goal of the workshop series is discussed with the participants. Furthermore, an overview of the supply chain is mapped by the participants to ensure a full understanding and a correct overview of the entire supply chain.

Define (1,5 hours)
The second workshop dives deeper into the communication channels in the supply chain. This workshop uses the process overview from the first workshop as input to analyse the underlying problems in these communication channels. By investigating the problems, solutions can be created for clear communication across the supply chain, thereby improving the way of working.

Refine (1,5 hours)
The purpose of the third workshop is to evaluate and iterate on the solutions created in the second workshop. Through this workshop, the communication channels can be optimised to ensure full implementation within the process. The workshop ends with an agreement between the different departments, in the form of a RACI-matrix, about the communication channels across the supply chain.

4

Deliverable

The output goal of the three workshops to evaluate over time

The RACI-matrix

The output goal of the workshops is an agreement between all departments in the form of a RACI-matrix. This RACI-matrix defines who is responsible for all activities in the supply chain. Additionally, the matrix includes the information that is exchanged at each activity and the contact points with the customer.

Through this matrix, the departments create a tangible agreement that can be referred to later on. Additionally, the matrix can be adjusted over time if activities in the supply chain change. Furthermore, it can also be used to easily inform new joiners about the supply chain.

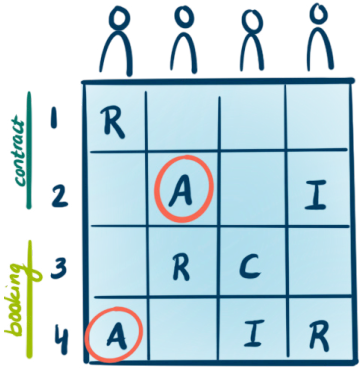
RACI is an abbreviation, which stands for the following:

Responsible
The department that executes the activity.

Accountable
The department that is ultimately responsible for the outcome.

Consulted
The department that provides input.

Informed
The department that has to be informed.



Evaluation

To RACI-matrix can also be used as an evaluation tool. This clearly shows the extent to which the activities are carried out as agreed. The evaluation cannot take place immediately, because it takes time for the participants to adjust their habits within this process. Therefore, it is important to take at least four weeks between the Refine workshop and the evaluation moment.

If needed, the RACI-matrix can be adjusted after the evaluation. This ensures that the RACI stays relevant, keeping the supply chain efficient.

5

Example

An example of a workshop series

This example shows how this workshop can be used and what output is achieved.

The FrieslandCampina supply chain

Within Maersk, the supply chain for FrieslandCampina has been a struggle for years. FrieslandCampina asks for foodgrade containers that have to meet very strict requirements. However, many containers were rejected, leading to frustrations for FrieslandCampina. The different departments involved all had contact with FrieslandCampina during these rejections and provided different information due to fragmented customer service. During the workshop, the supply chain and perspectives of all departments were discussed, leading to a shared understanding of the supply chain and its communication channels across the different departments.

RACI-matrix

During the workshops, the RACI-matrix on the next page was created as a result. All departments agreed on the matrix, making it implementable in the supply chain. Within the matrix, all activities, exchanged information, responsibilities, and customer contact points are registered. This matrix serves as a reference point for the employees involved and can be adjusted over time if needed.

		Activity	Information exchanged	Sales	CX	Equip-ment	EMR
Contract	1	Alignment call with E&E and sales prior to new tender release		R,A		C	C
	2	Sales proposes contract for tender to FC	• Quality container documents. Nominations 8 weeks prior effective tender date. • Volumes per pick-up location, per equipment type, per quality type needs to be received. • Make FC aware of the importance of having a forecast.	(R,A)			
	3	EMR & equipment provide input for contract to sales	• E&E gives feedback on what can/ cannot be delivered per equipment type and quality.	I	I	R,A	R
	4	Sales & FC sign contract	• Contract will be signed only on certain stipulation which need to rewritten for the contract. Not EMR related but very much interesting for next year.	(R,A)			
	5	Sales informs CX and E&E about nominations per origin and equipment type	• E&E needs to discuss supply plan, safety stocks, customer allocation (or not) and inform suppliers (depots) on what is expected from them.	R,A	I	I	I
	6	Sales files contract to enable bookings at CX	• Sales files allocation in CAT and requests customer allocations in ROCK from Equipment.	R,A	I	I	
Booking	7	FC books with CX through intermediary			(I)		
	8	Equipments receives booking from inland depot	• Number of equipment needed			I	
	9	Equipment handles stock management for booking	• Ensure forecast is up to date and target stock levels are set corrrectly			R,A	I
	10	Container cleaning and repairing					A
	11	Container transport to inland depot	• Number of containers needed for repositioning			A	
	12	Informing FC of container release			(R,A)		
	13	Inland depot checks container and transports it to FC					
	14	FC accepts or rejects container					
	15	Rejection: FC contacts CX	• Details about rejection: reason and pictures from inland depot		(I)		
	16	CX takes the discussion with FC and brings the case to Equipment & EMR			(R,A)	I	I
Rejection	17	Equipment gives return order for the rejected container	• Number of containers rejected and where they were released so EMR can pick them up with the right depot			R,A	
	18	EMR investigates rejection cause					R,A
	19	Inland depot transports new container to FC					
	20	Equipment files a Manual PO for inland depot for extra transports				R,A	

◯ = contact point with FrieslandCampina, R = Responsible, A = Accountable, C = Consulted, I = Informed

6

Workshop preparation

What to organise before hosting
the workshops



1. Understand the workshops and supply chain addressed

It is important that you know what will happen during the workshops. Prepare the workshops in a way that allows you to clearly understand what happens at each step by reading the workshop booklets and gathering the required materials.

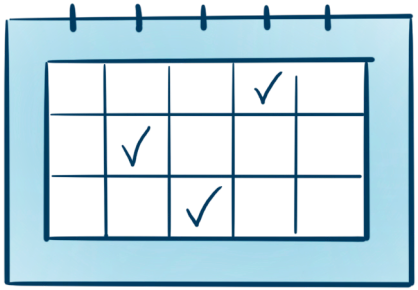
Besides understanding the workshops, it is important that you understand the process, so you can steer the participants (p.31) where needed during the workshops. Therefore, it is useful to already speak with participants from different departments before the explore workshop. Try to map the process and its information streams for yourself to better understand the discussions during the workshops.



2. Choose the process & participants

Problem
To start the workshop sessions, it is important to decide which supply chain needs to be addressed during the workshops. This has to be a process that needs improvement in its communication channels, involves a customer, and multiple internal departments.

Participants
During the workshops, only internal departments of Maersk will participate, so ensure that employees of these departments can all attend the workshops. Based on the chosen supply chain, you can invite the employees involved. Since there is a customer involved in the supply chain, both Sales and CX should be present. Depending on the chosen supply chain, other involved departments, such as Equipment or EMR also have to be invited.



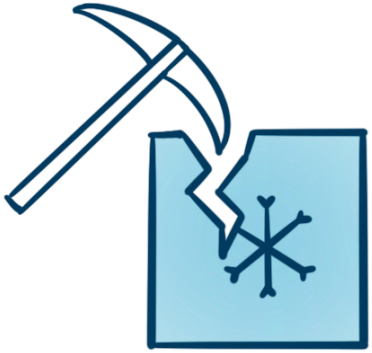
3. Plan the workshops

Make sure you plan all dates and locations of the workshops in advance and explain the goal of the workshops in the invitation email. This creates clarity for the participants, because they understand that there are different workshop rounds that build on one another. Additionally, you should also mention that the participants are expected to attend in person at the office. Creating clear communication channels through workshops can be achieved more easily when all participants are physically present instead of online.

Make sure that there is enough time between the workshops. Explore and Define can take place shortly after one another, but Refine should take place slightly later. If the third workshop is planned too early, evaluation is hard to execute.

I would recommend the following planning:

Explore:	Week 0
Define:	Week 1
Refine:	Week 4



4. Prepare icebreakers

Start the workshop with an icebreaker, because this improves the outcomes of the workshop. An icebreaker can loosen the atmosphere and helps the participants get into the right mindset.

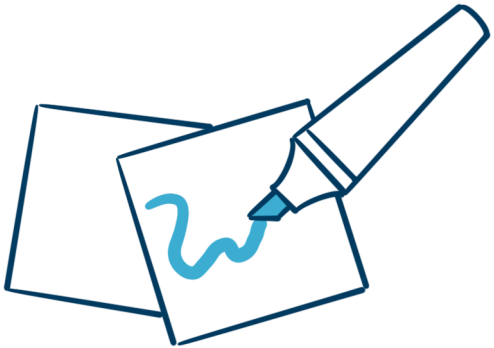
You can find many icebreakers online, for example on creactor.nl and sessionlab.com. There are many different icebreakers, so ensure that you use suitable ones for the participants. For example, icebreakers can participants help get to know each other, connect with one another, or enter a creative mindset. You can start searching once you know who will participate in the workshop. For each workshop, a different icebreaker can be used.



5. Prepare energisers

Depending on the length of the workshop, it can be useful to prepare energisers. When the participants get tired after some time or need to warm up for the next exercise, an energiser can be used. Like icebreakers, many energisers can be found online, for example on creactor.nl and sessionlab.com. Make sure you pick an energiser that suits the atmosphere and the workshop setting.

Since the workshops take more than one hour, it is useful to do a five-minute energiser. However, be strict with time, because the workshop should not take longer because of energisers.



6. Gather materials

Before each workshop, make sure you gather all the materials needed. This helps the workshop run smoothly and prevents unnecessary material breaks. Make sure you always have the folllowing materials:

- Post-its in different colours, bring many!
- Markers: at least one working marker per person. Use thick markers, because this encourages participants to write the core of their thought within the limited space of the post-it.
- Flipchart with large paper sheets (A0).
- Templates at the end of the workshop booklets
- A clock for time management.

7

Variations

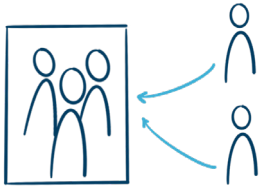
Possible varations for the workshops

This workshop guide is written to guide you while hosting workshops to improve communication in supply chains at Maersk. However, this booklet is only a guide, so you can adjust the workshops to best fit your supply chain and participants. This chapter will provide several options that you can vary.



Adjusting time limits

All parts of the workshops have recommended timing guideline. If you think this time is insufficient or unnecessary, the time limits can be adjusted. You, as the host, should decide this before or during the workshops. Make sure you plan enough time for the entire workshop if you adjust the time limits.



Including external stakeholders

Currently, the workshops are designed for internal use at Maersk. However, supply chains are extensive and involve external stakeholders. Therefore, it can be considered to invite these external stakeholders to participate in the Define and Refine workshops. In this case, the Explore workshop would be used to align internally, after which the supply chain can be aligned with external stakeholders.

When you invite the external stakeholders, ensure that they can attend both Define and Refine. Otherwise, the outcomes may not lead to a clear conclusion for the participants, leading to a lack of implementation.



Repeating Workshop 3 over time

After the Refine workshop, the participants will work in the process using the updated activities, information streams and responsibilities. If nothing changes over time, a quick follow-up can be scheduled to ensure all participants are still aligned.

However, when there are changes in the process, there may be a need to repeat the Refine workshop. Repeating this workshop is possible, when it is slightly adjusted. The tasks do not have to be evaluated again, but the RACI-matrix must be revised during this workshop.

8

Recommendations

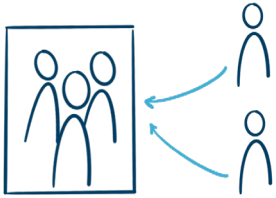
Next steps to increase impact

This workshop guide is part of my master's thesis, which is time-bound. Therefore, not all options could be investigated in depth. I would recommend further research into the use of these workshops, to increase their impact. The recommendations can be implemented in short-, mid- or long-term. The short-term recommendations can be initiated within six months, whereas the mid- and long-term projects will take at least one year to start.



Short-term: Workshops for customers

The first recommendation would be to develop a similar workshop session or series that can be held with the customer involved in the supply chain. Through a workshop or a series of workshops with the customer, expectations can be set, thereby ensuring improved alignment. This approach can strengthen Maersk's customer service and position in the competitive field. Additionally, it prevents unnecessary rejections from happening.



Short-term: Workshops for stakeholders

Like the workshops for customers, this recommendation is to develop similar workshops aimed at improving collaboration with stakeholders. This helps to improve overall communication and information streams, which is relevant since many external stakeholders are involved. By creating workshops and holding them with external stakeholders, Maersk can identify disruptions quickly and enable problem-solving, which leads to cost savings.



Mid-term: Workshops at the start of new processes and projects

This workshop guide is designed to improve existing processes. However, over time, Maersk would benefit from aligning new processes and projects from the outset. For example, this can be done when new customers sign a contract or new processes go live. By holding these workshops at the start of new processes, Maersk becomes proactive instead of reactive, thereby enhancing efficiency.



Long-term: Workshop 1 in the onboarding programme

In the long-term, it would be useful to implement Explore, or a similar training programme, as part of the onboarding programme of new employees. Through this implementation, employees gain a better understanding of the processes they are involved in from the start of their job. This improves communication among Maersk's employees, thereby enabling enhanced efficiency.