



e2open[®]

EBOOK

Command and Control Doesn't Come from a Tower



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Introduction

Functional control towers operate in silos, reinforcing suboptimal outcomes. Attempting to manage disruptions through multiple departmental control towers, with an additional overlay to tie them together, can't deliver the agility and resiliency needed. These fragmented methods hinder overall business objectives. E2open's multi-enterprise platform creates a new paradigm and introduces a fresh perspective. We believe in a command center approach to breaking down silos and overlays, replacing them with a unified operating platform. This ebook will help you understand why and how you can use e2open to improve your company's performance.

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Embracing cross-functional visibility

The control tower concept originated in the late 20th century as a way to centralize visibility in the globally-distributed, complex supply and logistics environment. A supply chain control tower helps organizations predict and respond to disruptions, collaborate with direct trading partners, optimize inventory and logistics, and align with strategic objectives. However, control towers relied on outdated data from fragmented supply chain management (SCM) platforms—untenable in today's data-rich supply chain landscape.

Today's supply chain risks and opportunities extend far beyond the enterprise. Issues arise from multi-tier suppliers, distributors, and transportation partners. From n-tier supply disruptions and anti-forced labor regulations to Scope 3 emissions requirements and more, it's glaringly evident that tier 1 visibility is no longer enough; supply chains must go deeper into sub-tiers to see, understand, and respond to distributions effectively across their entire ecosystem.

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The evolution of control towers into command centers

Control towers vary widely, from basic analytics overlays to applications with limited functionality focused on specific areas, like planning or internal operations. Yet, in today's landscape, true agility and resilience call for more than a mere software addition labeled as a "control tower."

Instead, what's crucial is inherent visibility and orchestration within a platform powering end-to-end operations. Real-time data from a multi-tier network, combined with applications, artificial intelligence (AI), and analytics enable internal and external stakeholders to comprehend exceptions, collaborate on decisions, monitor performance, and learn for future scenarios.

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Enter the concept of cross-functional command centers—a progressive shift away from isolated operational reporting and domain-specific control towers. These centers promote connectivity, collaboration, and orchestration across ecosystems, catering to specific use cases while leveraging near-real-time data for insights and predictions. Most importantly, command centers facilitate the orchestration and execution of processes across distributed and siloed functional teams and systems.

Both a control tower and a command center can help improve supply chain performance, but they have different objectives and outcomes. Depending on the needs and goals of the organization, one may be more suitable than the other.

Gartner analysts provide these delineating differences:

- **Control tower** is an *operational framework* to capture and use a variety of data, leveraging a functional model for providing enhanced visibility, predictions, and suggestions for predominantly domain-specific, short-term, and midterm decision making, sometimes automated.
- **Command center** is an *emerging aspiration* for organizations aiming to become more connected, converged, and orchestrated. It provides increased cross-functional process efficiency and short-term and midterm decision quality for specific use cases within their ecosystem.¹

Overall, a control tower is a capability that provides enhanced visibility and coordination across the supply chain, while a command center is a platform that integrates data from multiple sources and enables predictive and prescriptive analytics.

1. Quick Answer: Defining Control Tower, Command Center and Digital Supply Chain Twin, Gartner, Titze, Christian and Payne, Tim; 27 July 2022

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Distinguishing between control towers—such as logistics, fulfillment, or inventory focus—and command centers becomes secondary when seeking a technology provider. The primary focus should be on four fundamental pillars:



Data. Acquiring data from your extensive network of upstream and downstream partners is fundamental to establishing a digital twin foundation. However, this poses a challenge. The most cost-effective approach to link with all partners involves a multi-enterprise supply chain network employing a standardized integrated data model (IDM). Otherwise, the alternative is creating and managing numerous one-to-one connections, necessitating master data management processes. This impedes the speed of value realization and diminishes Return on investment (ROI). An established network with reusable connections enables scalability. Additionally, an AI-powered IDM automatically purifies and aligns data from diverse sources for immediate decision-making. This stands in contrast to leveraging hundreds of thousands of existing connections across tiers and ecosystems within the supply chain, accessing timely, high-quality data to drive favorable business outcomes.



Visibility. Efficient control towers integrate AI workflows to generate insights, offer recommendations, and automate responses. Isolated dashboards labeled as control towers fall short. They operate separately from day-to-day activities and exhibit inherent sluggishness. Seek a platform-based approach with comprehensive, AI-driven supply chain applications covering every business scenario from upstream planning to downstream execution—unified on a single platform. Control towers that cater to only one aspect, such as planning or logistics, leave companies without a complete solution. Proven AI capabilities delivering predictive and prescriptive analytics across functions, enterprises, and ecosystems offer vital insights for swift disruption resolution.

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Decisioning. Each decision holds downstream ramifications. Look for the ability to effectively simulate “what-if” scenarios to evaluate alternative strategies, crucial for decision support. Often, control towers lack robust scenario planning capabilities, risking missed opportunities or inadequate risk mitigation. Similar to air traffic control towers, supply chain control towers face dynamic situations like weather changes or unexpected events. Scenario-planning empowers companies to envision and prepare for diverse scenarios, enabling decision-makers to identify vulnerabilities and develop risk mitigation strategies. This proactive approach bolsters performance and efficiency.



Action. Crafting a flawless plan without a means to execute it is wishful thinking, if not immensely frustrating. Much like how a multi-enterprise supply chain network efficiently integrates partners, it serves as the most effective method to coordinate responses to potential disruptions. Intelligent applications with adaptable process workflows ensure compliance with policies, completion of approval steps, and timely communication with all stakeholders, both internal and external, ensuring seamless movement across the entire value chain.

Ultimately, seeking a “control tower” or “command center” solution can be misleading. Vendors define them differently, and many lack critical capabilities. Instead, focus on the ultimate objective of achieving a more responsive, agile, and resilient supply chain.

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The second-best time to get started is today

The best time was yesterday, so there's no time to waste. The benefits of integrating the proper command center/control tower solutions can help businesses transform how they manage and respond to disruption, including:

1. Identifying bottlenecks within the network to streamline operations
2. Managing unexpected disruptions like supply shortages or natural disasters efficiently
3. Enabling swift responses to unforeseen events, ensuring continuity in the value chain

The evolution of command centers stands as a transformative force, offering indispensable tools for navigating modern supply chain complexities. As technology advances, further innovation in this field remains inevitable.

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For almost a decade, e2open has been helping businesses set up control tower/command center capabilities that help our clients save millions in productivity and costs. Our capabilities provide probabilistic business impact assessment and prioritization through field-proven AI, machine learning, and predictive and prescriptive analytics. We help turn your data into action, enabling practitioners to respond to potential supply chain disruptions such as delivery delays, supply shortages, and demand signal shifts.

Decision support capabilities in e2open's platform facilitate workflows and event management across internal operations and multiple tiers of up and downstream trading partners. Each transaction is processed through intricate business rule configurations, hierarchical approval, and routing frameworks. AI-powered decision trees for multi-dimensional alignment and powerful analytics are leveraged to determine events that warrant a decision planner's attention based on contextual information.

For the past nine years, e2open's unified platform has been recognized as a leader in Nucleus Research's report on Control Tower Technology Value Matrix. The report highlights how e2open's connected platform can help your business to:

1. Reach a broad, deep network of over 480,000 supply, distribution, logistics, global trade, and supply ecosystem partners.
2. Automatically harmonize internal and external data to ensure collaboration happens with the same canonical integrated data model.
3. Gain end-to-end visibility of your supply chain for better collaboration and decision-making.
4. Take proactive corrective action to mitigate the impact of shifting demand signals, predictive supply shortages, and predictive ETAs.

Read more in the [report](#) or contact e2open to discuss how your company can achieve a more responsive, agile, and resilient supply chain.

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About e2open

At e2open, we're creating a more connected, intelligent supply chain. It starts with sensing and responding to real-time demand, supply and delivery constraints. Bringing together data from customers, distribution channels, suppliers, contract manufacturers and logistics partners, our collaborative and agile supply chain platform enables companies to use data in real time, with artificial intelligence and machine learning to drive smarter decisions. All this complex information is delivered in a single view that encompasses your demand, supply and logistics ecosystems. E2open is changing everything. Visit www.e2open.com.

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