

COVID-19 is testing supply chains like no crisis in recent history.

Business leaders will want to act quickly to protect and support their workers and sustain the operations that serve their customers and communities. As we explained in our Rapid Response supply chain recommendations, those that had the foresight to create rapid response centers and improve their supply chain resilience are likely to be better prepared to manage both the immediate crisis and future challenges.

The pandemic also illustrates the central role that well-functioning supply chains play in society.

Nowhere is this more evident than in healthcare, where supply chain disruption and a sudden and massive rise in demand have created critical shortages of products like personal protective equipment.

This is why companies should look to repurpose their supply chains to increase both resilience and responsibility. This includes ensuring core business values guide supply chain decisions, reshaping the whole supply chain for the future around the needs of the business, of shareholders, and of society.

The following recommendations will help companies do that. They have an opportunity to put themselves at the forefront of helping societies manage the humanitarian emergency of COVID-19, while also building the greater resilience and customer-centricity that will be vital to growth as economies rebound.

"We have to make decisions with 50% data and the other 50% directed by our purpose and values."

— Supply Chain 50 Member

"It is very clear to us that we didn't know what we didn't know. And we still don't know. And we won't know. So we decided that having adequate cash on the balance sheet was of primary importance. We're doing this because it is clear that we will have to support our partners up and down the supply chain."

- World 50 Member

We recommend companies address seven priorities, supported by their rapid response command centers:

Each priority comes with a series of clear, pragmatic, no-regret actions that company leaders can take today.

1

Preserve the extended workforce

Promote the health and wellbeing of supply chain workers, supporting their mental health and emotional and physical needs as well as their physical safety.

2

Repurpose your capabilities

Look for ways to repurpose supply chains to help societies manage the urgent challenges of COVID-19. 3

Think local

Think creatively about how to reallocate resources to support local communities across the whole supply chain.

4

Secure the supply base

Strengthen the security of supply networks to enhance overall resilience and help any areas of the supply base at risk from operational and/or financial disruption.

5

Respond with confidence and insight

Use analytics, automation, digital platforms and digital twins to model disruption and test out potential responses.

6

Learn and evolve

Capitalize on this once-in-ageneration event to identify points of supply chain failure, their root causes, and how they can be strengthened. 7

Design for resilience

Keep planning for the investments needed once this crisis passes and economies rebound, while building in the purposeful and responsible features developed during the pandemic.

PRIORITY 1

Preserve the extended workforce

We're all relying on the extended supply chain workforce (contractors, freelancers, and contingent labor), as well as suppliers, partners and ecosystems, to show exceptional resilience through these difficult times.



COVID-19 has put workers in an unfamiliar, fast-changing, and often highly stressful environment.

Physical safety

Make sure workers and their families feel physically safe. One client's advanced route planning is identifying vehicles/drivers arriving from cross-border locations and implementing protocols to minimize driver contact.

Mental wellbeing

Be flexible about what is and isn't possible right now. Allow people to focus on truly essential activities. Elevate leaders who understand this and display the most compassion and care. A client is providing an additional two weeks of paid sick leave for their drivers and operations workers who remain on the front line.

Connectedness

In this time of social distancing, ensure employees and the extended workforce feel as connected to each other as possible. If facilities are open, make sure workers can interact safely (including loading and unloading). If facilities are closed, check in on employees regularly and keep them updated.

What can you do to help your people right now?

Build a flexible working culture

Develop policy guidance for internal and external workforces. Establish an open and compassionate tone. Ensure leaders are aligned.

Plan for distributed continuity

Adapt business continuity plans for flexibility in workforce availability, restrictions on travel, and remote working where possible.

Reskill, multi-skill, upskill

Use data and applied intelligence to segment skills based on supply chain capabilities understand training needs and reallocate workers to areas of high demand.

Prepare suppliers and vendors

Connect regularly with suppliers/ vendors. Use periods of downtime to identify future strategies and orders. Explore opportunities to integrate with supplier/vendor technology.

Keep track of employees and alumni

Ensure employee contact information is up to date (e.g. telephone, email, home address). Maintain a healthy talent pipeline and strengthen brand affinity with workers.

Deploy tools for elastic collaboration

Act urgently to deploy or scale up collaboration tools that connect customers, partners, and suppliers. Where employees can work remotely, use SaaS-based solutions.

For more on Accenture's Elastic Digital Workplace recommendations during COVID-19, see here

Ensure the supply chain network is secure and can support new ways of working

Leverage virtual environments to support increased demand. Enable secure remote network connectivity with employees, customers and partners (one retail client is installing PCs in employees' homes for seamless connectivity). Review security protocols for widespread remote network access.

PRIORITY 2

Repurpose your capabilities

Businesses can play a vital role in helping societies manage the COVID-19 crisis and come out stronger the other side.



How could your business help?

What steps can you take to support healthcare workers and their families?

Some UK retailers help NHS medical staff get the essentials they need, offering discounts and ensuring those at risk stay safe while shopping in store.²

How could you innovate and scale vital treatment and diagnostic services?

In Latin America, Amazon Public Sector Partners within the AWS Partner Network are supporting communities using artificial intelligence. This helps reduce overcrowding by allowing patients to see wait times and join the queue remotely to improve throughput.³

Can you provide urgently needed personal protective equipment (PPE)?

Danone has donated facemasks and its supply chain is focused on getting even more to support hospitals, as well as protecting its workers in food manufacturing facilities.⁴

Could your operations be reconfigured to produce other essential healthcare equipment and/or sanitation consumables?

Dyson, Tesla, Rolls-Royce, Ford, Airbus and several others are commencing ventilator production.⁵ AB-InBev⁶ and Louis Vuitton Moet Hennessy (LVMH)⁷ will now be making sanitizer gels.

How can you respond to food-order surges?

A client has repurposed distribution to focus on a subset of its usual product range by reducing bulky items in particular.

What can you do now to repurpose supply chains for the good of society?

Understand what's needed for new products and services

Ensure the requirements and value chain of any new product are well understood. Consider functionality, production processes, equipment and environment, skills, materials and component sourcing, logistics, and environmental impacts and risks.

Rethink logistics

Evaluate whether transport fleets could help distribute critical supplies. Airbus has deployed a converted aircraft to deliver facemasks from China to European health systems. D.com is using autonomous vehicles (AVs) to provide a touchless delivery system. 8

Collaborate creatively

Use collaboration tools to finalize product design and industrialization with other companies. Orchestrate activities with shared information systems. A consortium of UK businesses is collaborating to produce medical ventilators using a dedicated ERP to synchronize manufacturing lines and material supplies.⁹

Explore and innovate

Think about how existing tools and equipment could be repurposed for emergency products. Some companies are using their 3D printers to produce vital equipment kits. ¹⁰ Consider leveraging procurement's buying power to obtain critical goods and services that can be donated.

Simplify product lines

Reduce the number of products and services or prioritize the simplest to increase throughput. Procter & Gamble is focusing on critical high-demand products like toilet paper. ¹¹ Barilla reduced production to a range of easy-to-manufacture pasta to ensure it could keep up with demand. ¹⁶

Streamline planning

Quickly develop a realistic and proactive plan by coordinating with the supply chain rapid-response center. One aircraft original equipment manufacturer (OEM) is using an artificial intelligence platform to predict purchase orders most likely to fail.

Improve visibility

Leverage supplier collaboration platforms to create visibility on order status and reduce delays. Do the same for transportation management platforms.

PRIORITY 3 Think local

Companies can help societies both directly, by supporting immediate healthcare needs, and indirectly, by supporting local communities, especially the most vulnerable.



Support should be extended to local communities all the way up through supply chains, including into countries with weaker governance and healthcare systems.

It should also reflect five human truths about the significant social and business changes that COVID-19 is driving:

1

Cost of confidence

Trust, optimism and confidence-building will become more important than ever.

2

Virtual century

Anything that can be done digitally, will be.

3

Every business is a health business

A new health economy will emerge, with opportunities for all.

4

Cocooning

Home comforts will carry a premium.

5

Reinvention of authority

Will top-down control predominate post-crisis?

What can you do now to demonstrate your purpose and help local communities?

Serve communities directly.

Prioritize vulnerable customers (such as creating special opening times). Consider grants for community groups and local networks. Hire local people to meet increased delivery or customer service needs. Donate food and/or products to local communities. Retool machines to produce goods that are needed in the locality.

Amazon is hiring 100,000 new roles to support increased demand for its services. ¹² The company is also working with Lyft¹³ to mitigate the impact on drivers of the drop in passenger numbers: Lyft is encouraging them to apply for roles in Amazon's fulfillment centers.

Support employees' communities.

Support employees as they play their own role in their

communities. Make resources and facilities available as needed (such as holding blood drives for the community). Be flexible as employees adapt to new ways of working. Donate executive salaries and/or bonuses to keep employees in post and avoid laying off workforces. Focus on building skills during periods of downtime.

United Center (home of the Chicago Bulls and Chicago Blackhawks) has offered its arena and campus as a logistics hub for the distribution of food and critical medical supplies. ¹⁴ D-Wave, the Canadian quantum computing company, is giving anyone working on responses to COVID-19 free access to its Leap 2 quantum computing cloud service. ¹⁵ And several pharmaceutical companies are donating compounds to health institutions to help develop vaccines to fight COVID-19.

Secure the supply base

COVID-19 starkly illustrates the need for all companies to consider the future security of the supply base, harnessing the relationships they've built with suppliers of all sizes – small, medium and large.



To shore up the supply base, companies need to think differently about risk

That means expanding risk areas, supplier focus, and depth of analysis...

RISK DIMENSION	YESTERDAY ("From here")	TODAY ("To here")
Risk areas	Information securityRegulatoryCommodity price	Yesterday's risk areas, plus: Country and geopolitical Business continuity and disaster recovery Financial viability Reputation
Supplier base	 Arbitrarily defined "strategic" suppliers Prioritized focus on "strategic", with consideration of offshore 	 Standardized segmentation into four tiers Expanded focus from Tier 1 to Tiers 2 and 3
Depth of analysis	Refresh during incidents onlyStatus internally generated dataReactive dashboard	 Refresh cadence commensurate with risk Internal data and analysis, augmented with external feeds. Dashboard with predictive and actionable insights

Source: Accenture, High Performance Procurement



COVID-19 calls for a deeper understanding of both known and unknown risks to the supply base, including taking precautionary measures in support of small and medium-sized businesses and local ecosystems. It also amplifies the importance of predictive modelling and applied intelligence.

That includes:



Planning and demand forecasting

The ability to forecast demand for supplies in known and unknown crisis situations, as well as how to respond to extreme volatility in demand globally, regionally and locally. Q

Sourcing and supplier management

The capacity to work closely with all sizes of suppliers to understand true risks to supply and the ripple effect on quality, timeliness, service delivery, local ecosystems and regulatory compliance.



Manufacturing and visibility into supply levels

The need to ensure an open and just-in-time exchange of information with suppliers on production process changes, supply levels and local subcontracting fallback options.



Fulfillment, distribution and service levels

The ability to respond to customer needs faster in a period of crisis, redirecting product flows through smaller distribution channels and creating capacity to deal with warranty claims.

What can you do now to secure the supply base?

Mobilize a response team.

Establish crossfunctional points of contact (including planning, procurement, manufacturing, distribution, legal and finance) and associated operating rules for responding to immediate internal and external intervention needs and business continuity.

Expand the risk framework.

Enhance and automate existing risk methodologies, protocols and tolerances. Partner across the ecosystem to get consistent visibility through third-party data feeds. Rethink the definition of "critical risk" with a focus on business purpose and social responsibility.

Continuously sense and prioritize risks.

Assess supply chain disruption on products, services and supply chains using advanced analytics. Prioritize risks and identify blind spots. Shortlist the small, medium and large suppliers to monitor and support. Reposition supply chain from being a risk generator to a customer-centered growth engine.

Be a force for good.

Stay true to commitments to smalland medium-sized businesses (working together on optimal delivery and payment structures, providing flexible capacity and fueling innovation). Work with government bodies to keep investing in the shared success of local ecosystems.

Reconfigure the network.

Revisit input and output flows, establishing new protocols with global/regional/local alternatives across the full supply chain. Build physical and digital resilience with the support of external parties. Understand the employee and community impact. Start building a more risk-aware culture

PRIORITY 5

Respond with confidence and insight

When disruption on the scale of COVID-19 hits, supply chain leaders must respond with speed, certainty and safety.

Today's digital platforms, analytics and automation capabilities enable them to quickly get visibility across the supply chain, determine the customers, geographies and products most affected, run simulations of potential resolutions, and make "no-regret" action plans.



To respond with purpose you need to see the whole picture

Revised risk frameworks that combine features like time to recovery with data on suppliers, inventory, and demand, let companies represent their entire supply networks in granular detail. Simulation capabilities allow them to model disruption scenarios an uncover risks that were previously unknown, both to support the current situation and future challenges, including natural disasters, transportation restrictions, geopolitical risks, and climate change.

DISRUPTION TYPE	TRADITIONAL SCENARIOS	"PURPOSEFUL" SCENARIOS
Constrained supply	Alternate Tier 1 / 2 suppliers	Local or small business suppliers
Severe drop in demand	Production plan towards limited SKU portfolio	New production schedule to manufacture new (critical) products (e.g. ventilators, hand-sanitizer, etc.)
Unavailable inventory (e.g. stock-outs) or inventory imbalance	Inventory-level rebalancing throughout network	Inventory-level rebalancing based on community impact score
Demand surge	Rescheduling production for increased volume of "indemand" products	Route demand to new channels (e.g. e-commerce)
Route closure/ trade restrictions	Rerouting product flows with nodes removed	Alternate delivery models (e.g. gig-economy)



Disruptions intensify the need for visibility and rapid response. Digital twins of the end-to-end supply chain allow companies to mirror operations digitally across the entire supply network—at any level of detail—and uncover risks that were previously hidden.

Elements of a digital-twin include:



Operational data

Internal data (suppliers, inventory, demand, network footprint), and external data (macroeconomic, trade restrictions, climate change, etc.) are combined to provide a complete picture of current operational status.



Analytics-based risk framework

Descriptive and predictive analytics applied to the full value chain are used to evaluate the time-to-recovery (e.g. the time taken for a particular supply chain node, such as a supplier facility, a distribution center, or a transportation hub, to be restored to full functionality).



Simulation models

Data within the organization, including ERP-based data can be leveraged by scenario-based 'what-if' models. These models are run (and re-run) to identify and test actions to alleviate or resolve disruption, uncover unidentified dependencies or constraints, and help forecast the cost, time, and effort required more accurately.



Automated execution

Intelligent automation capabilities like robotic process automation and cognitive computing can automatically make decisions and execute response protocols.

What can you do now to improve response confidence?

Prioritize customers, products and/or geographies

"Black swan" disruption events result in severe demand and supply imbalances. To ensure products and services are available to those who most need them, use analytics to segment the supply chain based on critical demand.

Ensure adequate supply

Run simulations to predict when and where supply shortages are likely to occur, the capacity of existing suppliers, and whether alternatives are an option (including local businesses or SMBs).

Stage inventory strategically

Analyze customer behavior and sentiment via social media and other sources and predict demand shifts by geography/channel. Simulate where the current on-hand, in-transit, and on-order inventory is now versus where it needs to be to meet predicted demand.

Keep assets utilized

Simulate production capacity requirements for existing high-demand products, as well as switching production capabilities to critical new products like hand-sanitizer, ventilators, personal protective equipment, and vaccines. Consider how unused warehouse space could be used for storing/staging goods produced by other companies or as a hospital overflow space.

Reconfigure last-mile capabilities

In times of disruption, customers may shift channels or require a different delivery method/location. Run simulations to test capacity to alter delivery routes, increase the number of drivers, or engage external parties or temporary labor to fill any gaps.

Develop "purposeful" responses

Using a digital twin, analyze the entire supply chain (or any node within it) by running the scenarios (shown in the table on slide 21) to confirm which purposeful response actions are feasible and/or cost-effective.

PRIORITY 6

Learn and evolve

Responding to an unprecedented crisis like COVID-19 can seem overwhelming. But there are opportunities for companies to learn from the ordeal and ensure their supply chains come through more resilient and responsible than before.



This global disruption is exposing weaknesses that can be addressed.

Temporary fixes can be converted into lasting capabilities that provide greater agility, responsibility and resilience, transforming the supply chain into a competitive enabler of growth addressing these areas:

- Understand root causes of failure
- Analyze failure modes
- Bring the organization together under a common cause
- → Focus on outcomes
- Determine resolution potential
- Use data wisely

What can you do now to transform your supply chain for the future?

Understand root causes of failure.

Carefully monitor trendlines, maintain issue logs and records related to all failures across the supply chain during the disruption. Map performance issues back to these root causes, using regression analysis where necessary.

Analyze failure modes.

Segment root causes of supply chain failure by origin, type and uncontrollable elements (such as shifts in demand). Use Failure Mode & Effects Analysis (FMEA) to determine systemic issues.

Bring the organization together under a common cause.

Look to align the whole company on priorities for supply chain reform. Establish a team, including senior leaders, with visibility into all initiatives. Prioritize by available capacity, potential benefit, and required timescales.

Focus on outcomes.

Build toward seamless end-to-end orchestration of customer deliverables to provide resilience and agility. Create end-to-end visibility into the way the supply chain operates. Use this to inform new strategies for harmonizing processes, systems and labor.

Determine resolution potential.

Assess sales and operations planning performance, inventory turns, lead times and fill rates over previous periods. Look for resolutions with lasting positive impacts on revenue, operating margins or return on capital.

Use data wisely.

Identify data from IoT, POS and other sources that can accelerate decision making, scenario modeling, contingency planning and overall network optimization. Prioritize data availability, systems harmonization and applied intelligence. Look for automation opportunities.

PRIORITY 7

Design for resilience

This crisis will pass. Societies and economies will rebound. While most companies will naturally be preoccupied by managing the immediate challenges of the coronavirus pandemic, it's important not to lose sight of the need to invest in future reform – for the business, for shareholders and for society.





Organizations that take long-run transformational views, supplemented with digital technologies capabilities, will quickly leapfrog competitors. What's more, as normality returns, they will have a unique opportunity to reimagine their supply chains with a redoubled focus on agility, resilience, social responsibility and human-centric needs.

To predict the future, you need to create it.



Customer-centric focus

Center the supply chain around customer needs. Understand that, post-crisis, growth will come not from the core business, but from new supply chain capabilities that directly and digitally enhance the customer experience. Shift toward multiple micro-segmented, fit-for-purpose end-to-end supply chains. Use these to operate with agility and quickly sense, reconfigure and proactively respond to changing needs.



Zero-based mindset

Major disruptions require liquidity in the short-term. By partnering with the finance function in cash preservation interventions, supply chain leaders can help weather the storm and reset costs and resources from a zero-base.



Responsible operations

Operating with principles and capabilities that build and nurture trust is crucial for future business growth. Ensure sustainability and social responsibility are prioritized across the value chain through innovative circular business models. Drive radical transparency and traceability to meet customer expectations and the highest ethical standards.

What can you do now to design for resilience?

Unlock funds intelligently

Reset the cost base to unlock cash for reform in an intelligent and sustainable way. Adopt a zero-based mindset rather than one of unsustainable short-term "across-the-board" cuts. Focus on simple discretionary categories (e.g. travel, facilities, events and sponsorships) coupled with working capital optimization.

Revisit capex portfolios

Re-evaluate investment plans, identifying projects that should be cancelled or postponed in order to boost liquidity, while retaining those that are necessary for future growth and success. Determine new investment priorities, such as technology that enables more employees to work remotely.

Maximize employee productivity

Demonstrate an unwavering commitment to meaningful career paths for employees. Increase reliance on automation, advanced analytics and applied intelligence, while transitioning new-found capacity to crisis recovery and net-new value generation.

Keep building the digital infrastructure

Don't allow the crisis to distract the business from the need to build an ecosystem of a digital core ERP, accompanied by platforms, analytics and microservices. Post-pandemic, self-driving automated capabilities and intelligent analytics will be essential for delivering necessary speed, agility and customer-centricity.

Prioritize advanced analytics

Generate actionable insights necessary to make rapid decisions for supply chain resilience and align with customer needs. Be prepared to revise assumptions, review forecasts and adjust physical flows. Food and beverages, for instance, have shifted dramatically to at-home consumption. Build a data analytics control tower to provide real-time (or near real-time) visibility of products, people, performance and costs.

Be pragmatic

With increased stress and anxiety, as well as a need to continuously respond to demands, the effective prioritization of efforts will be essential. Stand-up an "investment counsel" to pressuretest and validate the return on investment for all in-flight, planned or new endeavors.

Conclusion

This is a time of unprecedented supply chain disruption. These seven priorities, and the practical actions we recommend to meet them, will help companies respond in the most effective way, now and in the future.

The overarching objective is to reshape for the future by building greater responsibility, agility, responsiveness, and resilience right across the supply chain. In this, it is important to recognize that supply chains are critical to more than the bottom line: they are the essential lifelines that humanity relies upon. This is why there is an equal need to step up and build purpose and responsibility, as well as resilience, into supply chains.

That's the way to both help societies manage COVID-19 and create a foundation for future competitive advantage and growth.

Companies that can do all this with a focus on responsibility will be differentiated as leaders in the future.

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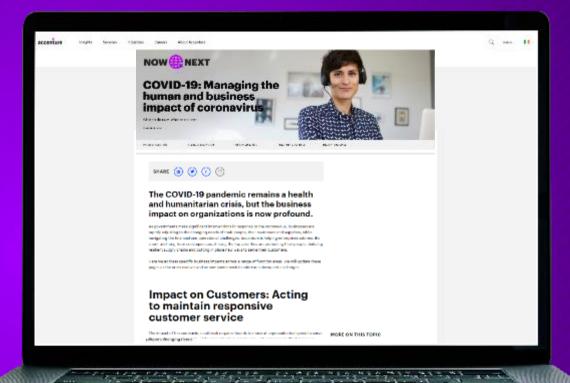
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To help our clients navigate both the human and business impact of COVID-19, we've created a hub of all of our latest thinking on a variety of topics.

Each topic highlights specific actions which can be taken now, and what to consider next as industries move towards a new normal.

From leadership essentials to ensuring productivity for your employees and customer service groups to building supply chain resilience and much more, our hub will be constantly updated. Check back regularly for more insights.

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