SCLA

Supply Chain Leaders In Action Conference Journal

Volume 28 – 2026 $20.00

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF SCLA

Leading with Passion and Purpose: Elevating the Future of Supply Chain

20th Anniversary Edition
Leadership, Innovation, and the Conversations That Helped Shape a Profession

The Rise of Physical AI
Rebuilding Supply Chains for an Era of Permanent Disruption

Navigating Global Volatility
Geopolitical Disruption, Tariff Turbulence, and the New Economics of Supply Chain Risk

The AI Inflection Point
From Hype to Autonomy in Supply Chains

Artificial Intelligence and ROI
An Operational Excellence Perspective

When Power Becomes the Constraint
Rethinking Infrastructure Growth, and Supply Chain Strategy

Leading Gen AI
Managing Generations and Artificial Intelligence in Supply Chains

Leadership, Trust, and the Pipeline Problem
Cultivating the Next Generation of Leaders

The Inaugural SCLA Supply Chain Outlook Report
What the Executive Community Reveals About the Next Era of Leadership

Trusted insight
when it matters most.

The U.S. Bank Freight Payment Index delivers a dependable view of freight market conditions using real payment data, not estimates.

By analyzing audited freight activity across regions, clear trends in volume and spend emerge. Carriers and shippers use these insights to cut through noise, understand market direction and act with confidence.

When uncertainty rises, the U.S. Bank Freight Payment Index brings the clarity the industry needs.

Turn freight data into clarity.

Subscribe today and connect with our team.

freight.usbank.com | CPSFreightPayment@usbank.com

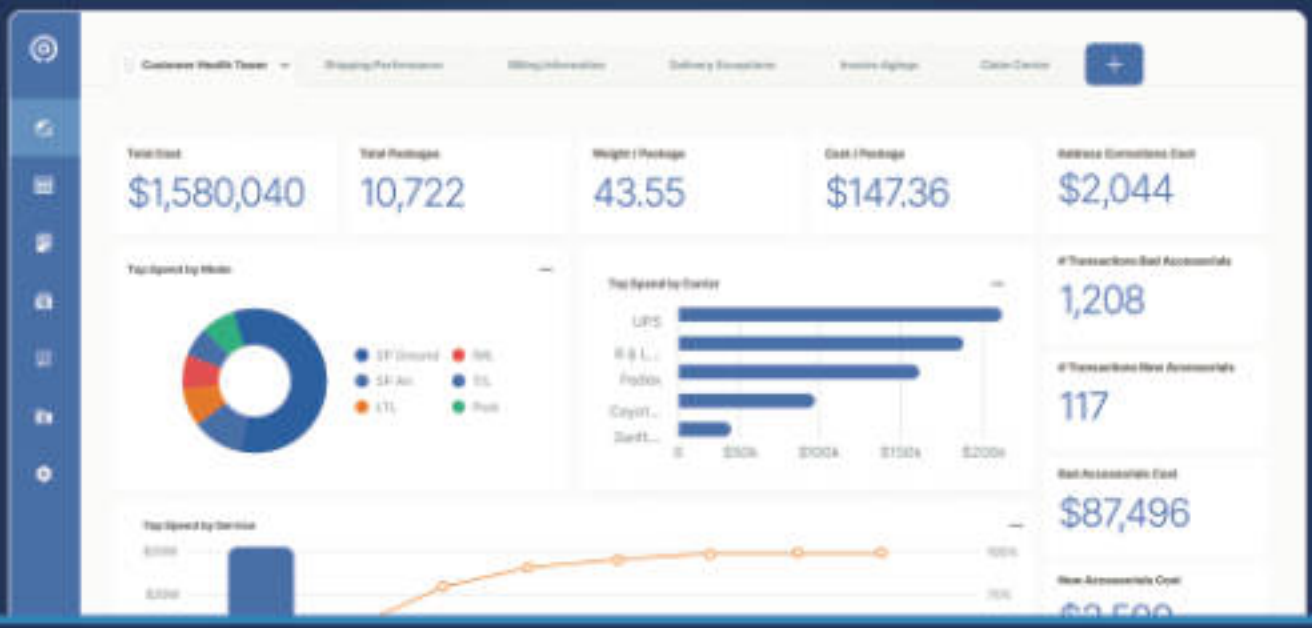
©2026 U.S. Bank. All trademarks are the property of their respective owners.
04-0251-01 (5/26) CAT-OOS

HappyRobot
Putting agents to work in complex environments
The supply chain runs on HappyRobot
KUEHNE+NAGEL
DHL
samsara
WERNER ENTERPRISES
Ryder
www.happyrobot.ai

INTELLIGENT AUDIT

Control costs. Gain clarity. Ship smarter.

Top-rated freight audit & payment partner, featuring McKinsey-recognized DeepDetectAI*



Trusted by the world's biggest brands since 1996

Coca-Cola · lululemon · citi · EATON · EVERNORTH · wayfair · CVS · Shutterfly · H&M · CATERPILLAR · COMCAST · NORDSTROM · HELLO FRESH

See customer success stories at intelligentaudit.com

Supply Chain Leaders in Action Journal

9 Editor's Letter

10 Celebrating 20 Years of SCLA
A reflection on the evolution of SCLA over the past two decades, honoring the leaders, relationships, and conversations that helped shape both the organization and the supply chain profession.

12 The Rise of Physical AI: Rebuilding Supply Chains for an Era of Permanent Disruption
As geopolitical instability and operational volatility reshape global commerce, Physical AI and autonomous industrial ecosystems are redefining resilience, decision making, and competitive advantage in the next era of supply chain transformation.

14 Geopolitical Disruption, Tariff Turbulence, and the New Economics of Supply Chain Risk
As geopolitical instability, tariff volatility, and energy disruption continue reshaping global commerce, supply chain leaders are being forced to rethink traditional sourcing, logistics, and network design strategies.

16 From Hype to Autonomy: The AI Inflection Point in Supply Chains
This article examines the growing gap between AI ambition and execution, highlighting how leading organizations are redesigning workflows, governance, and operating models to move from experimentation to autonomous supply chain orchestration.

19 SCLA 2026 Directory and Reference Guide

42 When Power Becomes the Constraint: Rethinking Infrastructure, Growth, and Supply
Explore how energy availability, water resources, grid bottlenecks, and infrastructure limitations are reshaping development timelines, financing strategies, site selection, and long-term network planning.

44 SCLA 2026 Circle of Excellence Award
The TJX Companies are recognized for their outstanding leadership in supply chain excellence, environmental stewardship, and social responsibility.

44 Distinguished Service Award Recognition
Ben Massie, Vice President of Supply Chain, Lenovo is recognized for his exceptional leadership, operational excellence, and enduring contributions to the global supply chain profession.

45 John Fitzgerald: A Master Connector and a Supply Chain Ambassador
John Fitzgerald, VP, Business Development at project44, has been named the recipient of DBM's/SCLA Lifetime Achievement Award.

46 From Initiative to Impact: Proving ROI Through Measurable Results
How disciplined KPI development, financial alignment, and structured ROI frameworks can help organizations prioritize investments, validate outcomes, and translate operational improvements into measurable financial impact.

50 VUCA World & Supply Chain Planning
Explore how organizations can navigate the VUCA environment through integrated supply chain design, disciplined priority setting, proactive scenario modeling, and resilience-based planning frameworks.

52 Artificial Intelligence and ROI: An Operational Excellence Perspective
Artificial Intelligence is rapidly reshaping operational performance, but sustainable value creation still depends on disciplined Operational Excellence principles.

56 Leading Gen AI: Managing Generations and Artificial Intelligence in Supply Chains
As supply chain organizations navigate both workforce dynamics and rapid AI adoption, leaders must now rethink how teams communicate, collaborate, and manage technology in the digital workplace.

60 Leadership, Trust, and the Pipeline Problem: Cultivating the Next Generation of Leaders in a Low-Trust World
Examines the growing leadership pipeline crisis, the critical role of coaching cultures and trust-based relationships, and why leadership development must become an ongoing organizational practice rather than a periodic training initiative.

62 What the 2026 SCLA Supply Chain Outlook Reveals About the Next Era of Leadership
The 2026 SCLA Supply Chain Outlook captures how senior supply chain leaders are preparing for the future, highlighting key trends in geopolitical risk, AI adoption, workforce transformation, and resilience, while identifying the capabilities required to compete in an increasingly complex world.

In This Issue:

SCLA 2026: Leading with Passion and Purpose: Elevating the Future of Supply Chain

This special issue commemorating SCLA's 20th Anniversary reflects both where the profession has been and where it is headed.

For twenty years, SCLA has brought together leaders who believe that the best ideas emerge when experience, curiosity, and collaboration intersect.

Inside these pages, you will find perspectives on artificial intelligence, geopolitical disruption, workforce transformation, infrastructure constraints, operational excellence, leadership, and resilience. You will hear from industry executives, academics, innovators, and practitioners who are helping define the next era of supply chain leadership.

More importantly, you will discover a common theme woven throughout every article: the future belongs to organizations that can learn, adapt, and lead with greater purpose.

We invite you to reflect not only on the challenges ahead, but also on the opportunities they create. The supply chain profession has never been more important, more influential, or more capable of shaping business and society.

FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE

- Celebrating 20 Years of SCLA
- The Rise of Physical AI
- Geopolitical Disruption, Tariff Turbulence, and the New Economics of Supply Chain Risk
- From Hype to Autonomy: The AI Inflection Point in Supply Chains
- When Power Becomes the Constraint
- Artificial Intelligence and ROI
- Leading Gen AI
- Leadership, Trust, and the Pipeline Problem
- What the 2026 SCLA Supply Chain Outlook Reveals About the Next Era of Leadership

SPECIAL FEATURES

- 2026 Circle of Excellence Award Recipient – TJX
- Distinguished Service Award – Ben Massie
- Lifetime Achievement Award – John Fitzgerald
- SCLA Executive Directory & Resource Guide

Supply Chain Leaders In Action Journal

Amy Z. Thorn
CEO, DBM Association
Editorial Director/SCLA Journal

Ron Malec
Director of Creative Services

Anne Dandridge
Director of Operations

Contributing Columnists

Misty Bennett
Rachel Clapp-Smith
Derek Cutler
Thomas Goldsby
Deepak Iyengar
Aniket Joglekar
Pervinder Johar
Walter Kemmsies
Nicholas Konen
Candace Palmarozzi
Venkatesh Srinivasan

Published annually by:
Supply Chain Leaders In Action

2938 Columbia Ave., Suite 1102
Lancaster, PA 17603
Phone: 717-295-0033
Fax: 717-299-2154
e-mail: athorn@dbm-assoc.com
www.SCLAsupplychain.com

Supply Chain Leaders in Action Journal,
A DBM Publication
2938 Columbia Avenue, Suite 1102
Lancaster, PA 17603
Internet: www.SCLAsupplychain.com

Printed in the USA copyright ©2026 by DBM, Inc.

No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted by any means without permission from the publisher. Permission to photocopy for internet use or the internal use of specific clients is granted by DBM Inc. for libraries and other users registered with the Copyright Clearance Center, CCC provided that a base fee of $1.25 per copy of the article plus 60 cents per page is paid directly to CCC, 222 Rosewood Dr., Danvers, MA 01923

When decisions align, supply chains perform in the real world.
Miebach
Organizations have more data, better tools, and stronger strategies than ever... yet performance gaps persist.
Miebach closes that gap by ensuring decisions align across functions and translate into execution, resulting in supply chain performance that improves margins, strengthens customer service, increases agility, and delivers consistent, enterprise-wide outcomes.
www.miebach.com

infor

Infor **Nexus**

Drive agility, resiliency and sustainability with a connected network

Plan, source, execute, sense and respond with real-time visibility actionable insights, multi-party collaboration and execution

- Overcome data and process silos with shared supply chain visibility and process orchestration
- Proactively respond to supply disruptions and predicted shortages with AI-driven insights
- Improve sustainability targets and free up working capital through supply chain finance
- Reduce operating costs through process and decision automation

We make supply chains connected, intelligent and collaborative

Call today at **800-260-2640** or scan the QR code to learn more.

Copyright ©2023 Infor. All rights reserved. www.infor.com

Leading with Passion and Purpose: Elevating the Future of Supply Chain

Twenty years ago, a group of supply chain leaders came together around a simple belief: that supply chain would evolve into a boardroom-level strategic function and become one of the most important disciplines shaping business success. What began as a small gathering of forward-thinking executives has grown into a community of leaders committed to learning, collaboration, and advancing the profession.

As SCLA celebrates its 20th anniversary, we have an opportunity to reflect on how far our discipline has come and the role this community has played in that journey. Together, we have navigated globalization, digital transformation, unprecedented disruption, and the rapid emergence of new technologies that continue to reshape the way we lead and operate.

For twenty years, this community has been built by leaders willing to share openly, learn from one another, and advance the profession.

This special anniversary issue reflects both where our profession has been and where it is headed. It includes a retrospective celebrating twenty years of SCLA, the inaugural SCLA Supply Chain Outlook Report, and thought leadership from industry executives, academics, innovators, and practitioners exploring the forces shaping the future of supply chain.

We also recognize individuals whose leadership, service, and commitment have helped strengthen both our organization and the broader supply chain community. Their contributions remind us that progress is driven not only by innovation and strategy, but by people willing to invest in others and lead with purpose.

As we celebrate this milestone, we are reminded of the strength of this community and the responsibility we share in helping shape what comes next.

My hope is that the ideas shared in these pages and at the Annual Forum inspire meaningful action.

Thank you for being part of this journey. Whether you have been with us since the beginning or joined more recently, your participation, insights, and leadership continue to shape what this organization represents. The challenges ahead will be different from those we faced twenty years ago, but the spirit that brought this community together remains unchanged.

I look forward to celebrating this milestone with you and to writing the next chapter together.

Warm regards,

Amy Thorn
Founder & CEO
DBM Association / Supply Chain Leaders in Action (SCLA)

Celebrating 20 Years of SCLA

Leadership, Innovation, and the Conversations That Helped Shape a Profession

By Amy Thorn, CEO, SCLA

In 2006, supply chain was still viewed largely as an operational discipline, important, but far removed from most executive conversations.

At the same time, the world was changing rapidly. Global sourcing was expanding. Technology was reshaping operations. Customer expectations were accelerating. Complexity was increasing across every industry.

A small group of senior leaders recognized something important: no one organization had all the answers.

The future of the profession would depend on stronger collaboration, more candid dialogue, and executives willing to learn from one another.

That belief became the foundation of Supply Chain Leaders in Action.

What began as a gathering of senior supply chain executives evolved into a trusted leadership community built around peer to peer learning, practical problem solving, and open discussion about the realities shaping global operations.

A Different Kind of Leadership Community

From the beginning, SCLA focused on creating an environment where leaders could speak candidly, challenge ideas, and learn from one another.

Executive Committee meetings created space for senior leaders to openly discuss the most pressing challenges facing their organizations. The Executive Business Forum brought together peer groups, case studies, and operational discussions that moved beyond theory into practical application.

One of the defining strengths of the organization was the collaboration between industry and academia. Professors introduced new frameworks and perspectives, while practitioners brought firsthand operational experience from some of the world's most complex supply chains. Innovation partners introduced emerging technologies long before many became mainstream business priorities.

The conversations were grounded in operational realities, not abstract theory.

The trust built within those conversations allowed executives to speak candidly about challenges, failures, and opportunities in ways rarely possible in more public industry settings.

Together, they created an environment where ideas could be explored openly, tested thoughtfully, and shared candidly.

Over the years, the conversations evolved alongside the profession itself, from globalization and transportation strategy to automation, resilience, sustainability, AI, workforce transformation, and digital decision making.

The Circle of Excellence recognition program reflected that evolution as well, honoring organizations not only for operational excellence, but also for leadership, innovation, sustainability, and corporate responsibility.

Building Community Beyond the Conference Room

As the organization grew, so did the relationships within it.

Careers were shaped through these conversations. Mentors became trusted advisors. Professional peers became lifelong friends.

SCLA also recognized the importance of creating stronger opportunities for women leaders within the profession, helping give rise to Supply Chain Women in Action.

Long before leadership diversity became a major corporate priority, women within the SCLA community were building networks, mentoring one another, and helping shape the future of leadership in supply chain.

That same spirit of collaboration became even more important during the disruption of the pandemic years.

When face to face meetings disappeared, the conversations continued through SCLA Virtual Think Tanks. Beginning in 2020, executives gathered every other Thursday to openly discuss disruption, resilience, geopolitics, workforce evolution, innovation, and the future of global operations.

The format changed, but the purpose remained the same: leaders helping leaders navigate uncertainty together.

Looking Ahead

Today, the pace of change continues to accelerate.

Artificial intelligence. Digital transformation. Geopolitical uncertainty. Workforce evolution. Energy transition.

And executives are still asking the same question they were asking twenty years ago:

How do we prepare for what comes next?

Yet when long time members reflect on the past twenty years, they rarely begin by talking about technology.

They talk about people.

The leaders who volunteered their time. The professors who expanded thinking. The innovators who introduced new ideas. The members who openly shared both successes and failures. The friendships built around conference tables and conversations that continued long after meetings ended.

Over time, SCLA became more than a professional network. It became part of people's lives.

As we celebrate this milestone, we also extend our deepest gratitude to the many leaders, educators, innovators, volunteers, and members who helped build and sustain SCLA over the last twenty years. Their commitment, generosity, and willingness to share openly with one another shaped not only this organization, but the profession itself.

Some of those leaders are no longer with us.

Others have stepped away after decades of contribution and leadership.

Yet their influence remains woven into the fabric of SCLA, in the ideas they shared, the people they mentored, the relationships they built, and the culture they helped create.

That is their legacy.

And now it becomes ours.

Because leadership is not measured by what we accomplish for ourselves. It is measured by what continues because we were here.

Looking back, the last twenty years are something we are deeply grateful for.

But the next chapter begins now. ■

McKinsey
& Company

Tech alone won't transform your supply chain. People and processes will.

See where AI is creating measurable P&L impact—and what leaders are doing next.

Mike Doheny
Senior Partner

Rahul Shahani
Partner

Aniket Joglekar
Partner

Kapil Dev Bansal
Associate Partner

Let's talk.

The Rise of Physical AI: Rebuilding Supply Chains for an Era of Permanent Disruption

By Pervinder Johar, CEO, Avathon

We are standing at the edge of a new industrial era, one defined not simply by digital transformation, but by the emergence of Physical AI, intelligence embedded directly into the systems that make, move, and manage the physical world.

For those of us who have spent our careers in and around supply chains, the disruption is impossible to miss. Tariff regimes shift by the week, sometimes by the day. Manufacturers are engaged in a near constant game of redesigning production footprints, reassigning country of origin, and rebalancing logistics networks on the fly. Wars in Ukraine, in Gaza, and the broader escalation with Iran continue to reshape regional flows. We have seen the unprecedented closure of the Strait of Hormuz, disrupted flight corridors, and oil markets that swing on a single headline. An "America First" posture has opened fundamental questions about which partnerships, which regions, and which trade lanes companies can count on going forward.

The World Economic Forum now describes our era as one of "permanent disruption." Supply chains were designed for a world of relative stability, predictable trade flows, and linear planning assumptions. That world no longer exists. There is no steady state for supply chains anymore, and there is not going to be one. The question is not whether the next shock arrives, whether it is another geopolitical realignment or something on the scale of the global banking crisis or the pandemic. The question is only when and how prepared your ecosystem will be when it does.

Most organizations will try to survive this period. A few will use it to pull decisively ahead. History is clear about what happens at moments like this: the spoils go to the most agile, to the operators who have planned options in advance, to the ecosystems that can sense a disruption and respond across multiple tiers of

partners faster, better, and at lower cost than anyone else. Resilience in an environment of permanent disruption is not about hardening a single configuration. It is about cultivating optionality so that whatever breaks, you already know your next move.

That is a very different way to think about supply chain leadership. It is also why Physical AI matters so much right now. For decades, supply chain, manufacturing, and asset management teams have fine tuned their practices, squeezing out incremental gains through lean programs, Six Sigma, better planning systems, and tighter integration with suppliers. The returns on those efforts are real, but they are also divergent.

"Physical AI does not simply improve existing operations. It fundamentally changes how industrial systems sense, reason, adapt, and execute in real time."

It opens the door to step function improvements in operational performance, and with them, step function improvements in profitable growth.

This is not a future state promise. It is happening now. Companies are already realizing dramatic gains in operational performance and asset utilization from agentic AI systems that plan, decide, and execute in real time. What was a proof of concept is in production today.

To understand the moment, it helps to separate what the AI revolution has actually delivered so far from what is coming next.

Phase I was the arrival of large language models that transformed information retrieval. Where search engines pointed you to links, the new systems organized the answer and delivered it directly. They could think and advise. That was remarkable, but it was still fundamentally about information.

Phase II has used LLMs and agents to manage information, drive decisions, and take actions but all within the digital layer. It is still, essentially, an IT phenomenon: emails drafted, tickets routed, code written, reports generated.

Phase III is the true revolution for industrial companies. It represents the convergence of AI and operational infrastructure, where intelligence moves beyond software interfaces and becomes embedded within factories, logistics networks, assets, energy systems, and industrial ecosystems themselves.

The difference matters because supply chains do not live in the digital layer. They live in the real world, in factories and ports and trucks and warehouses, governed by physics, chemistry, weather, labor, and geopolitics. Phase III is the first wave of AI that speaks that language natively.

"This transition is happening roughly five times faster and with about three times the impact of the Internet era. We are entering a cycle where the separation between winners and losers will accelerate. Companies that move early, redesign workflows, and embed AI into decision making will pull away from the competition."

– John Chambers, CEO Emeritus of Cisco and Avathon Advisor

Supply chains have always been complex, adaptive systems. The tragedy is that we have tried to run them on software that is rigid and deterministic, systems built on the assumption that operations can be predefined and repeatedly configured. That assumption is now broken, and so is the software built on it.

What leaders need instead are adaptive industrial intelligence systems, systems capable of continuously learning from interconnected operational environments and dynamically responding as conditions change. As conditions shift, the knowledge base updates itself. The agents and the system get smarter every day, not more brittle.

Once knowledge is alive, a more powerful capability becomes possible: inference. The old competitive frontier was reacting faster to a disruption once it hit. The new one is anticipating how a disruption will unfold across an interconnected network before it fully materializes. The system is then prepared to proactively act rather than wait to react creating a better outcome.

In this model, competitive advantage increasingly belongs to organizations capable of machine speed inference across globally distributed operational environments.

The advent of Physical AI is what brings this to life. Intelligence is no longer trapped inside a planning system that runs overnight. It lives at the edge, in the equipment, in the logistics layer, and it coordinates with other intelligent agents across the ecosystem.

In the Physical AI world, the traditional software interface begins to disappear. The future industrial enterprise will rely less on humans navigating software and more on intelligent systems coordinating actions autonomously across operational networks.

This is not a reduction of the human role. It is a promotion. It frees our best people from the mechanics of keeping operations running and focuses them on value orchestration, the decisions that only a human with judgment, relationships, and accountability can make.

Humans increasingly become orchestrators of intent, judgment, ethics, and strategic trade offs, while Physical AI manages continuous operational coordination at machine scale.

The leaders pulling ahead are not treating Physical AI as a collection of isolated use cases. They are redesigning industrial ecosystems around continuously learning operational intelligence.

Supply chains that learn, adapt, and act continuously will turn volatility from a constraint into a source of compounding advantage.

"The next generation of industrial leaders will be defined not by how efficiently they manage static supply chains, but by how effectively they build autonomous ecosystems capable of continuous learning and adaptation."

The next industrial revolution is not waiting. Neither should we. ■

Geopolitical Disruption, Tariff Turbulence, and the New Economics of Supply Chain Risk

Economic Risk and the Integrated Outlook for the Short to Medium Term

By Derek Cutler – Chief Economist, Principal, EBP US and
Walter Kemmsies– Global Trade Economist and Infrastructure Strategist

Key Issues

Perhaps the most frequently discussed topic among supply chain professionals is when the volatility induced by the current Middle East wars and the new U.S. tariff and trade policy shifts will settle down. The follow up to that question is how to develop a long term supply chain resiliency risk management strategy.

This is a very valid question because even if Middle East tensions abate, the larger geopolitical risks will remain. Both Russia and China remain bellicose and intent on keeping their North Korea and Iran partners involved in their efforts to upset the Pax Americana that has been in place since the end of World War Two.

This reality underscores a central theme of the SCLA session, "Navigating Global Volatility: Geopolitical Disruption, Tariff Turbulence, and the Redrawing of the Supply Chain Map," where the focus shifts from reacting to disruption toward structurally redesigning supply chains to operate within persistent geopolitical instability.

Looking into the immediate short to medium term outlook, there are six primary considerations that we argue should be on the back of people's minds. Before going into them, it is important to note that there are several different ways the U.S., Israel, Iran conflict could play out. This is very similar to how analysts conjectured that the Russia Ukraine war could play out back in 2022. At that time, many experienced analysts felt that the war could last between two and ten years and could possibly pull other countries and participants into it. Scenarios like those could be at play in the current U.S., Israel, Iran conflict.

From a leadership perspective, this scenario based uncertainty reinforces the need for predictive and scenario planning capabilities, an area increasingly enabled by AI and advanced analytics, as highlighted in the SCLA discussion.

In addition to the impacts from the Iran conflict, such as fuel and fertilizer shortages, there is still the need for companies to develop a tariff risk management strategy. Tariff risks have been overshadowed by Iran conflict news, but the current administration continues to pursue the use of other U.S. trade laws to reassert the "reciprocal" tariffs that were imposed on April 2, 2025.

> *"Tariffs are no longer isolated policy tools. They are now part of a broader geopolitical strategy that directly influences sourcing decisions, cost structures, and global network design."*

Oil Price Risks

Fuel prices and oil prices are highly correlated. Historically, for every $1 increase in the price of WTI, diesel prices increase by 4.5 cents.

The key thing to focus on is the average cost to produce a barrel of oil, as the price of oil is driven by the lowest cost producers and set by the marginal producers with higher average production costs.

The lowest cost oil producers are the countries around the Gulf of Persia, which export 20.9 million barrels per day, about 20% of daily global consumption according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration's World Oil Transit Chokepoints analysis.

Since the Strait of Hormuz has been effectively closed, lower cost oil from the Gulf of Persia countries has not been available. So oil prices have risen due to the supply shortage and consumers needing to buy from higher cost producers.

Will oil prices come down? It depends. After the bombings of some of the region's refineries, can these countries still export as much oil and gas as before the Iran war, or will it take years for the area's oil infrastructure to be repaired so previous levels of production can be regained?

So once the Strait of Hormuz is reopened, oil prices will come down, but most likely it will take some time before oil and fuel prices decline.

For supply chain leaders, this reinforces that energy is no longer just a cost input. It is a geopolitical variable that must be actively modeled within network and transportation strategy decisions.

Other Input Prices

It is not just oil and liquefied natural gas prices and quantities, but also fertilizers and other metallic output, such as aluminum, coming out of the Persian Gulf that are affected. These include:

- Phosphorous
- Nitrogen
- Potassium
- Potash
- Benzene, toluene, ethylene

These production cost increases will pile on top of the inflation pressures caused by higher oil prices.

These layered cost pressures illustrate how interconnected global supply chains have become, with disruption in one region now cascading across multiple industries and amplifying both cost and availability risk.

What Does This Mean for Inflation Risk?

Inflation is likely to rise due to higher oil prices, depending on how well transportation and manufacturing companies can pass on their higher fuel costs. This could trigger a recession unless the Fed cuts interest rates and puts more money into the economy. If so, a 1970s style inflation cycle could start up.

It is important to note that most of the cargo that transits the Strait of Hormuz is not bound directly to the United States, with much of the crude oil and liquefied natural gas bound for various countries around Asia. Its effects will instead be felt downstream in these supply chains, as prices are passed along, in addition to the contraction of available supply of materials due to the attacks on regional refineries and related modes of transportation.

The increase in fertilizer and other commodity input prices is going to add another boost in inflation because of higher production costs. This inflation will not materialize until later this year, as most countries are currently drawing down on inventories of these commodities in the hopes that the Iran war and the Strait of Hormuz closure end soon. But food prices might start increasing very soon.

This delayed inflationary effect highlights the importance of forward looking indicators and demand sensing capabilities, allowing organizations to anticipate cost pressures before they fully materialize in the market.

What Happens to Ocean Carrier Rates?

The ocean container carrier industry has excess capacity to the tune of over 20%. But during the Houthi crisis, ships sailed around the Cape of Good Hope, which from Asia to Europe and North America takes two weeks longer than via the Suez Canal, moving from four weeks to six weeks.

Slower speed and longer trips soak up capacity, and this kept ocean carrier rates higher until the Houthis stopped attacking ships.

Recently the Houthis started shooting missiles towards Israel, and ocean carriers started avoiding the Suez Canal again. As long as the Iran crisis remains in place, or Israel continues taking out Hezbollah, the Houthis may continue to help the container industry by incentivizing longer detours that effectively reduce available capacity.

For now, higher ocean carrier rates due to renewed capacity shortages and higher fuel prices should be expected. On top of this, ocean carriers are levying war risk surcharges for shipments destined for the Gulf and Middle East ranging between $1,200 and $4,000 depending on the type of container.

This creates a structural paradox: while capacity exists on paper, geopolitical disruption is effectively constraining usable capacity, requiring leaders to rethink traditional assumptions about supply and demand balance in logistics networks.

How Have Companies Been Reacting and Making Supply Chains More Resilient?

Companies have had to resort to shorter term tactics to deal with unexpected increases in fuel costs and ocean carrier fuel surcharges, but also with sudden increases in import duties and tariffs as were announced on April 2, 2025 as reciprocal tariffs.

Companies' efforts to make their supply chains more resilient have been whipsawed by the crisis of Covid 19 and the reaction of financial markets to the higher costs that such strategies entail. Besides the need to increase the flexibility of their logistics operations, companies have come to realize that they need to diversify their foreign supply sources.

Management consulting firms regularly survey their corporate clients on a range of issues. Besides surveying corporate clients on the use of artificial intelligence in their operations management, management consulting firms have also focused on how the U.S. government's changes in tariffs have resulted in companies restructuring their supply chains.

It is not surprising that across a significant number of industries, most of which are of national security importance, companies have restructured their supply chains.

The details of these surveys indicate that the supply chain restructuring efforts have focused on making sure that companies have more options to use geographically diverse port gateways. Often these are described as being four or five corner strategies.

These shifts align directly with what is being discussed in the SCLA session, organizations moving away from single threaded global models toward regionalized, diversified, and policy aware supply chain architectures.

Key Question: How Will Policy Makers React?

It is easy to conclude that inflation will surge or that a recession will occur. However, it is important to consider the "reaction function."

The Federal Reserve will try to engage in counter cyclical policy actions in order to reduce inflation or the potential severity of a contraction in economic activity.

How the Federal Reserve chooses to proceed will matter a great deal. While it might be tempting to conclude a doom and gloom scenario of impending recession, the Fed will continue to walk the proverbial tightrope.

If they keep rates too high for too long, it will likely tip the economy into a recession. If the Fed cuts rates, then they could avoid a recession, but push inflation even higher, which is against their mandate.

At the same time, trade policy and industrial policy are increasingly being used as strategic levers, further reinforcing that supply chain design must now incorporate policy forecasting as a core capability.

Conclusions

In our view, even if the geopolitical tension in the world and or the Middle East settles down, companies should not drop their guard, as many did once the Covid 19 pandemic settled down.

It is more important now than ever before to have both a tariff and a geopolitical risk management strategy in place. Even if the worst economic scenario of a recession and an increase in inflation do not occur, supply chain managers need to remain on guard.

"This is no longer about managing disruption. It is about designing for it."

Ultimately, the companies that will outperform are those that transition from reactive "war room" responses to proactive "lighthouse" strategies, embedding geopolitical awareness, tariff management, and predictive capabilities directly into how their supply chains are designed and operated. ■

From Hype to Autonomy: The AI Inflection Point in Supply Chains

By Aniket Joglekar and Ahash Srivastava, McKinsey & Co.

The gap between AI ambition and execution in supply chains has never been wider, and more consequential. While nearly every organization is investing in AI, with ›70% of organizations reportedly using AI in at least one business function in 2025, only a small fraction are translating that investment into measurable impact. In fact, organizations that launched AI transformations have captured only about 30% of their expected revenue increase and about 25% of their expected cost reduction.

This gap is not simply a technology issue, ***it reflects a broader challenge in translating capability into coordinated, enterprise-level action.*** The result is a growing divide: some supply chains are becoming faster, smarter, and increasingly autonomous, while others remain stuck in pilots and proofs of concept. What's driving this divergence isn't technology, it's how leaders are rethinking decision-making, workflows, and operating models.

Strides in AI: From insights to autonomous supply chains

AI in supply chains has moved beyond analytics and dashboards. The latest wave, combining generative and agentic AI, is fundamentally changing how decisions are made and executed.

Traditional AI focused on optimizing individual processes like demand forecasting or inventory planning. Generative AI added the ability to synthesize insights and support decision-making through natural language, enabling more intuitive interactions and higher-quality copilots that assist thinking, writing, and analysis. For example, in logistics, generative AI can shorten the lead time for producing documentation by auto-generating and consolidating shipping documents, flagging mistakes, and reducing manual workload. It is also enabling virtual subject-matter-expert chatbots for warehouse insights, and real-time messaging assistants that connect drivers, dispatchers, and customers to resolve delivery issues faster.

Now, Agentic AI is taking the next leap: systems that can reason, simulate trade-offs, and execute actions across the supply chain with minimal human intervention. In practice, AI agents can plan, execute, and coordinate multi-step tasks with limited supervision. For example, Supply Agents can create a live, probabilistic view of supply by integrating supplier capacity, risk signals, and upstream disruptions, and trigger pre-emptive, cross-functional responses before impact materializes. Self-adjusting production systems can reconfigure schedules, capacity, and sourcing in real time as constraints evolve. Logistics Agents provide highly reliable delivery promises by synchronizing inventory, capacity, and logistics constraints across the network, and dynamically reroute orders, rebalance loads, and resolve exceptions in-flight to protect service and margin. Orchestrator agents can coordinate ecosystems of specialized agents, continuously balancing enterprise-wide trade-offs across cost, service, and risk.

> *"The leaders pulling ahead are redesigning workflows, operating models, and decision-making structures around AI-enabled orchestration."*

The defining shift is not individual use cases, but the ability to coordinate decisions across functions in near real time. As this model scales, employees increasingly act as managers of AI agents, rather than just users of software.

The impact is tangible. Advanced deployments have demonstrated 20–50% productivity improvements and 4–7% reductions in cost of goods sold. In some cases, organizations have achieved up to 10x faster planning cycles and significantly improved responsiveness to disruptions. Digital twins have enabled 10%+ reductions in inventory days of supply and lower fulfillment costs, while improving service. In warehousing, shippers increasingly are realizing double-digit labor productivity improvements alongside better picking accuracy and lower cost per order as digital and AI capabilities mature. These results are emerging in targeted deployments and are not yet broadly realized across most organizations.

Critically, the breakthrough is not any single AI tool, it's orchestration. Leading organizations are building ecosystems of AI agents that work together across planning, procurement, logistics, and operations. These systems continuously balance trade-offs between cost, service, and risk, and can trigger coordinated actions end to end, something no human team can do at scale in real time.

The implication is clear: AI is no longer just supporting decisions, it is becoming a central component of how decisions are generated, evaluated, and executed within the supply chain.

Reality check: Most organizations are still in the early stages

Despite rapid technological progress, most companies are far from realizing this vision.

In a recent forum of senior retail supply chain leaders, ›50% of the executives indicated they are experimenting with or piloting AI use cases. Only 6% are scaling AI across multiple use cases, and just 3% have fully embedded AI into their operations. This pattern mirrors broader adoption: only a small share of organizations report reaching scale with AI agents, and supply chain and inventory management often lag other business functions.

Even among organizations investing in AI, value realization remains limited: many programs capture only a fraction of the benefits in their original business cases. ***This suggests that the challenge is less about access to AI capabilities and more about the ability to integrate them into existing decision and execution frameworks.***

Several structural barriers continue to hold organizations back.

Strategy, Leadership & Governance

- Unclear ROI and value measurement frameworks
- Lack of senior leadership conviction and sustained sponsorship
- Unclear ownership, governance, and vendor/partner strategy

Data & Technology Foundations

- Fragmented, low-quality, and inaccessible data
- Legacy technology constraints and integration complexity
- Legal and business policy constraints with sharing data with vendors/partners

Talent & Capabilities

- Gaps in AI, data, and product management expertise, too few "translators" bridging business, data, and technology
- Gaps in leadership understanding of what constitutes best-in-class AI, both in terms of emerging capabilities and what a successful implementation looks like

Operating Model & Adoption

- Operating models not redesigned for AI-driven decision-making, roles, controls, escalation paths
- Change-management friction, including low adoption, lack of trust, and inconsistent frontline execution

Perhaps most importantly, many organizations are trying to layer AI onto existing processes rather than rethinking how decisions should be made, and how decisions should flow across functions. This often results in localized improvements without meaningful end-to-end impact.

"The challenge is no longer whether AI works — it is whether organizations are structured to capture its value at scale."

This is where the gap between leaders and laggards is widening. High-performing organizations are nearly three times more likely to fundamentally redesign workflows during AI deployment and significantly more likely to have strong executive ownership of AI initiatives. They are also more focused on growth and innovation outcomes, not just efficiency.

In short, the challenge is not whether AI works, it is whether organizations are set up to capture its value.

What leaders do well: Turning AI into impact

Organizations that are successfully capturing value from AI in supply chains share a set of common practices. These are less about technology and more about how decisions are structured and executed.

Senior supply chain leaders should focus on the following priorities:

- Start with a domain, not isolated use cases: Transform an end-to-end domain, for example, demand planning or logistics, rather than deploying fragmented point solutions. A domain-led approach concentrates on sponsorship, creates data and change synergies, and accelerates scaling.
- Redesign workflows around decisions: Fundamentally rethink how decisions are made. Move from manual coordination and spreadsheet-driven processes to closed-loop systems where AI generates scenarios, prioritizes actions, and supports rapid decision-making, while keeping the human in the loop.
- Build orchestration, not just automation: Connect multiple AI capabilities into a cohesive system that aligns decisions across functions, rather than optimizing individual tasks in isolation.
- Anchor transformation in business ownership: Make AI programs business-led, with clear executive sponsors, product owners, aligned incentives, and accountability for operational outcomes, not just technical delivery.
- Relentlessly focus on measurable value: Tie use cases to financial performance, fund what proves impact, and stop initiatives that don't.
- Invest in talent and capabilities: Build cross-functional teams, supply chain, data science, engineering, product, and change, and upskill frontline leaders so AI becomes a trusted "team member."
- Build foundational architecture, "AI factory": Create reusable data products, integration patterns, and governance so solutions are repeatable, secure, and scalable, without waiting for perfect data.
- Communicate and lead the change: Set a clear narrative internally, reinforce it often, and manage adoption deliberately, training, incentives, controls, and exception handling.

Across these priorities, the consistent pattern is alignment between decision-making, execution, and accountability, not simply deployment of new tools.

The common thread is a shift from technology deployment to decision transformation. In effect, organizations must rewire both the "what," value roadmap and data, and the "how," operating model, technology, talent, adoption, and scaling, to progress from effective response to autonomous orchestration.

Closing

The supply chain is entering a new era, one where competitive advantage will be defined by how quickly and effectively organizations can sense, decide, and act. AI is not just another tool in this evolution; it is the foundation of a new operating model.

Done well, this shift can be as consequential as the invention of the shipping container, an innovation that redefined global trade by standardizing, accelerating, and lowering the cost of moving goods.

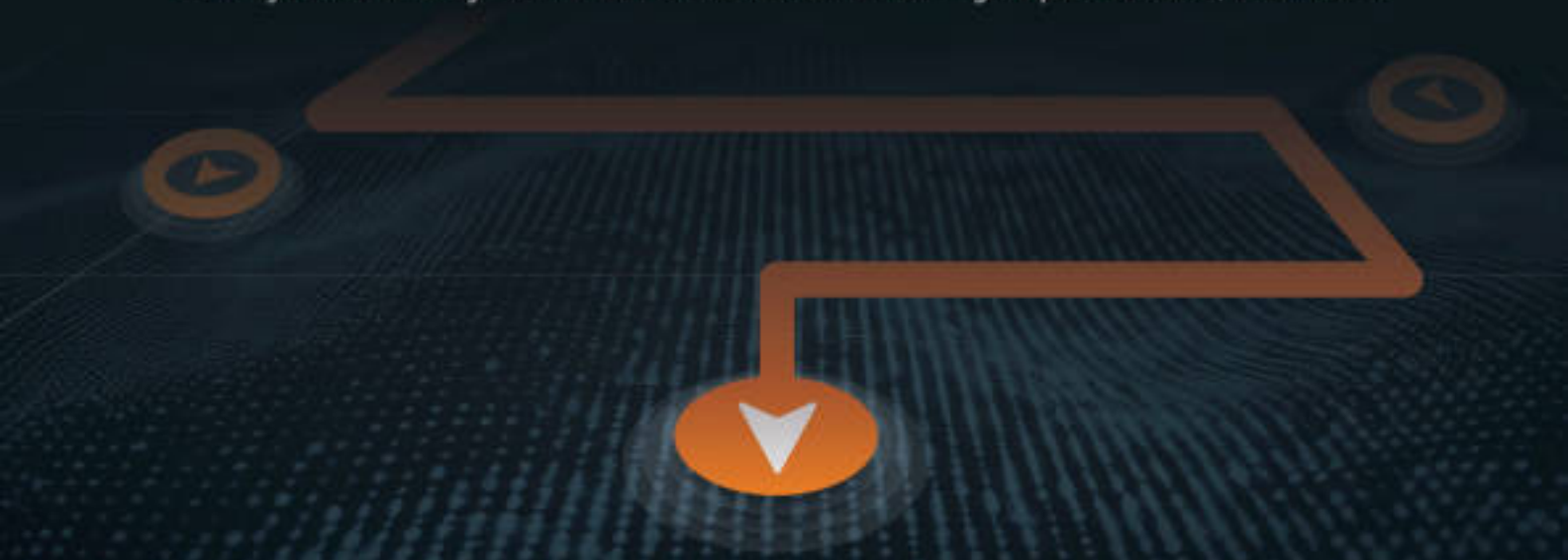
The leaders who move now, reimagining workflows, investing in orchestration, and scaling with intent, will define the next generation of supply chain excellence. The rest risk being left behind, not because they lack access to AI, but because they failed to transform how decisions are made and executed. ■

KONEXIAL

Your customers won't wait.

Meet the *Geo-Operations Platform.*

Always-on ecosystem. Live decision making. Operations, handled.



Powered by our Ki technology to keep you confidently ahead.

SNAP TO VIEW

IT IN ACTION

konexial.com

2026 Supply Chain Leaders in Action

Annual Executive Business Forum

Supply Chain Leaders in Action

The Supply Chain Leaders in Action would like to acknowledge our generous sponsors for their support of the following at the 2026 Annual Executive Business Forum:

Welcome Reception

GREEN MOUNTAIN

SCWA Opening Session Program

IBM

The AI Experience – Powered by Avathon

avathon.

Chair's Reception

Lenovo

Pitch Tank Sponsor

HappyRobot

Circle of Excellence

project44

Innisbrook Hotel Key Sponsor

Qued

General Information

Table of Contents

Welcome Letter 22
Conference Agenda 24
Committee Listings 28
Educational Resource Members 30
Session Abstracts 32
Biographies 35

Registration Hours:

Monday, June 22nd - 1:00 PM to 8:30 PM
Tuesday, June 23rd - 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM
Wednesday, June 24th - 7:00 AM to 5:00 PM

(Registration will be located in the ***STIRLING BALLROOM FOYER)***

General Session, Keynote Presentation, Breakfast and Lunch Locations:

All general sessions and keynote presentations, breakfasts and lunches will be held in the ***STIRLING BALLROOM***.

Peer Group Sessions:

Peer group sessions will be held Monday, June 22nd, 6:15 – 7:00 PM; Tuesday, June 23rd, 9:45 to 10:45 AM; and Wednesday, June 24th, 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM.

Stirling Hall – Peer Group Room Locations

Supply Chain Management Processes – ***Salons G/H***
Transportation Management – ***Salon Q***
Information Technology – ***Salon I***
Continuous Process Improvement, Robotics & Automation – ***Salon K***
Supply Chain Management Strategy – ***Salons L/M/N***
Procurement & Sourcing – ***Salon P***
Talent Management – ***Stirling Ballroom***

Edinburgh Hall – Peer Group Room Locations

Senior Executive – ***Edinburgh West***

Social Functions & Committee Meetings:

Monday, June 22nd

2:00 PM to 3:00 PM – Newcomer's reception – ***Salons D/E/F & Terrace***
6:15 PM to 7:00 PM - Peer group meet and greet: Locations vary. ***(see room designations)***
7:00 PM to 9:00 PM – Welcome reception – ***Salons D/E/F & Terrace***
8:30 PM to 9:00 PM – Mandatory speaker meeting – ***Stirling Ballroom***

Tuesday, June 23rd

7:00 AM to 7:45 AM – Breakfast – Stirling Ballroom
9:45 AM to 10:45 AM – Peer Groups – Various locations
12:00 PM to 1:15 PM – Networking Luncheon – Stirling Ballroom
6:00 PM to 9:00 PM – Cocktail Reception followed by Circle of Excellence & Distinguished Service Awards Dinner – ***Stirling Ballroom***

Wednesday, June 24th

7:00 AM to 8:15 AM – Education Committee meeting – ***Salon B***
7:30 AM to 8:15 AM – Breakfast – ***Stirling Ballroom***
11:30 AM to 12:30 PM – Peer Groups – ***Various locations***
12:30 PM to 2:00 PM – SCLA Executive Outlook – ***Stirling Ballroom***
4:30 PM to 6:00 PM – Closing reception – ***Stirling Ballroom Foyer***

Welcome Attendees

Dear Distinguished Supply Chain Colleagues,

Greetings!

This year marks the 20th anniversary of our Executive Business Forum. Events like this are sustained through the dedication, insight, and support of our members. We truly have a phenomenal group of committed volunteers, and I am both thrilled and humbled to welcome you to SCLA 2026 – Leading with Passion and Purpose: Elevating the Future of Supply Chain.

Delivering fresh, meaningful content year after year is no small challenge. Since last fall, the Education Committee, along with our association members and talented network of experts, has worked diligently to create a program designed to inspire, educate, and spark valuable conversation.

One thing I have learned through my experience with SCLA is that you get out of it what you put into it. Let's especially embrace our new association members alongside our forum veterans. The collaboration within this group is truly unique. Your active participation in the panels, breakout sessions, and discussions will enrich both your personal and professional growth.

Monday kicks off with our traditional Welcome Reception and Program Overview. I'm especially excited for the Supply Chain Women in Action keynote. Many of us are constantly pursuing productivity while trying to manage our most precious resource — time.

Tuesday is packed with engaging sessions and networking opportunities. Brian Biro will start the day with a powerful leadership message. We are also excited to introduce a new feature this year — The Supply Chain Outlook Report — a collaborative industry perspective designed to capture emerging trends, key challenges, strategic priorities, and forward-looking insights from leaders across our membership and expert network. We will conclude the evening with our Circle of Excellence Dinner, celebrating innovation, leadership, and achievement across the supply chain profession.

Wednesday begins with a discussion on geopolitical concerns impacting global supply chains and concludes with the always exciting Pitch Tank competition. We worked hard to ensure broad member participation throughout the program, including numerous first-time members. Listen, learn, and engage. Discover the ideas, perspectives, and solutions that can bring meaningful value to your respective supply chains.

Special thanks to each of our session leaders and panelists for the wisdom, preparation, and time they have contributed throughout the year. Without your dedication, this forum would not be possible.

Let's continue sharing our passion for all things supply chain. Enjoy the time together — and the wine!

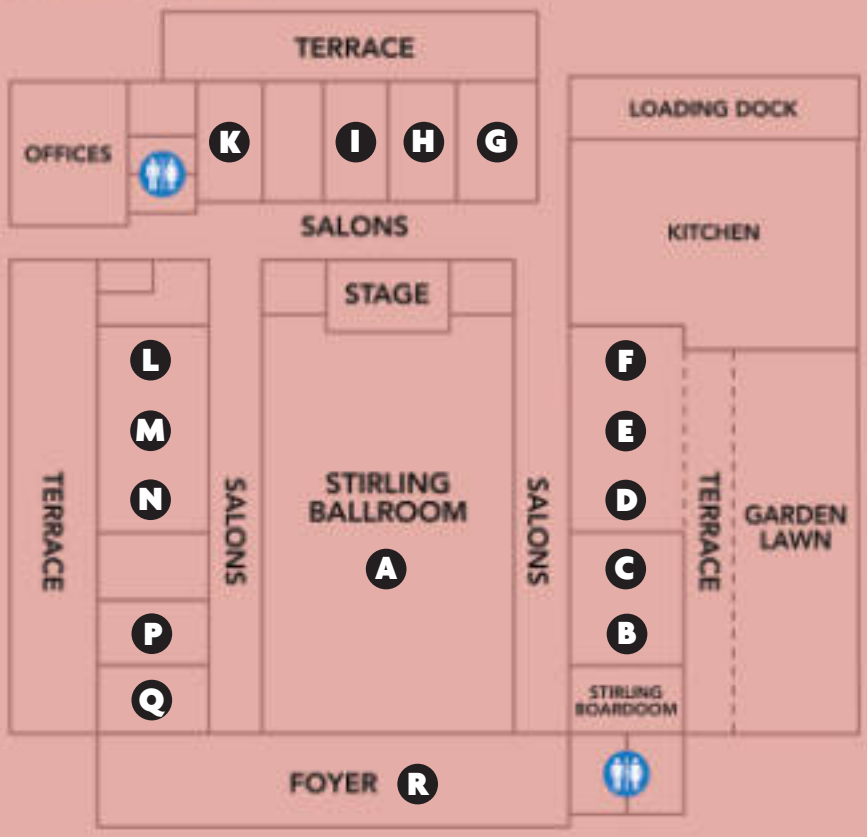
Warm Regards,

John Hickey

SVP Supply Chain & Operations, Acme United
2026 Education Committee Chair

Floor Plan & Layout

STIRLING HALL



R Daily Registration – Stirling Ballroom Foyer

Peer Group Sessions:

Monday, June 22nd from 6:15 PM to 7:00 PM
Tuesday, June 23rd from 9:45 AM to 10:45 AM
Wednesday, June 24th from 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM

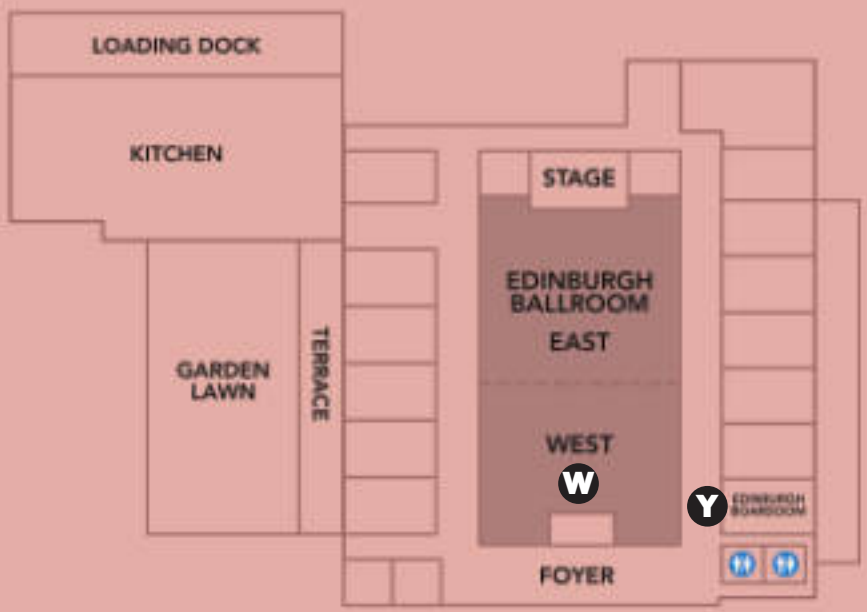
Stirling Hall – Peer Group Room Locations

- **G Supply Chain Management Processes:** Salons G/H
- **Q Transportation Management:** Salon Q
- **I Information Technology:** Salon I
- **K Continuous Process Improvement, Robotics & Automation:** Salon K
- **L Supply Chain Management Strategy:** Salons L/M/N
- **Y Talent Management –** Stirling Boardroom
- **P Procurement & Sourcing –** Salon P

Edinburgh Hall – Peer Group Room Locations

- **W Senior Executive –** Edinburgh West

EDINBURGH HALL



Social Functions and Committee Meetings:

Monday, June 22nd

- **D 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM – Newcomers' reception –** Salons D/E/F & Terrace
  6:15 PM to 7:00 PM – Peer group meet and greet – Various locations *(see above)*
- **D 7:00 PM to 8:15 PM – Welcome reception –** Salon D
- **A 8:30 PM to 9:15 PM – Mandatory speaker meeting –** Stirling Ballroom

Tuesday, June 23rd

- **A 7:00 AM to 7:45 AM – Breakfast –** Stirling Ballroom
  9:45 AM to 10:45 – Peer Groups – Various locations *(see above)*
- **A 12:00 PM to 1:15 PM – Networking Luncheon –** Stirling Ballroom
- **A 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM – Cocktail Reception followed by Circle of Excellence & Distinguished Service Awards Dinner –** Stirling Ballroom

Wednesday, June 24th

- **B 7:00 AM to 8:15 AM – Education Committee meeting –** Salon B
- **A 7:30 AM to 8:15 AM – Breakfast –** Stirling Ballroom
  11:30 PM to 12:30 PM – Peer Groups – Various locations *(see above)*
- **A 12:30 PM to 2:00 PM – SCLA Luncheon & Executive Outlook –** Stirling Ballroom
- **R 4:30 PM to 5:15 PM – Closing reception –** Stirling Ballroom Foyer

2026 SCLA Annual Executive Business Forum

Supply Chain -Today -Tomorrow -Together

MONDAY, JUNE 22, 2026

1:00 pm – 8:30 pm	**Registration – *Stirling Ballroom Foyer***
2:00 pm – 3:00 pm	**Newcomers' Reception – *Stirling Salon D***
4:00 pm – 6:00 pm	**Welcome & Program Overview – *Stirling Ballroom*** Amy Thorn, CEO, SCLA **Supply Chain Women in Action Keynote – Using AI to Elevate Personal and Professional Productivity** ***Presented by SCWA Committee:*** *Raina Avalon, EVP & Chief Logistics Officer, TJX & SCWA Chair and Fotini Petroula,VP, Technology Lifecycle Services & Cloud Supply Chain, IBM* *Anita Toth, Manager Technical Transformation and Execution, Supply Chain, IBM* ***Workshop Presenters:*** *Pushpinder Singh, Partner Global Practice Leader, IBM* *Matthias Grafe, Director of Supply Chain Transformation, IBM*
6:15 pm – 7:00 pm	**Peer Groups Meet and Greet – *Multiple Locations***
7:00 pm – 9:00 pm	**Welcome Reception – *Stirling Salon D***
8:30 pm – 9:00 pm	**Mandatory Speaker Meeting – *Stirling Ballroom***

TUESDAY, JUNE 23, 2026

7:00 am – 5:00 pm	**Registration – *Stirling Ballroom Foyer***	
7:00 am – 7:45 am	**Breakfast – *Stirling Ballroom***	
8:00 am – 8:15 am	**Welcome – *Stirling Ballroom*** Amy Thorn, CEO Supply, Chain Leaders in Action ***Introductions:*** Ben Massie, VP, Global Supply Chain, Lenovo & SCLA Executive Committee Chair ***Opening Remarks & Program Overview:*** John Hickey, SVP Supply Chain & Operations, Acme United & Education Committee Chair	
8:15 am – 9:30 am	**Keynote: Breakthrough Leadership! – *Stirling Ballroom*** *Brian Biro, Keynote Speaker*	
9:30 am – 9:45 am	**Break**	
9:45 am– 10:45 am	**Peer Groups – *Multiple Locations***	
10:45 am – 11:00 am	**Break**	
11:00 am – 12:00 pm	**Augmented AI vs. AI-Driven Innovation – *Stirling Ballroom*** ***Moderator:*** Brian Cooper, Chief Marketing Officer, project44 ***Panelists:*** Julia Bedanova, COO, Million Dollar Baby Marcus Olsen, VP Supply Chain, Surplus City, LLC Ned Frisbee, Director of Procurement, Toshiba Nikita Parikh, Global Sourcing Lead, Google	**War Room to Lighthouse: Leading Through the Perfect Storm – *Edinburgh East*** ***Moderator:*** Raina Avalon, Executive Vice President & Chief Logistics Officer, TJX ***Panelists:*** Joe Ruddy, Chief Innovation Officer, The Port of Virginia Adis Sulejmanovic, Head of Digital Supply Chain Transformation & Strategy, Kraft Heinz

TUESDAY, JUNE 23, 2026

12:00 pm – 1:15 pm	**Networking Lunch – *Stirling Ballroom*** **A Global Supply Chain and Geopolitical Briefing on Current Risks** Tom Marotta, Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy (Retired); Ron Marotta, EVP Yusen Logistics	
1:15 pm – 2:15 pm	**Energy and Water: Impacts on Infrastructure Planning & Supply Chain – *Edinburgh East*** ***Moderator:*** Nicholas Konen, VP Strategic Development, Hillwood ***Panelists:*** Judodine Nichols, Chief Technology Officer, Principal Minerals; Joni Sartain, VP, Onsite Energy Solutions, Walmart Shayne Wahlmeier, SVP, Energy, Walmart Amy Rardin, Sr. Director SC Digitization & Strategic Partner, P&G	**Aligning Sales and Supply Chain for Strategic Growth – *Stirling Ballroom*** ***Moderator:*** Tracey Noffke, Sr. Director - Customer Logistics Strategies, Kimberly-Clark ***Panelists:*** Katherine Storer, CSCO, Berlin Packaging Breann Lay, Head of Integrated Supply Chain, North America Region, Philips Ann Benzon, Head of Sales & Operations, Kraft Heinz Matthew DeLaurentis, Vice President, Logistics & Customer Supply Chain, Acme
2:15 pm – 2:30 pm	**Break**	
2:30 pm – 3:30 pm	**Generational Leadership in the Age of AI: From Stereotypes to Synergy – *Edinburgh East*** ***Moderator:*** Katherine Jeffery, PhD, Generational Consultant, GenShift ***Presenters:*** Aniket Joglekar, Partner, McKinsey Ashley Bushey, VP E2E Strategy & Ops Support, Walmart David Lande, VP Intake & Customer Success, Caliber Collision Bart De Muynck, Founder (Bart De Muynck LLC) Kailey Beck, Global Supply Chain Rotational Program Manager, Lenovo	**The Pivot in Planning: Moving Past Traditional Planning to Orchestration and Beyond – *Stirling Ballroom*** ***Moderator:*** Christine Barnhart, Head of Industry Engagement & Alliances, Miebach ***Panelists:*** Stefan Schulz, SVP, Strategy & Operational Development, 3M Ken Kwasniewski, Director, SC Transformation, Rich Foods Pam Jobert, Sr. Director Supply Network Operations, P&G Matt Tichon, Exec. Director Applied AI & Decision Intelligence, Kinaxis
3:30 pm – 3:45 pm	**Break**	
3:45 pm – 4:45 pm	**Leadership: Teams and Trust — Building the Next Generation of Leaders – *Stirling Ballroom*** ***Moderator:*** Rachel Clapp-Smith, Dean of the Mike Cottrell College of Business, Univ. North Georgia ***Panelists:*** Harry Ziff, VP Corporate Logistics, EastPenn Jeff Kellan, President Omnichannel Retail CPG Division Americas & Asian Pacific, GXO Raina Avalon, EVP & Chief Logistics Officer, TJX Jordan Strawn, SVP Logistics, Werner Marcus Olsen, VP Supply Chain, Surplus City	
4:45 pm – 5:00 pm	**Wrap-Up and Closing Remarks** Ben Massie, VP, Global Supply Chain, Lenovo & SCLA Executive Committee Chair John Hickey, SVP Supply Chain & Operations, Acme United & Education Committee Chair	
6:00 pm – 9:00 pm	**Cocktail Reception & Circle of Excellence, Distinguished Service, & Lifetime Achievement Awards Dinner – *Stirling Foyer & Ballroom***	

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24TH,

7:00 am – 5:00 pm	**Registration– *Stirling Ballroom Foyer***
7:00 am – 8:15 am	**Education Committee Meeting – *Salon B***
7:30 am – 8:15 am	**Breakfast – *Stirling Ballroom***

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 24TH,

8:30 am–8:45 am	**Opening Remarks – *Stirling Ballroom*** Amy Thorn, CEO, SCLA; Ben Massie, VP, Global Supply Chain, Lenovo & SCLA Executive Committee Chair John Hickey, SVP Supply Chain & Operations, Acme United & Education Committee Chair
8:45 am–10:00 am	**Navigating Global Volatility: Geopolitical Disruption, Tariff Turbulence, and the Redrawing of the Supply Chain Map – *Stirling Ballroom*** ***Moderator:*** Don Klock, Adjunct Professor, Rutgers ***Panelists:*** John Hickey, SVP, Supply Chain and Operations, Acme United Ryan Hutcherson, SVP Supply Chain, Georgia Pacific Rodger Baker, RANE; Kate Gerdes, Integrated Supply Chain Strategy, Risk and M&A Executive, Philips Ben Massie, Vice President, ISG Global Supply Chain, Lenovo
10:00 am – 10:15 am	**Break**
10:15 am – 11:15 am	**Powering Business Outcomes AI Journey – *Stirling Ballroom*** ***Moderator:*** Fotini Petroula, VP, Technology Lifecycle Services & Cloud Supply Chain, IBM ***Panelists:*** Peter Brereton, CEO, Tecsys Amy Rardin, Sr. Director SC Digitization & Strategic Partner, P&G; Rich Rosselle, Director ISG Global Supply Chain Strategy (Lenovo) Matthias Grafe, Director of Supply Chain Transformation, IBM
11:15 am – 11:30 am	**Break**
11:30 am – 12:30 pm	**Peer Groups – *Multiple locations***
12:30 pm–2:00 pm	**Networking Lunch – SCLA Executive Outlook 2026 - Fireside Chat – *Stirling Ballroom*** Amy Thorn, CEO, SCLA Tom Goldsby, Dee & Jimmy Haslam Chair in Logistics, University of Tennessee John Hickey, SVP Supply Chain & Operations, Acme Ben Massie, VP Global Supply Chain, Lenovo Nick Banich, CRO, USA & Canada, Miebach
2:00 pm–3:00 pm	**Proving ROI Through Measurable Impact – *Stirling Ballroom*** ***Moderator:*** Heidi Benko, VP Product Marketing & Strategy, infor ***Panelists:*** Stefan Schulz, SVP, Strategy & Operational Development, 3M Doug Cantriel, Head of North American Transportation & Modernization, Ford Motor Company Candace Palmarozzi, Vice President - Controller, Finance, BNSF Nick Banich, CRO, USA & Canada, Miebach
3:00 pm – 3:15 pm	**Break**
3:15 pm – 4:15 pm	**Pitch Tank – *Stirling Ballroom*** ***Pitch Tank Presenters:*** David Bell, Co-Founder & CEO, CloneOps.ai Zohar Bronfman, Co-Founder & CEO, Pecan AI Josh Gruenstein, Co-founder & CEO, Tutor Intelligence ***Pitch Tank Judges:*** Marcus Olsen, VP, Supply Chain, Surplus City Renée Ure, Co-Founder, Executive Leadership Insights Rob Holland, VP Transportation & Logistics, Tailored Brands Jeff Kellan, Division President, Omni-channel Retail, AMAPAC GXO Logistics Pablo Palafox, CEO, HappyRobot
4:15 pm – 4:30 pm	**Wrap-Up and Closing – *Stirling Ballroom***
4:30 pm – 5:30 pm	**Closing Reception – *Stirling Ballroom Foyer***

tecsys

Lead with clarity. Act with confidence.

Complex operations don't need more complexity. They need clarity. Tecsys' supply chain execution software delivers the real-time visibility, control and flexibility you need to stop reacting and start leading – whether you're managing three sites or 30.

Built for distribution. Proven at scale.

Purpose-built supply chain software

Network-wide visibility

Real-time decision-making

Flexible, configurable workflows

Move smarter. Operate faster.

www.tecsys.com/wms
info@tecsys.com
Toll Free: 1-800-922-8649

Supply Chain Leaders in Action 2026 Executive Committee

Lenovo
Benjamin Massie
VP, Global Supply Chain – ISG
Executive Committee Chair SCLA2026

3M
Stefan Shulz
SVP, Strategy & Operational Development

Acme United Corporation
John Hickey
SVP, Supply Chain and Operations

Avathon
Pervinder Johar
CEO

Berlin Packaging
Katherine Storer
CSCO

BNSF Railway, Inc
Gregg Zody
General Director- Consumer Products

Caliber Collision
David Lande
VP Customer Success & Demand Planning

Central Michigan University
Misty Bennett
Associate Dean

Champion Petfoods
Carlos Castro
Global Direction, Distribution & Logistics

Descartes Systems Group
Mike Hane
Director, Product Marketing

Dole International
Nathalie Cote
Associate Director Supply Chain & Customer Service

Dole International
Todd Stillwell
VP Supply Chain and Manufacturing

EastPenn
Harry Ziff
VP Corporate Logistics

Elemica
Arun Samuga
Chief Innovation Officer

Estes Express
Pat Martin
VP Corporate Logistics

Fender
Mary McNelly
VP Global Distribution & Logistics

Ford Motor Company
Doug Cantriel
Head of North American Transportation & Modernization

Ferguson Enterprises
David Simons
SVP Supply Chain

Georgia Pacific
Ryan Hutcherson
SVP Customer Experience & Demand Fulfillment

Georgia Ports
Flavio Batista
Chief Operation Officer

Good360
Grant Fitzgerald
Sr. Director Fulfillment and Logistics

Green Mountain Technology
Mike McComb
SVP Commercial Development

GXO
Michael Jacobs
President, Americas & Asia Pacific

HappyRobot
Pablo Palofax
Chief Executive Officer

Hillwood
Nicholas Konen
VP Strategic Development

IBM
Fotini Petroula
VP Technology Lifecycle Services and Cloud Supply Chain

Infor, GT Nexus
Heidi Benko
VP Product Marketing & Strategy

Instawork
Austin Bumpus
Sr. Director, Strategic Partnerships

Intelligent Audit
Hannah Testani
CEO

KBC Advisors
Todd Steffen
Market Leader

Kimberly-Clark
Tracey Noffke
VP Customer Logistics

McKesson
Gary Baker
VP Supply Chain Management

Kinaxis
Matt Tichon
Executive Director, Applied AI & Decision Intelligence

Konexial
Ken Evans
CEO

McKinsey
Aniket Joglekar
Partner

Miebach
Nicholas Banich
Chief Revenue Officer
Christine Barnhart
Head of Industry Engagement & Alliances

Million Dollar Baby Co.
Julia Bedanova
COO

Mitsubishi Heavy Industries
Mikio (Yoshi) Tsuneyoshi
EVP & Head of SCM

Nordstrom
Karoline Dygas
VP, CPO

Northwest Seaport Alliance
John Wolfe
Chief Executive Officer

nuVizz
Guru Rao
Chief Executive Officer

OneRail
Bill Catania
Co-Founder

Philips
Kate Gerdes
ISC Strategy

Principal Mineral
Judodine Nichols
Chief Technology Officer

Procter & Gamble
Amy Rardin
Sr. Director, SC Digitization & Strategic Partner

Project44
John Fitzgerald
VP Business Development

Qued
Prasad Gollapalli
CEO & Chaiman

Raymond Corporation
Tim Osmulski
Chief Supply Chain Officer

Rich's Foods
Ken Kwasniewski
Director, Supply Chain Transformation Delivery Lead

Rick McDonald Supply Chain Advisory, LLC
Rick McDonald
SVP and CSCO

Rutgers Business School
Donald Klock
Professor, Rutgers Business School

Sazerac
Giovanni Dal Bon
Head of Logistics

Surplus City
Marcus Olsen
VP Strategy, Surplus City

Standard Industries
Yair Leshem
Dir. Digital Transformation/Innovation

Tailored Brands
Jamie Bragg
Chief Supply Chain Officer

Tecsys
Peter Brereton
CEO

The Kemmsies Group
Walter Kemsis
Managing Partner

The Kraft Heinz Company
William Durbin
Vice President NA Logistics & Planning

TJX Companies
Raina Avalon
EVP-Chief Logistics Officer

Toshiba Global Commerce Solutions
Steven Mensch
Senior VP Global Supply Chain

University of Tennessee
Thomas Goldsby
Professor, SCM

US Bank
Jeff Pape
General Manager

R4 Technologies
Mark Henrich (Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy, Retired)
President

Valvoline
Tom Gerald
SVP of Core North America

Virginia International Terminals, LLC
Tom Capozzi
Chief Sales Officer

Walmart
Ashley Bushey
VP, E2E Strategy & Opps Support

Werner
Jordan Strawn
SVP Logistics

Williams Sonoma
Brent Koslo
Chief Supply Chain Officer

Yusen Logistics (Americas) Inc
Ronald Marotta
Vice President

2026 Education Committee

Acme United Corporation
John Hickey
Sr. VP, Supply Chain and Operations Education Committee Chair, SCLA 2026

3M
Stefan Shulz
SVP, Strategy & Operational Development

Berlin Packaging
Katherine Storer
CSCO

BNSF Railway, Inc
Gregg Zody
General Director- Consumer Products

Central Michigan University
Misty Bennett
Associate Dean

Executive Leadership Insights
Renee Ure
Co-Founder

Ford Motor Company
Doug Cantriel
Head of North American Transportation & Modernization

Georgia Pacific
Ryan Hutcherson
SVP Customer Experience & Demand Fulfillment

GXO
Michael Jacobs
President, Americas & Asia Pacific

Infor, GT Nexus
Heidi Benko
VP Product Marketing & Strategy

Kimberly Clark
Tracey Noffke
VP Customer Logistics

Lenovo
Benjamin Massie
VP, Global Supply Chain - ISG

Miebach
Nicholas Banich
Chief Revenue Officer

Miebach
Christine Barnhart
Head of Industry Engagement & Alliances

Million Dollar Baby Co.
Julia Bedanova
COO

Nordstrom
Karoline Dygas
VP, CPO

Procter & Gamble
Amy Rardin
Sr. Director - SC Digitization & Strategic Partner

Philips
Kate Gerdes
ISC Strategy

Project44
John Fitzgerald
VP Business Development

Raymond Corporation
Tim Osmulski
CSCO

Rick McDonald; Supply Chain Advisory, LLC
Richard McDonald
CEO

Rutgers Business School
Don Klock
Professor, Global Procurement and Sourcing Specialization

Surplus City
Marcus Olsen
VP Strategy

The Kraft Heinz Company
William Durbin
Vice President NA Logistics & Planning

TJX Companies
Raina Avalon
Executive Vice President-Chief Logistics Officer

University of Tennessee
Thomas Goldsby
Professor, SCM

Walmart
Ashley Bushey
VP, E2E Strategy & Opps Support

Werner
Jordan Strawn
VP Logistics

Yusen Logistics (Americas) Inc
Ronald Marotta
Vice President

2026 Academic Facilitators

Georgia Institute of Technology
Chelsea (Chip) White, Ph.D.
Professor and Schneider National Chair of Transportation and Logistics
Peer Group: Continuous Process Improvement

Loyola University of Chicago
Harry Haney
(Fmr) Dir, Supply Chain & Sustainability Center, Loyola University Chicago
Peer Group: Supply Chian Mgt Strategy

Rutgers Business School
Donald (Don) Klock, Ph.D.
Adjunct Professor, Rutgers
Peer Group: Procurement & Sourcing

University of North Texas
Terrance (Terry) Pohlen, Ph.D.
Professor of Logistics and Associate Dean for Operations and Research
Transportation Management

University of Tennessee
Thomas (Tom) Goldsby, Ph.D.
Haslam Chair of Logistics, Department of Supply Chain Management
Peer Group: Senior Executive

University of North Georgia
Rachel Clapp-Smith
Dean of the Mike Cottrell College of Business, Univ. North Georgia
Peer Group: Talent Management

Georgia Southern University
Deepak Iygenar
Professor of Logistics & Supply Chain Management
Peer Group: Information Technology

University of Denver
Jack Buffington
Professor of Logistics
Peer Group: Supply Chain Mgt Processes

University of North Georgia
Varun Gupta
Associate Professor of Logistics and Supply Chain Management
Peer Group: Peer Group: Supply Chain Management

2026 Educational Resource Members

Avathon
Sean Rollings, VP Product Marketing
srollings@avathon.com
650.740.7238
www.avathon.com
Avathon is the leading Industrial AI autonomy platform, helping customers across heavy industries -- energy, mining, manufacturing, aerospace, defense, and logistics -- accelerate the journey toward autonomous operations. Our platform is built on a Computational Knowledge Graph foundation that contextualizes and connects operational data across siloed systems, bringing together time series, structured, unstructured, and machine vision data to power AI-driven applications in asset performance management, supply chain intelligence, visual AI, and global trade management. With capabilities spanning digital twins, normal behavior modeling, natural language processing, and computer vision, Avathon delivers real-time predictive intelligence and agentic decision-making at industrial scale.

Descartes Systems Group Inc.
Brian Hodgson, GM Trade Intelligence
bhodgson@descartes.com
Tel: 617-922-4619
Mike Hane, Director, Product Marketing
mhane@descartes.com
http://www.descartes.com
Descartes is the global leader in providing on-demand, software-as-a-service solutions focused on improving the productivity, security and sustainability of logistics-intensive businesses. Solutions are used to route, track and help improve the safety, performance and compliance of delivery resources; plan, allocate and execute shipments; rate, audit and pay transportation invoices; access global trade data; file customs and security documents for imports/exports; and complete numerous logistics processes by participating in the world's largest, collaborative multimodal logistics community. Descartes is headquartered in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada and has offices and partners around the world.

Green Mountain
Mike McComb, SVP Commercial Development
mmccomb@greenmt.com
http://www.greenmt.com
The mountain standing between companies and their most effective shipping solutions can feel insurmountable. That's where we come in. Our approach moves those mountains out of your way. A team of leading industry experts who work as an extension of your organization, so we're not an added to-do list item but a way to make that list shorter. The most powerful data and technology which offer the highest level of intelligence so future issues are identified and solved before they affect your business. Partnerships that know no bounds. Our solutions are built for scale and complexity, designed with the world's largest shippers in mind. We'll immerse ourselves in your business to meet your needs with precision and innovation. Founded by a group of entrepreneurs committed to creating better shipping and financial outcomes for clients, Green Mountain is the first company to provide a dedicated and automated Parcel Spend Management solution, a service we're still proudly offering today.

HappyRobot
Kathryn Dean, Head of Growth
kathryn@happyrobot.ai
HappyRobot helps enterprises like DHL, Kuehne+Nagel, or Ryder put agents to work in complex environments. Agents are autonomous AI workers that communicate, coordinate, and execute tasks end to end. Deploying them at scale means covering core operations — from freight quote requests and shipment status updates to carrier onboarding, claims intake, and payment collection. HappyRobot's platform captures context from every interaction and gets smarter over time, giving enterprises a highly competitive, differentiated operating system.

Infor Nexus™
Heidi Benko, VP Product Marketing & Strategy
Heidi.benko@infor.com
Tel: (646) 336-1700
http://www.infor.com/scm
Infor Nexus™ is the leading end-to-end global supply chain platform, helping companies achieve unmatched visibility for over 20 years. Infor Nexus connects a network of brands, retailers, manufacturers, suppliers, logistics providers, and banks on a single-instance network platform to orchestrate global supply chain processes seamlessly from source to delivery and payment. Companies streamline their operations, eliminating inefficiencies and waste while gaining data-driven insights and optimizing the flow of capital for improved agility, resilience, and sustainability.

Instawork
Austin Bumpus, Director, Strategic Partnerships
abumpus@instawork.com
Tel: (248) 943-1320
http://www.instawork.com
The future of hourly work has arrived. At Instawork, our mission is to create economic opportunities for local businesses and hourly workers across the globe. We believe that everyone deserves a chance to thrive in their careers, and we're here to empower our users to make that happen. In 2015, Instawork was founded to efficiently connect businesses with hourly workers, making hiring as easy as ordering a ride or meal. Now, Instawork is the leading marketplace for hourly workers, with the largest platform connecting businesses to hourly workers at 70M+ hourly workers in network. With over 7M workers across North America, Instawork has the scale to meet business' needs large or small, wherever they are. Rewarding and retaining top workers. The highest-performing workers qualify for our 'Top Pro' program to unlock more shift opportunities and get cash bonuses on select shifts. Delivering first-class shift experiences. Workers go through a background check and validation of work history and certifications. We send vetted 'Captains' to make your large shifts run more smoothly. Investment in AI and other cutting-edge technologies. We're using our billions of signals to optimize worker fit, increase reliability and maximize worker return rate.

Intelligent Audit
Hannah Testani, CEO
htestani@intelligentaudit.com
Tel: (201) 880-1110
http://www.intelligentaudit.com
Intelligent Audit, founded in 1996, is a leader in supply chain optimization, blending freight audit, recovery, and advanced analytics to drive data-driven decision-making. Utilizing machine learning and business intelligence, we streamline operations, ensuring cost efficiency and operational excellence across carriers globally. Our proprietary technology, offering over 750 customizable reports, empowers businesses to confidently tackle market volatilities, enhancing logistics and shipping effectiveness. Recognized as a WBENC-certified diversity supplier and a Logistics Disruptor by McKinsey & Co., and with our CEO honored as an EY Entrepreneur of the Year, we cater to a diverse client base, from Fortune 10 giants to small enterprises. Our significant impact is demonstrated by auditing over 1.1 billion shipments for more than 2,900 clients, affirming our pivotal role in their strategic supply chain achievements.

Kinaxis
Matt Tichon, Exec. Director Applied AI & Decision Intelligence
mtichon@kinaxis.com
Kinaxis® is a leading provider of cloud-based subscription software that enables businesses to improve and accelerate decision making across their supply chain operations. Our AI-infused supply chain orchestration platform, Maestro, is designed to unlock true adaptability. It enables better, faster decisions by connecting end-to-end concurrent planning and execution, helping teams respond dynamically as conditions change. Through continuous decision making and intelligent AI agents that accelerate routine work, Maestro helps global leaders balance service, margin, risk, and sustainability, turning volatility into a lasting competitive advantage.

Konexial
Ken Evans, CEO, CTO & Founder
ken@konexial.com
Mathew Miller, VP of Sales and Growth Revenue
mmiller@konexial.com
www.konexial.com
Konexial's integration-free platform provides an all-in-one solution to your most critical pain points.
Konexial is built on edge computing technology systems. Edge computing for transportation companies involves processing data closer to the source of generation, such as vehicles, rather than relying solely on centralized data centers or "cloud servers". This approach aims to improve real-time decision-making, reduce latency, enhance security, and optimize bandwidth usage in the supply chain.
Konexial provides superb technology to the transportation industry through the TPaaS (transportation platform as a service) model featuring fleet management, video, and safety management, asset tracking, fuel savings programs, and more. Our scalable solutions can be tailored to accommodate fleets and supply chain companies of any size. This enables you to grow and adapt in a rapidly changing market. Stay on top of vehicle maintenance, driver behavior with enterprise fleet management solutions. Aided by real-time data from GPS tracking devices, you can optimize supply chains and fleet productivity. From electronic logging devices to dispatch and load execution, Konexial can solve it all.

McKinsey
Aniket Joglekar, Partner
Aniket_Joglekar@mckinsey.com
312-532-8623
McKinsey is a global management consulting firm committed to helping organizations accelerate sustainable and inclusive growth. We work with clients across the private, public, and social sectors to solve complex problems and create positive change for all their stakeholders. We combine bold strategies and transformative technologies to help organizations innovate more sustainably, achieve lasting gains in performance, and build workforces that will thrive for this generation and the next.

Miebach Consulting Inc.
Nick Banich, CRO
banich@miebach.com
Tel: (317) 294-2666
http://www.descartes.com
Miebach is one of the most globally recognized supply chain consulting, engineering and advisory firms. Our support can be holistic or focused specifically on strategies, processes, systems, or equipment. Our experts design and implement best in class solutions for our customers to achieve supply chain excellence and sustainable competitive advantages. We focus on cost and service, as well as flexible and reliable processes supported by an ideal level of automation to achieve maximum customer ROI. Our aim is to leverage our hyper-focused experts to collaboratively deliver step-change improvements and innovation strategically, tactically, and digitally.

2026 Educational Resource Members

nuVizz
Gururaj Rao, CEO
3301 Windy Ridge Pkwy SE
Atlanta, GA 30339
gururaj@nuvizz.com
www.nuvizz.com
nuVizz is an AI-powered last mile Transportation Management Platform built for enterprise shippers and logistics service providers. Trusted across healthcare, life sciences, automotive, retail, and food industries, nuVizz provides real-time visibility, intelligent control, and AI-driven insights across complex delivery ecosystems.
For enterprise shippers, nuVizz improves carrier performance, strengthens delivery reliability, and helps create better customer experiences. For 3PLs, 4PLs, and LSPs, the platform unifies multi-shipper operations, reduces complexity, and automates critical workflows including partner management, shipper integration, billing, and settlement. With scalable architecture and faster ROI through automation, nuVizz helps logistics leaders move from reactive operations to confident, data-driven decision-making at every mile.

One Rail
Bill Catania, Founder & CEO
Bill.cantania@onerail.oi
Tel: (505) 506-5784
http://www.OneRail.com
OneRail is a final mile delivery orchestration platform providing real-time visibility, actionable data, and data-driven optimization capabilities for its enterprise clients. OneRail's cloud-based "delivery switch" simplifies same-day and on-demand delivery execution by connecting the demand signal (POS, eCommerce, ERP) with an ecosystem of delivery networks and internal fleets, in real-time. The result of OneRail's centralized view of disparate final mile data enables data-driven optimization, positively impacting the dependability, speed, and cost of final mile fulfillment.

Qued
Prasad Gollapalli, CEO & Founder
prasad@qued.com
http://www.qued.com
Qued is a transportation technology company focused on automating freight appointment scheduling for brokers, carriers, and shippers. Through AI-driven workflows and direct integrations with leading transportation and scheduling platforms, Qued helps customers reduce manual scheduling work, secure better appointment times, and improve operational efficiency.
The platform connects users to thousands of warehouse and dock locations across North America while working directly within existing transportation workflows and TMS environments. By reducing scheduling delays and improving visibility into appointment performance, Qued helps transportation teams improve service levels and scale operations more effectively.
Built on the pillars of trust, constant innovation, and customer success, Qued's mission is to become the single connection point for appointment scheduling across North America.

Tecsys
Peter Brereton, CEO
Peter.Brereton@tecsys.com
Adam.polka@tecsys.com
http://www.tecsys.com"www.tecsys.com
Tecsys is a global provider of cloud-based supply chain solutions that equip the borderless enterprise for growth and competitive advantage. Serving healthcare, distribution and converging commerce industries, and spanning multiple complex, regulated and high-volume markets, Tecsys delivers dynamic and powerful solutions for warehouse management, distribution and transportation management, supply management at point of use, retail order management and fulfillment, as well as complete financial management and analytics solutions. Tecsys' solutions are built on the Itopia® low-code application platform, which provides organizations the flexibility to customize their systems according to their evolving business needs. This extensible cloud-based supply chain framework connects inventory, warehouse and distribution operations, unlocking critical data insights and control across the supply chain. Tecsys is publicly traded on the Toronto Stock Exchange under the ticker symbol TCS. For more about Tecsys and its solutions, please visit "https://www.tecsys.com/" \t "_new"www.tecsys.com.

US Bank
Jeffrey Pape, General Manager
https://www.usbank.com/corporate-and-commercial-banking/industry-expertise/transportation.html
U.S. Bank delivers integrated freight payment and fleet solutions that bring control, visibility, and financial rigor to transportation spend. U.S. Bank Freight Payment's 100% prepayment audit ensures every transaction is accurate and produces true decision-grade data. As a bank-grade steward of commerce, we secure and optimize payments to improve working capital and outcomes for shippers and carriers. The Voyager Fleet Program sets the standard in fleet payments, combining broad acceptance, strong controls, and rich data to help fleet leaders manage fuel, maintenance, and on-road costs with confidence.

2026 Supply Chain Women in Action Committee

Raina Avalon
SCLA 2024 SCWA Committee Chair
TJX Companies
EVP

Julia Bedanova
Million Dollar Baby
Chief Operating Officer

Heidi Benko
infor
VP Product Marketing & Strategy

Misty Bennett
Central Michigan University
Associate Dean, Business Administration

Anne Dandridge
SCLA
Director of Operations

Karoline Dygas
Nordstrom
CPO and VP - Strategic Sourcing & Procurement

Kate Gerdes
Philips
Integrated Supply Chain Strategy, Risk and M&A Executive

Tracey Noffke
Kimberly-Clark
Sr. Director - Customer Logistics Strategies

Fotini Petroula
IBM
VP, Technology Lifecycle Services & Cloud Supply Chain

Amy Rardin
Procter & Gamble
Sr. Director SC Digitization & Strategic Partner

Roseann Reece
Yusen Logistics (Americas)
Sr. Manager, Client Management and Operations – OCM

Katherine Storer
Berlin Packaging
Chief Supply Chain Officer

Hannah Testani
Intelligent Audit
CEO

Amy Thorn
DBM Association
CEO & Executive Director

Anita Toth
Manager Technical Transformation and Execution @TLS Supply Chain

Renee Ure
Executive Leadership Insights
Co-Founder

2026 Pitch Tank Companies

PecanAI
Pecan AI is a predictive analytics platform that helps business teams turn data into actionable forecasts without requiring coding, machine learning expertise or heavy data science support. Its predictive AI agent enables users to ask business questions, build and validate models, and generate predictions that support faster, more confident decisions. Pecan supports use cases including customer churn, lifetime value modeling, lead scoring, demand forecasting, upsell and cross-sell, customer winback, fraud prevention and campaign ROAS prediction. By automating data preparation, feature engineering and model development, Pecan helps companies move from reactive decision-making to proactive planning, improving growth, marketing efficiency, inventory management and operational performance

CloneOps
CloneOps.ai is an AI-powered business communications platform built to automate high-volume operational workflows across freight brokerage, logistics and other complex service environments. Its virtual agents manage phone, email and text communications across the business lifecycle, from sales and dispatch to check calls, carrier screening, document requests, billing and collections. The platform integrates with TMS, CRM, ERP and custom systems, syncing data in real time so every interaction is logged, auditable and actionable. With features such as live human takeover, language detection, VoiceID, sentiment analysis and workflow automation, CloneOps.ai helps logistics teams reduce manual work, improve response times, strengthen compliance and scale operations without adding unnecessary headcount.

Tutor Intelligence
Tutor Intelligence develops AI-powered robotic workforces for factories and warehouses, helping companies automate repetitive physical work across production, fulfillment and end-of-line logistics. Its robots are designed to deploy quickly in existing industrial environments, including complex, crowded and variable brownfield facilities. Tutor's platform combines physical AI, visual intelligence and human-guided learning so robots can adapt to new tasks, handle changing SKUs and improve over time. Use cases include palletizing, depalletizing, case picking, material handling and broader factory-floor automation. By making robotic labor more flexible and easier to adopt, Tutor Intelligence helps manufacturers and logistics operators increase throughput, reduce manual strain, improve consistency and scale operations without major infrastructure changes.

Session Abstracts

Monday, June 22nd

4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
Supply Chain Women in Action: Using AI to Elevate Personal & Professional Productivity

Presented by:

Raina Avalon, EVP & Chief Logistics Officer, TJX & SCWA Chair

Workshop Presenters:

Pushpinder Singh, Partner Global Practice Leader, IBM;
Matthias Grafe, Director of Supply Chain Transformation, IBM
Fotini Petroula, VP, Technology Lifecycle Services & Cloud Supply Chain, IBM

Session description:

As technology continues to redefine how we live and work, the intersection of artificial intelligence and human well-being has become one of the most important leadership conversations of our time. This session—part of the Supply Chain Women in Action (SCWA) series—explores how AI tools, including personal chat assistants, can serve as powerful enablers of professional productivity, personal balance, and mental resilience.

Led by senior executive Raina Avalon, this engaging keynote blends live demonstration with reflective dialogue drawn from real-world leadership experience. Participants will see how customized AI tools can be integrated into daily workflows to streamline decision-making, manage information overload, and reduce mental fatigue—while also understanding critical guardrails related to data privacy, ethical use, and organizational security.

The discussion extends beyond technology to address the emotional and psychological realities of leadership in a rapidly evolving digital environment. With perspectives from a guest mental health expert, the session explores strategies for managing anxiety, protecting cognitive bandwidth, maintaining human connection, and fostering resilience amid constant change. Through practical examples and storytelling, attendees will learn how to embrace AI intentionally using it to unlock capacity, creativity, and confidence at work and at home.

Key takeaways will be:

- How AI tools can meaningfully reduce the mental load associated with modern leadership
- Practical strategies for integrating AI into daily workflows to improve productivity and work-life harmony
- Best practices for protecting personal and organizational data while using AI systems
- Awareness of the psychological impacts of technological change—and how to address them proactively
- Approaches for fostering resilience, ethical leadership, and well-being in the digital era

Tuesday, June 23rd

11:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
Augmented AI vs. AI-Driven Innovation

Moderator:

Brian Cooper, Chief Marketing Officer (project44)

Panelists:

Julia Bedanova, COO (Million Dollar Baby)
Marcus Olsen, Vice President Supply Chain (Surplus City, LLC)
Ned Frisbee, Director of Procurement (Toshiba)
Nikita Parikh, Global Sourcing Lead (Google)
Pervinder Johar, CEO (Avathon)

Session description:

As artificial intelligence rapidly reshapes how organizations operate, leaders across generations are confronting a defining question: how must traditional management models evolve for an AI-driven future? This session explores the contrasting yet complementary perspectives of established "augmented AI" leadership—where AI enhances existing processes—and emerging "AI-native" approaches, where organizations are designed with AI embedded from the start. Through a dynamic, conversational format featuring executives representing multiple generations and leadership philosophies, the discussion examines how AI is transforming decision-making, innovation, and organizational culture. Panelists will explore the tension between integrating AI into legacy structures versus reimagining operating models that challenge long-standing assumptions about hierarchy, control, and execution.

Drawing on real-world examples from startups such as Codif and Invisible Labs alongside global enterprises including Lenovo and Nordstrom, the session highlights how leaders can bridge generational divides to accelerate innovation while preserving the human elements that define effective leadership—trust, adaptability, empathy, and cultural cohesion.

Key takeaways will be:

- A clear understanding of the differences between augmented AI models and AI-native business design
- Insight into how leadership philosophies vary across generations in an AI-driven environment
- Practical guidance for integrating AI while preserving trust, culture, and human judgment
- Real-world examples contrasting legacy AI integration with AI-driven reinvention
- Actionable perspectives for building more agile, creative, and technology-adaptive organizations

11:00 a.m. - 12.00 p.m.
War Room to Lighthouse: Leading Through the Perfect Storm

Moderator:

Raina Avalon, Executive V P & Chief Logistics Officer (TJX)

Panelists:

Joe Ruddy, Chief Innovation Officer (The Port of Virginia)
David Simons, SVP, Supply Chain (Ferguson)
Adis Sulejmanovic, Head of Digital Supply Chain Transformation & Strategy (Kraft Heinz)

Session description:

In today's volatile operating environment—shaped by tariffs, pandemics, cyber threats, labor disruptions, and global instability—leaders are frequently forced into "war room" mode, reacting to crises as they unfold. This session examines how visionary organizations evolve beyond constant firefighting to transform disruption into strategic direction.

Senior industry leaders share real-world leadership experiences that illustrate how embracing chaos—rather than resisting it—can become a catalyst for innovation, cultural renewal, and long-term resilience. The discussion explores practical approaches for rallying both C-suite and front-line teams around a unified direction during turbulence, while reinforcing transparency, trust, and purpose.

Participants will gain insight into how organizations move from short-term survival tactics to repeatable leadership frameworks that anticipate change, stabilize operations, and convert uncertainty into sustained competitive advantage—shifting from reactive "war room" leadership to proactive "lighthouse" strategy.

Key takeaways will be:

- How to reframe disruption as a driver of growth, alignment, and leadership clarity
- Practical strategies for leading through extreme uncertainty while maintaining organizational cohesion
- Communication frameworks that transform crisis moments into unifying direction
- Real-world examples of turning short-term crisis management into long-term strategic advantage
- Repeatable practices for building resilient leadership systems that anticipate change rather than fear it

1:15 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.
Energy and Water Impacts on Infrastructure Planning and Supply Chain

Moderator:

Nicholas Konen, VP Strategic Development, Hillwood

Panelists:

Judodine Nichols, Chief Technology Officer (Principal Minerals)
Joni Sartain, VP, Onsite Energy Solutions (Walmart)
Shayne Wahlmeier, SVP, Energy (Walmart)
Amy Rardin, Sr. Director SC Digitization & Strategic Partner (P&G) Corporation

Session description:

As data center growth, electrification, and decarbonization accelerate demand, energy and water are emerging as strategic constraints that directly shape supply chain continuity, network expansion, and cost volatility. Grid congestion, interconnection delays, and increasing competition for natural resources are redefining where organizations can build, expand, and reliably operate—introducing new risk across manufacturing, logistics, and distribution networks.

This panel discussion explores how leading organizations are proactively preparing for these constraints through integrated site and network strategy, scenario planning, energy procurement and demand management, resiliency investments, and water stewardship.

Executives will share how they are identifying leading indicators of risk, mitigating operational disruption, and protecting service levels in an environment where infrastructure bottlenecks and resource scarcity can no longer be treated as secondary considerations.

Participants will gain insight into how organizations are aligning supply chain, real estate, engineering, sustainability, and finance teams to improve infrastructure decision-making. The session offers a forward-looking view on how companies can position their supply chains for growth and resilience in a future where access to energy and water must be actively planned, governed, and secured.

Key takeaways will be:

- How energy and water constraints are reshaping network design, capacity planning, and operational risk
- Leading indicators and scenario-planning approaches to anticipate grid congestion and resource-related disruption
- Practical mitigation strategies, including procurement models, demand management, resiliency investments, and water stewardship
- Approaches for building cross-functional governance across supply chain, infrastructure, sustainability, and real estate teams
- Actionable guidance for strengthening infrastructure readiness and maintaining service reliability amid tightening constraints

1:15 p.m. - 2:15 p.m.
Aligning Sales and Supply Chain for Strategic Growth

Moderator:

Tracey Noffke, Sr. Director - Customer Logistics Strategies (Kimberly-Clark)

Panelists:

Katherine Storer, CSCO (Berlin Packaging); Breann Lay Head of Integrated Supply Chain North America Region (Philips)
Ann Benzon, Head of Sales and Operations Execution (Kraft Heinz)
Matthew DeLaurentis, Vice President, Logistics & Customer Supply Chain (Acme)

Session description:

In an era defined by volatility, shifting demand, and persistent margin pressure, misalignment between sales and supply chain remains one of the greatest obstacles to sustainable business performance. This session examines how leading organizations are dismantling functional silos and building shared accountability to align commercial ambition with operational reality.

Drawing on real-world case examples from Kimberly-Clark, Berlin Packaging, and Philips, senior executives explore how they are closing the gap between customer promises and execution. The discussion addresses common structural, cultural, and incentive-related challenges—such as disconnected forecasting, misaligned KPIs, communication breakdowns, and conflicting definitions of success—and highlights practical solutions that foster collaboration and trust.

Participants will gain insight into proven practices including early alignment checkpoints immediately following deal signings ("Meeting Zero"), joint incentive models that balance revenue growth with fulfillment performance, and the creation of shared language and metrics across functions. The session also emphasizes the human dimension of alignment—recognizing personality differences, building mutual respect, and learning how to effectively translate between sales-driven and supply chain–driven perspectives to deliver consistent, profitable growth.

Key takeaways will be:

- Clear understanding of the root causes behind sales and supply chain misalignment
- Practical tools for aligning incentives, language, and success metrics across functions
- Real-world examples of structured handoffs and collaborative planning frameworks that work
- Strategies for fostering a culture of shared accountability and trust
- Approaches for translating operational excellence into improved commercial outcomes and customer satisfaction

2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.
Generational Leadership in the Age of AI: From Stereotypes to Synergy

Moderator:

Katherine Jeffery, Ph.D., Generational Consultant (GenShift™)

Panelists:

Aniket Joglekar, Partner (McKinsey)
Ashley Bushey, VP E2E Strategy & Ops Support (Walmart)
David Lande, VP Intake & Customer Success (Caliber Collision)
Bart De Muynck, Founder (Bart De Muynck LLC)
Kailey Beck, Global Supply Chain Rotational Program Manager, (Lenovo)

Session description:

Leaders have long managed generational differences as if they were fixed truths. At the same time, artificial intelligence is entering the workforce as an active contributor—not just a tool—reshaping how decisions are made, how work is performed, and how teams are led.

This session challenges conventional thinking on generational dynamics and explores how leadership must evolve in a multi-generational, AI-enabled workplace. Rather than relying on stereotypes, leaders must shift toward understanding individual work styles, communication preferences, and digital fluency. In parallel, they must learn to lead AI as they would any other contributor—defining its role, setting decision boundaries, establishing accountability, and refining performance through continuous feedback.

Drawing insights from leaders across corporate and academic environments—including perspectives from Walmart and higher education—the discussion examines how organizations are navigating the intersection of multi-generational teams and AI-enabled work. The session also addresses the impact of technology on cognitive load, attention, and burnout, and what that means for workforce performance and decision quality.

Participants will leave with a practical framework for leading a blended workforce where humans and AI operate together, and where leadership is defined by how effectively that system performs.

Key takeaways will be:

- Leadership strategies for connecting multi-generational teams in hybrid and digital environments
- Practical approaches for leading both people and AI as collaborative contributors
- Ways to translate AI fluency into inclusion and empowerment across generations
- Governance models that balance autonomy, accountability, and ethical technology use
- New perspectives for challenging generational stereotypes and bias through interactive dialogue and AI- enabled insight

2:30 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.
The Pivot in Planning: Moving Past Traditional Planning to Orchestration and Beyond

Moderator:

Christine Barnhart, Head of Industry Engagement & Alliances (Miebach)

Panelists:

Stefan Schulz, SVP, Strategy & Operational Development (3M)
Ken Kwasniewski, Director, SC Transformation (Rich Foods)
Pam Jobert, Sr. Director Supply Network Operations (P&G)
Matt Tichon, Executive Director Applied AI & Decision Intelligence (Kinaxis)

Session description:

In an era defined by volatility, labor constraints, and heightened service expectations, planning has re-emerged as the strategic control function of the supply chain. Yet many organizations continue to operate with fragmented data, siloed workflows, heavy manual intervention, and reactive decision cycles. The result is too much time spent firefighting and too little time spent optimizing performance.

Leading organizations are now making a decisive pivot—moving beyond traditional planning toward integrated, augmented, and orchestrated planning models. This shift elevates planners from operational expediters to strategic decision-makers by aligning people, process, data, and technology. Rather than pursuing fully autonomous planning as an end goal, companies are embracing agentic AI and decision-support intelligence that enhances human expertise and enables faster, clearer decision-making.

As planning maturity advances, organizations progress through distinct stages—from traditional siloed planning, to integrated planning across demand, supply, and production, to fully orchestrated planning that synchronizes decision-making across suppliers, production networks, and customer demand signals. Modern data platforms and configurable AI are accelerating this transformation, allowing organizations of all sizes to reduce manual touches, improve service levels, and create more resilient supply chains.

This session explores how leading companies are advancing along this maturity pathway and what practical steps organizations can take to evolve their planning capabilities. Participants will also engage in an interactive maturity poll to benchmark where their organizations stand today and identify what must be true to progress toward true end-to-end orchestration.

Key takeaways will be:

- Why planning has become the foundation for performance, agility, and profitability
- How to redesign the planner role to enable strategic decision-making rather than operational firefighting
- How clean, connected data enables end-to-end visibility and planning orchestration
- Where agentic AI and decision intelligence can meaningfully improve planning outcomes
- Practical steps organizations can take to move from traditional planning to integrated and orchestrated planning

3:45 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.
Leadership, Teams, and Trust: Building the Next Generation of Leaders

Moderator:

Rachel Clapp-Smith, Dean of the Mike Cottrell College of Business (University of North Georgia)

Panelists:

Harry Ziff, VP Corporate Logistics (EastPenn)
Jeff Kellan, President Omnichannel Retail CPG Division Americas & Asian Pacific (GXO)
Raina Avalon, EVP & Chief Logistics Officer (TJX)
Jordan Strawn, SVP Logistics (Werner)
Marcus Olsen, VP Supply Chain (Surplus City)

Session description:

In an era defined by constant disruption and transformation, organizations face not only a talent shortage—but a growing leadership gap. This session explores how exceptional leaders intentionally cultivate the next generation of leadership by building trust, developing talent, and creating deliberate pathways for succession.

Drawing on decades of executive experience across retail, consumer products, distribution, and logistics, panelists share practical, real-world approaches that move beyond traditional "management" toward actively building leaders. The discussion highlights how organizations create sustainable leadership pipelines by empowering high-potential individuals through lateral moves, stretch assignments, and development experiences that build confidence, judgment, and versatility.

Participants will also examine how trust, humility, and courage form the foundation of leadership continuity and organizational resilience—particularly when teams are operating in environments marked by volatility, complexity, and rapid change.

Key takeaways will be:

- Practical methods for identifying and developing future leaders beyond traditional succession planning
- How trust enables accountability, performance, and leadership growth across teams
- Proven approaches to designing leadership pathways through lateral moves, stretch roles, and intentional development experiences
- Strategies for developing leaders who can perform effectively under uncertainty
- How to embed "leaders building leaders" as a cultural norm to create a resilient leadership bench

Wednesday, June 24th

8:45 a.m - 10:00 a.m.
Navigating Global Volatility: Geopolitical Disruption, Tariff Turbulence, and the Redrawing of the Supply Chain Map

Moderator:

Don Klock, Adjunct Professor (Rutgers)

Panelists:

John Hickey, Senior Vice President, Supply Chain and Operations (Acme United);
Ryan Hutcherson, SVP Supply Chain (Georgia Pacific);
Rodger Baker, (RANE);
Kate Gerdes, Integrated Supply Chain Strategy, Risk and M&A Executive (Philips);
Ben Massie, Vice President, ISGGlobal Supply Chain (Lenovo)

Session description:

Global supply chains continue to face relentless waves of disruption—from rapidly evolving tariff structures and geopolitical realignment to technology-driven transformation. This session explores how supply chain leaders are navigating this volatility by shifting from reactive "war room" responses to proactive, data-driven "lighthouse" strategies.

Drawing on real-world examples across pharmaceutical, technology, and industrial sectors, the discussion examines how global manufacturing footprints are being redrawn through regionalization, government incentives, and changing economic priorities. Participants will gain insight into practical approaches for managing tariff volatility through supplier diversification, free trade zones, and tariff engineering, while maintaining cost stability and customer confidence.

The session also highlights how artificial intelligence and predictive analytics emerge as critical enablers of resilience, helping organizations anticipate disruption, align geopolitical risk awareness with operational decision-making, and manage uncertainty at scale.

Key takeaways will be:

- Practical frameworks for improving supply chain agility and mitigating geopolitical and trade-related risk
- Strategies for navigating tariff volatility while protecting margins and customer trust
- Insight into how global manufacturing networks are being reshaped by regionalization and policy incentives
- Real-world examples of technology-enabled adaptation in complex and uncertain trade environments
- Actionable approaches to future-proof sourcing decisions and embed resilience into organizational design

10:15 a.m - 11:30 a.m.
Powering Business Outcomes AI Journey

Moderator:

Fotini Petroula, Vice President, Sales & Supply Chain Integration, IBM

Panelists:

Peter Brereton, CEO (Tecsys);
Matthias Grafe, Director of Supply Chain Transformation (IBM);
Amy Rardin, Sr. Director SC Digitization & Strategic Partner (P&G);
Rich Rosselle, Director ISG Global Supply Chain Strategy (Lenovo)

Session description:

This year's session will focus on what transformation involving AI the panel has engaged in and what progress they have made since.

The third session of our AI series will focus on the evolution of AI trends, exploring how artificial intelligence has progressed from basic rule-based automation to advanced autonomous systems. This session will dive into three key paradigms shaping the future: Scripted AI, which streamlines repetitive tasks through predefined logic; Generative AI, which introduces creativity and predictive capabilities to optimize planning and forecasting; and Agentic AI, the latest frontier that combines autonomy with orchestration to manage complex workflows and make dynamic decisions without constant human intervention.

Attendees will gain insights into how these trends are transforming supply chain operations into intelligent, adaptive ecosystems, enabling organizations to achieve resilience, transparency, and efficiency at scale.

The session will emphasize real, production-level AI use cases in the supply chain that deliver tangible business value, rather than focusing on experiments or proof of concepts. This approach aims to highlight that enterprise-grade AI solutions are already powering measurable outcomes. Participants will also learn what differentiates the small percentage of successful enterprise AI projects that create real impact.

Key takeaways will be:

- Proven AI Applications: Explore specific AI use cases driving efficiency in the areas presented
- Tangible Business Impacts: Insights into measurable outcomes achieved in the areas presented
- Implementation Best Practices: Practical tips on integrating AI tools and overcoming common barriers.
- Interactive Learning: Direct Q&A with experts to deepen understanding and explore tailored AI s trategies.

12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.
Luncheon & SCLA Executive Outlook 2026

Fireside Chat:

Amy Thorn, CEO, SCLA
Tom Goldsby, Dee & Jimmy Haslam Chair in Logistics, University of Tennessee;
John Hickey, SVP Supply Chain & Operations, Acme
Ben Massie, VP Global Supply Chain, Lenovo

Session description:

The SCLA Executive Outlook 2026 is a concise, executive-level brief designed to help supply chain leaders set priorities and make trade-offs in a year defined by volatility. Developed with the University of Tennessee and informed by SCLA executive dialogue and annual pulse inputs, it summarizes what leaders are seeing, testing, and scaling—so members can move from awareness to action.

This is not an analyst forecast. It is a peer-informed viewpoint built to support discussion, benchmarking, and decision-making.

Five Strategic Pillars

1. Geopolitical Risk & Trade Realignment How leaders are managing tariff and policy uncertainty, strengthening supplier transparency, and building scenario playbooks.
2. AI, Automation & Agility Where AI is delivering value, what it takes to scale beyond pilots, and how leaders are governing adoption and ROI.
3. Talent & Organizational Agility How leaders are closing capability gaps, developing the next generation of leaders, and improving decision speed.
4. Resilience by Design How networks are being redesigned for continuity—through segmentation, risk sensing, and measurable resilience practices.
5. Forward-Looking Trends: Ecosystem, Circularity & Platforms Emerging themes shaping 2026+ strategy, including multi-enterprise collaboration, platform orchestration, and circularity.

The Outlook provides a shared framework to pressure-test strategy, benchmark maturity, and prioritize the few moves that matter most in 2026.

2026 SCLA Speaker Biographies

2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Proving ROI Through Measurable Impact

Moderator:

Heidi Benko, VP Product Marketing & Strategy (infor)

Panelists:

Stefan Schulz, SVP, Strategy & Operational Development (3M)
Doug Cantriel, Head of North American Transportation & Modernization, (Ford Motor Company)
Candace Palmarozzi, Vice President - Controller, Finance (BNSF)

Session description:

In today's climate of heightened cost scrutiny, tariff pressure, and constrained capital approval, organizations face growing challenges in justifying investments—particularly when the primary value is not easily captured through traditional financial metrics. This session brings together supply chain, operations, and finance leaders to address one of the most pressing questions facing modern enterprises: how to prove return on investment when the benefits are indirect, qualitative, or realized across multiple functions.

The discussion explores practical methods for translating abstract gains—such as speed, visibility, predictive accuracy, agility, and innovation—into compelling financial narratives that resonate with executive leadership, boards, and CFOs. Panelists will examine how organizations identify measurable indicators for intangible outcomes, project secondary and tertiary impacts, and align AI and emerging technology initiatives with broader business strategy.

Through real-world examples and executive perspectives, participants will learn how storytelling, benchmarking, pilot-based validation, and cross-functional alignment can be used to communicate value effectively turning innovation investments into clear, defensible business cases that secure stakeholder buy-in and sustain long-term transformation.

Key takeaways will be:

- Methods for converting qualitative improvements into financial impact stories that resonate with executive and finance leadership
- Practical frameworks for identifying and measuring intangible, secondary, and tertiary outcomes—both financial and non-financial
- Techniques for building credible ROI narratives around AI and emerging technology investments
- Approaches for communicating value across technical, operational, and executive audiences
- Strategies for strengthening approval cases and sustaining momentum for digital transformation initiatives

Raina L. Avalon
EVP & Chief Logistics Officer, TIX & SCWA Chair
Raina Avalon is a logistics and transportation professional with experience across retail, foodservice distribution, and 3PL logistics, [Name] brings expertise in leadership, supply chain, negotiations, talent development, and governance. They have been actively engaged in DE&I efforts for several years, including service on Sysco's D&I Council and current work with the I&D team at TJX. Beyond their professional role, they have supported multiple nonprofit organizations focused on health equity, human trafficking prevention, education, youth leadership, and international reconciliation. Their community involvement has included advisory and board service with The Root Cause, Seeds of Hope, Team Burundi, and the GirlIScouts Hornets' Nest Council.

Rodger Baker
RANE
Rodger Baker leads Stratfor's strategic thinking on global issues and future trends. As Senior Analyst, he guides the company's analytical process, including the development of international analyst teams and their application of Stratfor's methodology grounded in applied geopolitics and intelligence analysis. He joined Stratfor|in 1997 and holds a master's degree in military history from Norwich University. Rodger has studied and worked in South Korea and graduated with honors from Southampton College, Long Island University. He regularly engages with academic institutions and research groups worldwide and frequently briefs executives, corporate boards, andjindustry groups on geopolitical trends.

Christine Barnhart
Head of Industry Engagement & Alliances, Miebach
Christine Barnhart is Head of Industry Engagement & Alliances for Miebach Consulting in North America, where she strengthens partnerships, expands market presence, and connects global supply chain expertise with client challenges. Known as "The Supply Chain Whisperer," Christine brings more than 25 years of end-to-end supply chain leadership across manufacturing, CPG, and enterprise technology. Her career includes leadership roles at Whirlpool, Mead Johnson Nutrition, Berry Global, Infor, and Nulogy, spanning planning, manufacturing operations, transformation, product innovation, go-to-market strategy, and industry engagement. A frequent speaker and industry commentator, Christine is recognized for translating complexity into clarity and helping organizations build faster, smarter, more resilient supply chains. She holds CPIM and PMP certifications.

Julia Bedanova
COO, Million Dollar Baby
Julia Bedanova is Chief Operations Officer at Million Dollar Baby Co. (MDB Co.), a Los Angeles-based leader in baby and children's furniture. During her seven years with MDB Co., she has transformed the company's approach to supply chain, analytics, organizational alignment, and employee engagement across its portfolio of nursery brands, including Babyletto, DaVinci, and Nurseryworks. Previously, Julia was a Manager in Deloitte Consulting's Strategy and Operations group, where she supported engagements in analytics excellence, customer experience optimization, and M&A. She earned dual BS degrees in Finance and Marketing from the University of Maryland, College Park, and an MBA from The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

David Bell
Co-Founder & CEO, CloneOps.ai
Beginning his career in 1995, David Bell quickly ascended through various roles in the transportation industry. His leadership as CEO of Smith-Cargo Transportation led to its successful exit and sale to a Private Equity firm. With over 30 years in the transportation sector, he co-founded Lean Solutions Group where he successfully led two liquidity events with private equity and expanded the company to employ over 10,000 individuals in Latin America. David was an instrumental figure in shaping the go-to-market strategies, partnership alignments, and visionary roadmaps for the company.

Heidi Benko
VP Product Marketing & Strategy, Infor
Heidi Benko is VP of Product Management at Infor Nexus responsible for the Visibility and Orchestration solutions. Heidi has over 20 years of experience in supply chain product management, solutions strategy and marketing, delivering innovative supply chain solutions to companies across industries that help them transform their supply chain operations.

Ann Benzon
Head of Sales & Operations, Kraft Heinz
Ann Benzon is Head of Sales and Operations Execution at The Kraft Heinz Company. She has been with Kraft Heinz for eight years, holding a range of roles across logistics. In her current role, she leads efforts to improve execution performance by accelerating the adoption of digital tools that enable more consistent and scalable ways of working. She is focused on reducing manual intervention, increasing automation, and strengthening management by exception.

Brian Biro
Keynote Speaker
Brian Biro is America's Breakthrough Speaker! He has delivered over 2,000 presentations around the world over the last 36 years to over one million participants. Brian is the author of 16 books including his bestseller, BEYOND SUCCESS, and his new LESSONS FROM THE LEGENDS. With degrees from Stanford University and UCLA, Brian has appeared on Good Morning America, and CNN. He

delivered the opening mainstage presentation at the prestigious National Speakers Association Influence event to 750 of the world's finest speakers. Brian was recently honored as one of the top 10 interactive keynote speakers in North America, and one of the top 50 Motivational Speakers in the WORLD!

Peter Brereton
CEO, Tecsys
Peter Brereton is President and CEO of Tecsys, a company he co-founded more than 40 years ago. He began by leadingsoftware development before expanding into product management, sales, and marketing. Appointed president in 1995 and CEO in 1998, he led Tecsys through its IPO on the Toronto and Montreal stock exchanges. Under his leadership,
Tecsys has expanded globally and built deep expertise in complex, high-volume supply chains, including healthcare, distribution, retail, and third-party logistics. Brereton was recognized as an EY Entrepreneur of the Year award winner in Quebec in 2019.

Zohar Bronfman
Co-Founder & CEO, Pecan AI
Zohar Bronfman is a researcher, entrepreneur, and cofounder of Pecan AI. He holds dual PhDs in cognitive neuroscience and philosophy of technology, a combination that lets him sit at the intersection of how humans think and how machines learn.
His work focuses on agentic AI, predictive intelligence, and the cognitive architecture behind reliable machine reasoning. He argues that prediction is one of the defining capabilities of modern business acumen, and that the next wave of AI won't summarize the past but forecast what comes next.
Zohar writes and speaks regularly on applied predictive AI, the limits of large language models on real business data, and the widening gap between companies that act early and ones that react too late.

Ashley Bushey
VP E2E Strategy & Ops Support, Walmart
Ashley Bushey is Vice President of End-to-End Strategy & Operations Support, where she turns enterprise priorities into clear, actionable solutions that improve business operations. Known for simplifying complexity and building high-performing teams, she drives operational transformation that enhances associate and customer experiences. Ashley brings experience from Chick-fil-A, DaySpring, a Hallmark company, and J.B. Hunt Transportation, giving her a strong cross-industry perspective on strategy and execution. Her leadership style is grounded in collaboration, continuous improvement, and helping teams deliver meaningful enterprise-wide impact. She lives in Northwest Arkansas with her husband, Keith, and their two dogs.

Doug Cantriel
Head of North American Transportation & Modernization, Ford Motor Company
Doug Cantriel is Head of North America Transportation for Ford Motor Company's Customer Service Division, where he manages an $850 million budget and oversees daily parts movement from suppliers to packagers, distribution centers, and more than 3,000 dealers. He has broad experience across supply chain operations, software, and consulting, with work involving organizations such as the Department of Defense, FEMA, Dell, Cummins, Coca-Cola, DHL Express, Delta Airlines, Southwest Airlines, Coach, and UPS. Doug has led Ford's transportation modernization, including TMS, real-time visibility, yard management, and final-mile delivery solutions, driving more than $120 million in cost
reductions.

Rachel Clapp-Smith
Dean of the Mike Cottrell College of Business, University of North Georgia
Dr. Rachel Clapp-Smith is Dean of the Mike Cottrell College of Business at the University of NorthG orgia and Professor of Management. She holds a PhD in Organizational Behavior from the University of Nebragka-Lincoln, an MBA from Thunderbird, and a bachelor's degree in history and German from Bowdoin College. Her reseafch focuses on leader identity development and global leadership and has appeared in Academy of Management Review, Leadership Quarterly, and the Journal of Management and Organization. Before academia, she worked in enterprise software, addressing business challenges in supply chain management, distribution management, and back-pffice integration.

Brian Cooper
Chief Marketing Officer, project44
Brian Cooper is a data-driven marketing executive with more than 25 years of experience leading global marketing, demand generation, AI expertise, and analytics for high-growth enterprise technology companies. As Chief Marketing Officer at project44, he leads global brand, product marketing, demand generation, communications, and digital go-to-market for the company's Decision Intelligence Platform for modern supply chains. Previously, he led demand generation, web, and analytics at Rubrik during its growth toward IPO and spent eight years at Juniper Networks building demand generation strategy and marketing data infrastructure. Brian has published in Harvard Business Review and served on industry boards.

Matthew DeLaurentis
Vice President, Logistics & Customer Supply Chain, Acme
Matt DeLaurentis is the Vice President of Logistics & Customer Supply Chain for Acme United Corporation, leading several teams including customer service, logistics, master data, demand planning, supply planning, and IT-Operations.
More recently Matt has been appointed the head of Acme's AI Steering Committee overseeing digital transformation for the whole company. Matt's collaborative leadership approach has allowed for increased e2e visibility in many facets of the business, improvements in customer experience, significant cost savings, improved partnership with finance and IT, as well as several successful acquisition integrations.
Matt lives in Trumbull, CT chasing three kids around, ages 5, 3, and 1, and attempts to find sleep somewhere between it all.

Bart De Muynck
Founder, Bart De Muynck LLC
Bart De Muynck is an advisor, thought leader, and Head Thinker at Better Supply Chains, where he helps organizations improve commerce through smarter, more efficient supply chain strategies. With deep expertise across supply chain, logistics, technology, and business process improvement, Bart brings a practical, cross-functional perspective to solving complex operational challenges. A Six Sigma Black Belt, he is committed to process excellence, strategic decision-making, and creating sustainable value for businesses and their customers. Through his advisory work, Bart shares industry insights, fosters collaboration, and helps companies better understand and optimize the dynamics of modern supply chains.

Bill Durbin
Vice President Logistics, Kraft Heinz
Bill Durbin serves as Head of Logistics & Planning for North America at The Kraft Heinz Company, where he oversees planning, transportation, and distribution. Since joining Kraft Heinz in 2017 as Vice President of Logistics, he has helped modernize the company's end-to-end supply chain through digital transformation, automation, and artificial intelligence. His leadership has supported operational improvements, including increased production efficiency and enhanced deployment and transportation planning through strategic partnerships. A graduate of Michigan State University, Bill is recognized as a forward-thinking supply chain executive focused on innovation, agility, and resilience across Kraft Heinz's North American logistics network.

Ned Frisbee
Director of Procurement, Toshiba
Ned Frisbee is a global procurement and supply chain leader with a proven record of transforming organizations, developing sourcing strategies, and delivering significant savings across global markets. His expertise spans enterprise procurement transformation, global logistics, indirect spend management, value engineering, and digital sourcing enablement. He has led large-scale global transitions, redesigned procurement organizations, and improved total cost of ownership across complex spend categories. His work has reduced costs, improved service levels, accelerated speed to market, and

strengthened strategic control for Fortune-level organizations. Known for building high-performing teams and aligning procurement strategy with corporate priorities, Ned brings strategic vision, operational rigor, and a continuous improvement mindset to procurement and supply chain leadership.

Kate Gerdes
Integrated Supply Chain Strategy, Risk and M&A Executive, Philips Kate Gerdes is a Business Partner Ecosystem Leader and Supply Chain Manager with more than 20 years of experience improving operational efficiency, leading complex business systems, and driving organizational resililts. They bring expertise across operations, client success, strategic planning, sales and brand management, supply and demand
planning, manufacturing operations, logistics, fulfillment, project execution, and process improvement. Known as an influential, customer-focused business partner, they are recognized for strong executive communication, leadership, and the ability to motivate cross-functional teams. Their background includes Lean manufacturing, Kaizen methodologies, global resource planning, inventory control, cost reduction, best-practice implementation, channel :strategy, and acquisitions. They hold an MBA in Business Logistics and Supply Chain Management
.

Tom Goldsby
Dee & Jimmy Haslam Chair in Logistics, University of Tennessee Thomas Goldsby is the Haslam Chair in Logistics in the Department of Supply Chain Management at the Haslam College of Business. He previously served on the faculties of The Ohio State University, the University of Kentucky, and Iowa State University. Dr. Goldsby is former Co-Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Business Logistics and the Transportation Journal. His research focuses on logistics strategy, supply chain agility, and the economics of urban logistics. He has published more than 100 articles and co-authored five books on transportation, logistics, supply chain management, lean, and sustainability. He received SCLA's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2019 and has earned multiple teaching and research honors.

Matthias Grafe
Director of Supply Chain Transformation, IBM
Matthias Grafe is Director of Supply Chain Transformation at IBM, where he leads efforts to advance the company's supply chain into a transparent, cognitive value chain. He oversees a team of supply chain subject matter experts and a Smarter Supply Chain Analytics & AI Center of Competency. With more than 21 years of experience, Matthias has held leadership roles across supply chain management, transformation, engineering, manufacturing, procurement, sales, demand planning, and scheduling, including assignments in Eastern Europe and Asia Pacific. He is a certified Consulting Supply Chain Management Professional and holds patents in supply chain processes and solutions. Matthias earned a master's degree in Mechanical Engineering and Business Administration from the Technical University of Darmstadt, Germany.

Josh Gruenstein
Co-founder & CEO, Tutor Intelligence
Josh Gruenstein is the co-founder and CEO of Tutor, building generally capable fleets of artificially intelligent warehouse robot workers through research and deployment of frontier technology. Prior to founding Tutor, Josh was a graduate researcher and instructor in robot learning at MIT, his work spanning computer vision, policy learning, and humanintheloop supervision. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science and a Master's in Artificial Intelligence from MIT.

John Hickey
SVP Supply Chain & Operations, Acme United & Education Committee Chair John M. Hickey has served since 2021 as Senior Vice President, Supply Chain and Operations of Acme United Corporation, a leading worldwide supplier of innovative cutting, measuring, first aid and sharpening products to the school, home, office, hardware, sporting goods and industrial markets with operations in the United States, Canada,
Europe and Asia; Vice President, Supply Chain from 2009 thru 2021; Director Supply Chain from 2005 thru 2009. Johnformerly served as Director of Purchasing for Beiersdorf, North America a global skin care company and Director of Materials Management for Beiersdorf, US. John is a former US Army Captain.

Rob Holland
VP Transportation & Logistics, Tailored Brands
With more than 40 years of supply chain experience, Rob Holland serves as Vice President of Trans ortation and Logistics at Tailored Brands, where he leads strategic transformation initiatives that drive operational excellence, continuous improvement, and leadership development across the organization.

Ryan Hutcherson
SVP Supply Chain, Georgia Pacific
Ryan Hutcherson is a Senior Vice President of Supply Chain with 20+ year history of working in the p| per & forest products industry. Skilled in Integrated Business Planning, Logistic and Transportation, Digital Transformation and Customer Experience.

Michael Jacobs
President, Americas & Asia Pacific, GXO
Michael Jacobs is President of GXO, where he leads operations across the Americas and Asia Pacific, overseeing a multi-billion-dollar portfolio across 16 countries. He is responsible for supply chain operations, commercial growth, customer solutions, and strategic execution, with a focus on scaling performance, accelerating innovation, and strengthening GXO's contract logistics leadership. Previously, Michael served as Senior Vice President of Supply Chain at Ferguson Enterprises and held senior leadership roles at Keurig Green Mountain, including Chief Product Officer and Chief Logistics Officer. He also served as Senior Vice President of Logistics at Toys "R" Us. He holds a master's degree in supply chain management from Penn State University and an MBA and BSBA from Manhattan University.

Katherine Jeffery, PhD
Generational Consultant, GenShift
Katherine Jeffery is a generational strategist, consultant, international speaker, and host of the GenShift podcast. She helps leaders understand the forces shaping today's workforce and respond with clarity, flexibility, and stronger relationships. With more than 20 years of experience studying how people think, work, and lead across generations, Katherine brings deep expertise in leadership development and generational dynamics. Her work supports executives, HR leaders, educators, nonprofits, and teams navigating growth, transition, or generational tension. Through keynotes, facilitated conversations, and consulting engagements, she helps organizations reduce friction, build shared expectations, strengthen cross-generational leadership, and create cultures where people of all ages can contribute and thrive.

Pam Jobert
Sr. Director Supply Network Operations, P&G
Pamela A. Jobert is Senior Director, NA Planning Capability at Procter & Gamble, where she leads planning mastery, adoption, governance, and innovation across supply, business, and demand planning. Her work includes advancing touchless planning through human-orchestrated, AI-driven tools and standard work, while partner mg on corporate innovation transformation across systems, processes, and capability. Since joining P&G in 1994, Pam has held senior manufacturing and supply chain leadership roles across Fabric Care, Baby Care, Beauty & Grooming, and Pharmaceuticals. Her experience spans end-to-end supply chain planning, customer service, inve 'ory, Capacity planning, S&OP, planning centralization, and operating strategy. She earned a BS in Civil Engineering from Duke University.

Aniket Joglekar
Partner, McKinsey
Aniket Joglekar is a Partner in the Operations Practice at McKinsey and a deep expert in Supply Chain topics. He has 15+ years of experience in end-to-end Operations topics such as omnichannel supply chain strategy, network design, distribution excellence, procurement, and customer experience.
Education/prior work experience: MBA (Strategy and Operations) Kellogg School of Management, M.S. (Design Innovation) - Northwestern University, B.; Tech (Materials Engineering); Pre-McKinsey roles include Plant and Warehouse lead, Lean and Six Sigma implementation leader; Certified SupplyChain Professional (APICS / ASCM)

Pervinder Johar
Chief Executive Officer, Avathon
Pervinder Johar is a high-tech entrepreneur and supply chain technology leader with deep expertise in logistics, digital platforms, and global operations. He launched Blume Global in 2018 to build a digital platform for global supply chain orchestration. Previously, he served as CEO of Steelwedge, leading the cloud-based S&OP software company through its sale to E2open, and held CEO leadership at EdgeVerve, an Infosys company. Earlier in his career, Pervinder was Vice President of Global Supply Chain Systems at Hewlett-Packard, overseeing worldwide supply chain, manufacturing, order-to-cash, procure-to-pay, and IT systems. He is a thought leader in supply chain, logistics, AI, machine learning, and enterprise technology.

Jeff Kellan
President Omnichannel Retail CPG Division Americas & Asian Pacific, GXO
Jeff Kellan is Division President, Omni-channel Retail, AMAPAC, at GXO Logistics, where he leads contract logistics operations and growth across 35+ distribution centers, 25 customers, and more than $600 million i) revenue. He joined GXO in March 2025 after senior logistics roles at Maersk, where he helped lead the Performence Team acquisition and integration, advanced end-to-end supply chain solutions, and later oversaw contraqt logistics, cold chain, and innovation initiatives. Jeff has 25+ years of experience across e-commerce fulfillment, distribution, international transportation, and supply chain strategy, with prior leadership roles at XPO, Polo Ralyh Lauren, Kohl's, and Toys R Us.

Don Klock
Adjunct Professor, Rutgers
Don Klock is a Professor of Supply Chain Management at Rutgers Business School and a senior global procurement and supply chain executive with more than 30 years of domestic and international experience. Priol to academia, he held leadership roles with major multinational consumer Products companies, including Colgate-Palmolive, Mars, and Reckitt Benckiser. As Vice President and Chief Procurement Officer at Colgate-Palmolive, he led a global procurement transformation that delivered more than $1 billion in savings. His expertise includes global sourcing, supplier innovation, cost savings, supply chain systems, customer service improvement, talent management, and change management. Don holds an MBA from the University of Rochester and a BS from Clarkson University.

Nicholas Konen
VP Strategic Development, Hillwood
Nick serves as the Vice President of Strategic Development for Hillwood, working closely with development and marketing teams to advance long-term planning and infrastructure needs for AllianceTexas. Nick's rimary focus is on advancing critical development initiatives in mobility innovation, industrial infrastructure, energy, water resources, and telecommunication. Nick's experience ranges from Class | railroad mainline to intermodal and siza le industrial site development. He has successfully executed numerous large and small projects in various municipalities throughout the United States.

Ken Kwaniewski
Director, SC Transformation, Rich Foods
Ken Kwasniewski is Director of Supply Chain Transformation at Rich Products, where he oversees the Make to Stock, Source to Settle, and Plan to Make workstreams within the Supply Chain and Manufacturing pillar. Ih this role, he leads enterprise-wide transformation efforts focused on people, process, and technology across Rich Praducts' supply chain and manufacturing operations.

David Lande
VP Intake & Customer Success, Caliber Collision
David Lande is a global business executive with over 24 years of experience. He joined Caliber Collision in 2024 to lead Customer Success and Intake Management. In his role as Vice President, David is responsible for managing the Customer Success teams for Caliber Collision and Caliber Auto Glass along with building out the capabilities to scale Caliber's Intake process across 1800+ nationwide collision centers. Caliber has implemented new AI and contact center solutions under David's leadership to build out a true omnichannel customer experience. Prior to joining Caliber, David led Logistics for CarMax as Vice President, managing nationwide transportation and home delivery for the company. He holds a BBA from Emory University.

Breann Lay
Head of Integrated Supply Chain, North America Region, Philips
Breann Lay is a senior executive leader known for building cultures grounded in integrity, accountability, and high performance. A Six Sigma Green Belt and Lean Certified leader, she brings expertise in business strategy, change management, customer success, operational execution, and cross-functional leadership. Breann has been recognized for accelerating transformation initiatives, strengthening client relationships, and delivering strategic programs with discipline and transparency. She is skilled at aligning teams around long-term goals, improving processes, and driving organizational performance across complex environments. Passionate about mentoring teams and developing leaders, she helps organizations challenge complacency and operate with greater clarity, energy, and impact.

Rear Admiral Thomas Marotta
Rear Admiral (Ret)
Rear Admiral Thomas Marotta is a retired U.S. Navy officer, Naval Aviator, and 1985 graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy. Over his distinguished career, he flew the F-14 Tomcat and F/A-18 Hornet, logging more than 3,300 flight hours and 500 carrier landings. He deployed in support of Operation Desert Shield, Operation Southern Watch, and Operation Iraqi Freedom, and commanded VFA-201 after its mobilization aboard USS Theodore Roosevelt. Marotta also held senior Reserve leadership roles supporting U.S. Naval Forces Europe, Sixth Fleet, Navy Reserve Component Command Southeast, and U.S. Fifth Fleet. His honors include the Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, Air Medal, and multiple commendations. In civilian life, he is a Captain and Instructor Pilot with a major international cargo airline.

Ben Massie
VP, Global Supply Chain, Lenovo & SCLA Executive Committee Chair
Ben Massie is Vice President of Supply Chain for Lenovo's $10B+ Infrastructure Solutions Group, which builds serverand storage products for enterprise and cloud customers. He leads a global team of approximately 800 employees across fulfillment, demand planning, supply management, inventory, quality, test, supplier engineering, and back-office operations. Ben has 22 years of technology industry experience across supply chain, sales operations, new product development, and finance at Lenovo, IBM, and Microsoft. Since joining Lenovo through the IBM System x acquisition, he has helped transform supply chain into a core competence for Lenovo's server business. Ben holds an executive MBA from UNC and a Business Logistics degree from Penn State.

Rick McDonald
Advisor
Rick McDonald is the former Chief Supply Chain Officer for The Clorox Company, a $7B+ global consumer packaged goods company, where he led global supply chain strategy across procurement, planning, manufacturing, logistics, engineering, quality assurance, and people leadership. He is recognized for leading through major disruption, including the COVID-19 pandemic, hyperinflation, and the company's 2023 cyberattack, while keeping teams focused on the critical few priorities that mattered most. During COVID, Rick streamlined the organization's objectives to protecting employees worldwide and running plants at full capacity to deliver essential disinfecting products to consumers. He also helped shift Clorox's global supply chain from a "just-in-time" mindset to a more resilient "just-in-case" operating model. Today, Rick advises executive leaders and boards on market-facing supply chain challenges and serves on advisory boards for organizations including Georgia Tech Scheller College of Business, Cleo, ketteQ, and PopCapacity.

Judodine Nichols
Chief Technology Officer, Principal Minerals
Dr. Nichols is Chief Technology Officer at Principal Mineral, leading technology development and deployment across critical materials. With over 20 years of international experience, she oversees product design, testing, and the company's technology strategy. Previously, she served as Chief Sustainability Officer and VP of Innovation at Radius Recycling, where she led sustainability and innovation across 100+ sites, launched a new critical mbterials recycling business, increased product profitability by up to 30%, and contributed to building a $250 million sustainability portfolio. Earlier, at Alcoa, she managed a $350 million technology and commercialization roadmap. Dr. Nichols serves on Juniata's College Board of Trustees.

Tracey Noffke
Sr. Director - Customer Logistics Strategies, Kimberly-Clark
Tracey Noffke is Vice President of Customer Logistics at Kimberly-Clark, where she leads customer|service strategy, logistics operations, and end-to-end delivery across North America. With over 25 years at the company, she has held a range of leadership roles focused on driving supply chain efficiency and customer satisfaction.
Noffke is known for her operational discipline and customer-first mindset, playing a key role in ensuring Kimberly-Clark's essential consumer products reach retail partners and end-users reliably and on time. Her l adership continues to strengthen the company's supply chain resilience, service performance, and strategic|customer partnerships.
Based in Wisconsin, she is a respected leader in logistics and supply chain management within the consumer-packaged goods industry.

Marcus Olsen
Vice President Supply Chain, Surplus City, LLC
Marcus Olsen is VP, Supply Chain, for Surplus City, LLC, a PE-owned company focused on aggressive growth in a market ready for consolidation. He brings broad supply chain leadership experience across procurement, consulting, analytics, value generation, and general management. Previously, Marcus held senior executive procurement roles at Leggett & Platt and Panduit Corporation, along with supply chain consulting roles at LogicTools and Exchange.
Throughout his career, he has led teams that delivered more than $150 million in cost savings and $150 million in cash flow generation. He continues to focus on creating value through strong analytics, leadership, and professional approach to supply chain management.

Candace Palmarozzi
Vice President - Controller, Finance, BNSF
Candace Palmarozzi was named vice president and controller for BNSF Railway in August 2020. In this role, she is responsible for financial budgeting, forecasting, accounting, reporting, treasury, cargo claims, and revenue and disbursements management. Candace was previously vice president, corporate controller and chief accounting officer at Borden Dairy Company. Prior to Borden, she spent five years at Lennox International, a Texas-based HVAC products manufacturer. Candace spent the first 10 years of her career with accounting firm PwC.

Nikita Parikh
Global Sourcing Lead, Google
Nikita Parikh is an industry-leading Strategic Sourcing leader driving the evolution of global infrastructure and next-generation networking. Renowned for her technical acumen and sharp commercial judgment, she architect-level strategies that secure resilient, hyperscale supply chains for the world's most demanding environments. Nikita bridges the gap between complex network engineering and high-stakes commercial execution—transforming traditional supplier relationships into powerful, scalable market advantages. A master negotiator and category strategist, she doesn't just manage global supply chains; she future-proofs them for continuous velocity and long-term enterprise value.

Fotini Petroula
VP, Technology Lifecycle Services & Cloud Supply Chain, IBM
Fotini Petroula is Vice President, Technology Lifecycle Services & Cloud Supply Chain at IBM and a global executive with experience leading in multicultural markets. Originally from Greece, she has lived and worked ih Scotland, France, Brazil, and the United States. Fotini is recognized for leadership in supply chain, Quote-to-Cash, business operations, data and digital transformation, and client advocacy. She is passionate about talent development and employee engagement and actively contributes to the supply chain community through the Service Council Industry Advisory Board and Supply Chain Leaders in Action.

Amy Rardin
Sr. Director SC Digitization & Strategic Partner, P&G
Amy Rardin is Global Senior Director of Supply Chain Digital Transformation & Strategic Partnerships at Procter & Gamble, where she designs more seamless, efficient flows of data and materials across the end-tojend supply chain.
With more than 25 years of experience, Amy has led major supply chain, innovation, customer collaboration, and transformation initiatives across P&G. Her background includes serving as COO of Tide Cleaners, ldading P&G's Global Supply Innovation Portfolio, supporting major Beauty supply chain transformation work, and advanding Fabric Care product and package innovation. She is known for relationship building, persuasive leadership, and|delivering results in complex environments. Amy holds a Mechanical Engineering degree from The University of Texas at/Austin.

Rich Rosselle
Director ISG Global Supply Chain Strategy, Lenovo
Rich Rosselle is Director of ISG Global Supply Chain Strategy & Digital at Lenovo, where he leads global initiatives across network strategy, manufacturing, procurement synergies, and operational transformation. His work focuses on applying data, analytics, and automation to improve end-to-end supply chain performance. Rich has held leadership roles at Lenovo, IBM, and Sanmina. He holds an MBA and a B.S. in Industrial Engineering from North Carolina State University and brings deep experience building resilient, scalable supply chains.

Joe Ruddy
Chief Innovation Officer, The Port of Virginia
Joseph P. Ruddy is Chief Operations Officer for Virginia International Terminals (VIT), LLC, where he oversees Operations, information technology, safety, security, capacity expansion, and maintenance across marine terminal facilities in Norfolk, Portsmouth, Newport News, Richmond, and Front Royal, Virginia. He also oversees the Hampton Roads Chassis Pool. Joe previously served as VIT's first Chief Innovation Officer, helping establish strategic planning, analytics, and process excellence teams. Earlier roles included Director of Operations and Labor at VIT and General Manager of Virginia Intermodal Management. He holds a bachelor's degree from Virginia Wesleyan University and a master's in education from The College of New Jersey.

Joni Sartain
VP, Onsite Energy Solutions, Walmart
Joni Sartain is Vice President of Onsite Energy at Walmart, where she leads distributed energy initiatives across stores, clubs, and supply chain facilities, with a focus on resiliency, energy efficiency, and sustainable opetations. Since joining Walmart in 2011, she has held leadership roles across property management, supply chain real estate, international real estate, and large-scale field execution. Her experience includes complex transactions, lease negotiations, portfolio integrations, capital investment strategy, governance, and more than 2,000 remodels and special projects. Joni lives in Northwest Arkansas with her husband and two daughters.

Stefan Schulz
SVP, Strategy & Operational Development, 3M
Stefan Schulz is Senior Vice President, Operational Excellence at 3M and a global operations executive with more than 30 years of leadership across manufacturing, supply chain, quality, and operational excellence. He leads enterprise-wide strategy for supply chain, digital transformation, data analytics, corporate quality, and network optimization.
Stefan has held senior regional and global operations roles across EMEA, the United States and Canada, and Asia Pacific. His background includes plant leadership and Lean Six Sigma Master Black Belt responsibilities. He is recognized for driving large-scale transformation, improving operational performance, and buildin high-performing global teams.

Pushpinder Singh
Partner Global Practice Leader, IBM
Pushpinder Singh is Partner and Global Supply Chain Transformation Practice Leader at IBM, where he helps enterprises advance from fragmented automation to AI-enabled decision orchestration at scale. With more than 25 years of experience, he has led large-scale supply chain, procurement, and manufacturing transformations for Fortune 100 organizations across automotive, consumer goods, life sciences, high-tech, semiconductor, and energy sectors. His work focuses on intelligent operations, ESG, operating model reinvention, and connected, autonomous decision-making. Pushpinder is also deeply committed to developing future supply chain leaders, having mentored more than 175 professionals. He regularly speaks at industry forums and has been recognized multiple times as a Supply & Demand Chain Executive "Pro to Know."

Katherine Storer
CSCO, Berlin Packaging
Katherine Storer is Chief Supply Chain Officer at Berlin Packaging, the world's largest hybrid packaging supplier. She leads Berlin North America's supply chain strategy and execution, including sourcing, planning, custom tooling, logistics, and quality. Since joining Berlin Packaging in 2019, Katherine has helped advance global innovation and operational performance across a complex packaging network. Previously, she spent more than a decade at Procter & Gamble, where she led globally distributed teams and supported digital transformation across purchasing. Katherine earned her MBA from the University of Chicago Booth School of Business and has been recognized tby Supply & Demand Chain Executive and Supply Chain Digital for her leadership and impact in supply chain.

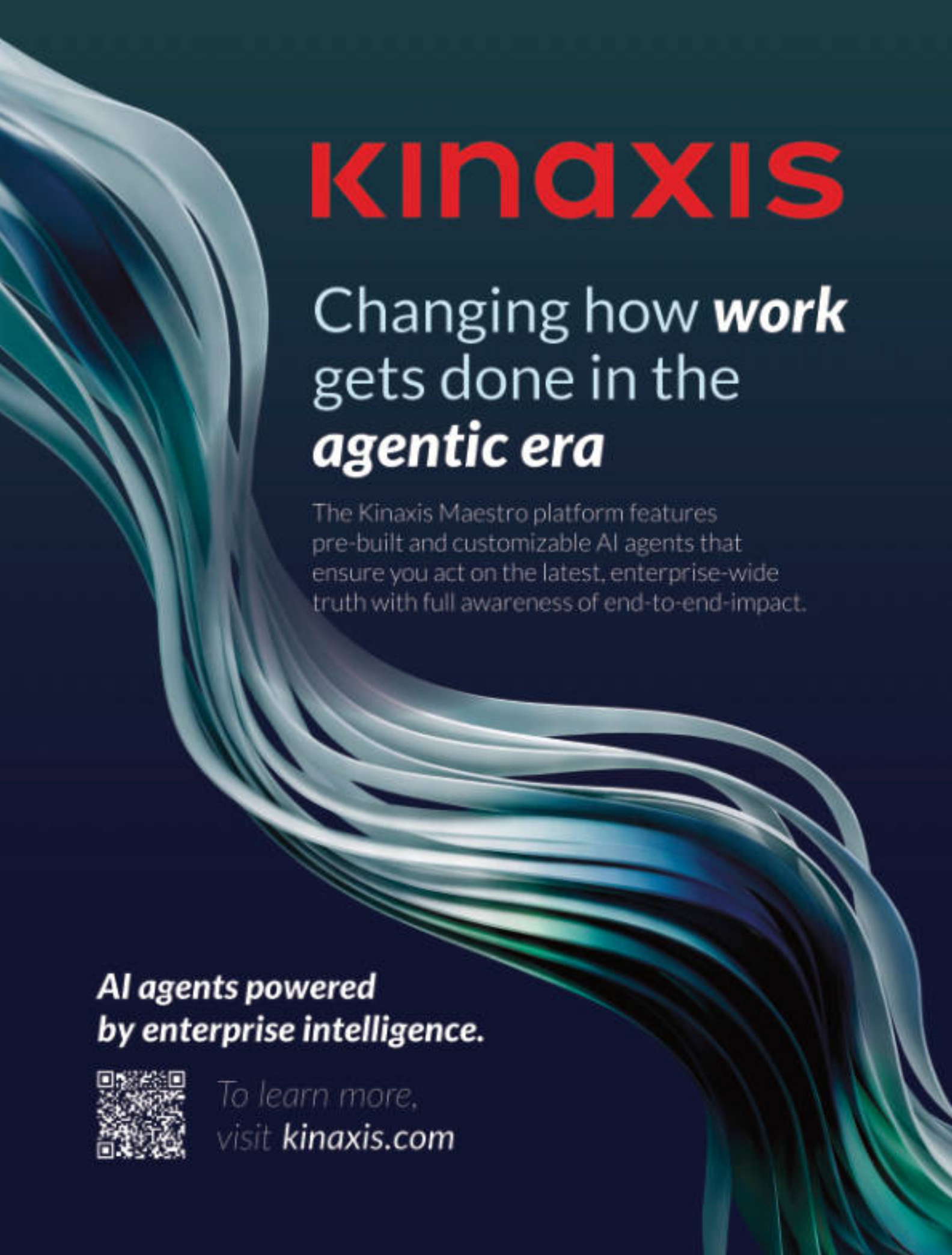
Jordan Strawn
SVP Logistics, Werner
Jordan Strawn is the Vice President of Werner Logistics, a key component of the company's portfolio of transportation services solutions. Jordan joined the team in 2015 after a decade of experience in the logistics indugtry. His core responsibilities include planning and budget development to support business goals.
Jordan is known for his strong leadership, innovative problem-solving, operational excellence, and talent development.
He believes that people are central to success and therefore places tremendous focus on building exceptional teams that are well equipped to lead sales generation for Werner Logistics. Jordan holds a degree in finanᶜe and is a proud alumnus of the University of South Florida. He currently resides in Tampa with his wife and son.

Adis Sulejmanovic
Head of Digital Supply Chain Transformation & Strategy, Kraft Heinz
Adis Sulejmanovic is Head of Digital Supply Chain Transformation & Strategy at Kraft Heinz, where he leads digital transformation across North America, including deploying and scaling autonomous planning. With nearly 20 years of supply chain leadership at Kraft Heinz, Whirlpool, Elkay, and Ace Hardware, he is known for a foundations-first approach to transformation — people and process first, technology as the enabler.

Amy Thorn
CEO, SCLA
Amy Thorn is CEO of DBM Association, based in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where she brings together senior business leaders and academia to address critical issues shaping the supply chain landscape. She is the founder of Supply Chain Leaders in Action (SCLA), an invitation-only, shipper-led executive forum for senior supply chain leaders focused on confidential peer exchange, thought leadership, and strategic connection. Amy also serves as founder and Editorial Director of the DBM Journal, which helps executives and managers stay current on innovative approaches to supply chain strategy, cost reduction, performance, quality, and customer service. She is also owner and award-winning winemaker of Thorn Hill Vineyards and a graduate of Elizabethtown College.

Matt Tichon
Exec. Director Applied AI & Decision Intelligence, Kinaxis
Matt Tichon is the Executive Director of Applied AI - Decision Intelligence at Kinaxis (since December 2025). In this role, he drives global adoption of AI agents and decision intelligence, empowering complex supply chains with real-time orchestration, concurrency, and end-to-end visibility.
With more than 30 years of senior leadership experience across consulting, technology, manufacturing, distribution, and retail, Matt has a proven track record of delivering transformative supply chain initiatives. He holds a BSBA in Logistics Management from Central Michigan University and completed MIT Sloan's executive program in Machine Learning. He was named a "Pro to Know" in 2021 by Supply Chain Dive.

Renee Ure
Co-Founder, Executive Leadership Insights
Dynamic technology and operations leader with over 40 years of global experience driving supply chain transformation, operational excellence, and digital innovation. Retired in August 2023 after a distinguished career at IBM (32+ years) and Lenovo, where I served as VP, Global Supply Chain and Chief Operating Officer of the Infrastructure Solutions Group.
Currently, I serve as Advisor to Ekho Labs, an AI platform delivering predictive intelligence for supply chain risk mitigation. I also sit on three advisory boards: Supply Chain Leaders in Action, Cybord (AI component traceability), and Gartner's Executive Advisory Board. Recognized for end-to-end process optimization, AI and blockchain integration, and building high-performance, resilient global operations. Based at Smith Mountain Lake, Virginia and Kure Beach, North Carolina.


kinaxis
Changing how work gets done in the agentic era
The Kinaxis Maestro platform features pre-built and customizable AI agents that ensure you act on the latest, enterprise-wide truth with full awareness of end-to-end-impact.
AI agents powered by enterprise intelligence.
To learn more, visit kinaxis.com

When Power Becomes the Constraint: Rethinking Infrastructure, Growth, and Supply Chain Strategy

By Nicholas Konen – Vice President, Strategic Development, Hillwood

The U.S. industrial development landscape is undergoing a fundamental transformation. For decades, access to reliable and affordable power was largely assumed, an input that could be secured with predictable timelines and costs. Today, that assumption no longer holds.

The rapid convergence of electrification, reshoring of manufacturing, and the explosive growth of data centers and AI infrastructure has fundamentally altered the supply demand balance for electricity.

> *"Power is no longer a commodity. It is a gating factor."*

Power may be the most visible cnstraint, but it is no longer the only one. Water availability, cooling requirements, and broader infrastructure limitations are now shaping development feasibility in equally material ways.

This shift is reshaping development strategies, extending project timelines, and forcing both developers and large power users to rethink how projects are conceived, financed, and executed.

The Structural Imbalance

At the heart of the issue is a structural imbalance between accelerating demand and constrained supply. U.S. electricity consumption, which had been relatively flat for years, is now entering a new growth phase driven by industrial electrification and digital infrastructure.

Data centers alone are primary drivers. Grid based electricity demand is projected to increase significantly by 2030, with data centers representing a disproportionate share of that growth. At the same time, their electricity consumption has surged dramatically over the past decade.

Yet the grid is not expanding at a commensurate pace. Developers are encountering several systemic constraints:

- Transmission bottlenecks and insufficient substation capacity
- Overloaded interconnection queues delaying grid access
- Long lead times for critical equipment such as transformers and switchgear
- Retirement of firm generation capacity without equivalent replacement

These constraints are not theoretical. They are already materially impacting development. Power availability, grid bottlenecks, and policy constraints are now among the primary limits on how quickly new industrial and data center capacity can be delivered.

What begins as a power issue rarely stays one. For many projects, the pressure now extends across water, cooling, permitting, and local resource competition, turning infrastructure planning into a far more complex strategic exercise.

Site Selection Is Being Redefined

Historically, site selection prioritized land, labor, and logistics. Today, the first question is:

Can the site be powered and when?

That question is broadening quickly: not just whether a site can be powered, but whether it can be supported over time from an energy, water, and infrastructure standpoint.

Interconnection timelines that once took 12 to 24 months can now stretch to several years or longer, particularly in constrained markets. Transmission upgrades often take even longer, introducing significant uncertainty into development schedules.

Compounding this issue is the growing backlog in interconnection queues. Utilities are inundated with speculative and overlapping requests, making it difficult to distinguish viable projects from placeholders. This has led to a system that is increasingly misaligned with actual project readiness.

The result is clear: power, not capital or demand, is the primary pacing item for development.

For supply chain leaders, this means infrastructure delay is no longer simply a development problem. It becomes a direct constraint on network expansion, speed to capacity, and service reliability.

Financing and Capital Allocation Are Changing

The uncertainty around power availability is directly impacting financing timelines and capital deployment strategies.

Lenders and equity partners are placing greater emphasis on power certainty before committing capital. Projects without secured power, or at least a credible path to it, face extended diligence periods, conditional financing structures, and higher costs of capital due to elevated risk profiles.

In some cases, projects are being repriced or abandoned altogether due to inability to secure timely power. This creates a cascading effect. Delays in power lead to delays in financing, which in turn delay construction and revenue generation.

The traditional sequencing of development has been disrupted. Financial close is no longer simply a function of market demand and project fundamentals. It is increasingly contingent on infrastructure readiness.

As a result, infrastructure constraints are no longer a downstream operational issue. They are shaping capital allocation, network planning, and executive decision making at the front end.

Development Timelines Are Expanding

The implications for development timelines are profound. What was once a relatively linear process, site acquisition, permitting, financing, construction, has become highly iterative and uncertain.

Key impacts include:

- Front loaded due diligence, with power studies and utility engagement beginning at the earliest stages
- Longer predevelopment phases as developers work to secure interconnection agreements and infrastructure commitments
- Increased carrying costs as land and capital are held for extended periods
- Phased development strategies aligned with incremental power availability

In many markets, the timeline to deliver a fully energized industrial or data center facility has effectively doubled.

For supply chain leaders, that means infrastructure delay is no longer just a development problem. It becomes a direct constraint on network expansion, speed to capacity, and service reliability.

How Organizations Are Responding

Faced with these challenges, developers and large power users are adapting rapidly. Several key strategies are emerging.

First, a power first approach to site selection has become standard. Developers are prioritizing locations based on existing grid capacity rather than traditional real estate metrics.

Second, many large users are investing behind the meter generation.

Third, direct partnerships with utilities are becoming more common.

Fourth, load flexibility and demand response strategies are gaining traction.

Finally, geographic diversification is reshaping development patterns.

None of these responses work in isolation. The organizations making progress are the ones treating energy, infrastructure, operations, and long-range network strategy as part of the same decision set.

Municipalities and Regulators Are Under Pressure

At the local level, municipalities are increasingly affected by the rapid growth of large load developments.

In some regions, data centers and industrial users now represent a substantial share of total electricity consumption. This concentration has raised concerns about grid reliability, resource allocation, and impacts on local ratepayers.

As a result, municipalities and regulators are responding in several ways:

- Implementing moratoriums or restrictions on new large load connections
- Increasing scrutiny of development approvals
- Facing community opposition tied to energy consumption and environmental concerns

Another key issue is infrastructure cost allocation.

Approval risk is also changing. Communities and regulators are no longer looking only at load. They are looking at water use, environmental impact, and who bears the cost of growth.

Rebuilding the Infrastructure Pipeline

Despite these constraints, significant actions are being taken to address the power bottleneck.

Investment in new generation capacity is increasing, with a mix of natural gas, renewable energy, and energy storage projects under development. However, permitting timelines and supply chain limitations constrain the pace at which these resources can come online.

Transmission expansion is also gaining attention. There is broad recognition that substantial new transmission infrastructure is required, though these projects face long development timelines and complex siting challenges.

Interconnection reform efforts are underway to streamline processes, reduce backlogs, and prioritize viable projects.

Additionally, there is a push to localize supply chains for critical equipment such as transformers and switchgear.

This is why more companies are shifting from static infrastructure assumptions to scenario-based planning that tests how energy, water, and regulatory volatility could affect future capacity and continuity.

Strategic Implications for the Future

In this new paradigm, successful developers are those who treat power as a core development pillar rather than a downstream utility service.

Early and consistent engagement with utilities is critical. Developers must gain a clear understanding of capacity constraints, upgrade requirements, and realistic timelines.

Power risk must be explicitly underwritten.

Where possible, securing access to power should precede or at least coincide with land acquisition.

Developers should also diversify their power strategies.

Design flexibility is increasingly important.

Finally, staying informed on policy and regulatory developments is essential.

The advantage will go to organizations that can read the signals early: interconnection backlog, equipment lead times, permitting friction, and regional resource strain.

Conclusion

The U.S. industrial development sector is entering an era where power availability is the primary determinant of feasibility. Demand is not the limiting factor. Capacity is.

The implications are far reaching. Development timelines are lengthening, financing structures are evolving, and site selection criteria are being fundamentally redefined. Municipalities and utilities are under increasing pressure to balance economic growth with infrastructure limitations and community impacts.

Yet within these challenges lies opportunity.

"The winners will be the organizations that stop treating infrastructure as a background assumption and start managing energy and water as strategic inputs to growth, resilience, and network design."

In this new landscape, the defining question is no longer simply where to build, but how to secure the power necessary to make development possible.

Increasingly, the challenge is not simply securing power. It is securing the full infrastructure envelope required to grow without compromising resilience, cost, or continuity. ■

2026 Circle of Excellence Award honors TJX

The SCLA/DBM 2026 Circle of Excellence Award will be presented to The TJX Companies in recognition of the company's outstanding leadership in supply chain excellence, environmental stewardship, and social responsibility. The award honors organizations that demonstrate measurable impact through innovation, operational excellence, sustainability initiatives, and long-term community commitment.

The award will be presented during the Circle of Excellence Awards Banquet on June 23, 2026, at the Innisbrook Resort.

Raina Avalon , EVP & Chief Logistics Officer, TJX will accept the award on behalf of TJX.

Ben Massie Earns 2026 Distinguished Service Award

The DBM Association proudly presents the 2026 Distinguished Service Award to Ben Massie, recognizing his exceptional leadership, operational excellence, and enduring contributions to the global supply chain profession.

As Vice President of Supply Chain for Lenovo's $10B+ Infrastructure Solutions Group, Ben Massie leads a global organization of approximately 800 professionals, overseeing all facets of the supply chain including demand planning, fulfillment, supply management, inventory, quality, supplier engineering, and back-office operations. His leadership has been instrumental in transforming Lenovo's supply chain into a strategic differentiator, one that is now recognized among the top supply chains in the world.

Over the course of his 22-year career spanning Lenovo, IBM, and Microsoft, Ben has built a reputation as a disciplined operator and forward-thinking strategist. He played a pivotal role in the integration of Lenovo's supply chain following the IBM System x acquisition, successfully navigating one of the most complex transitions in the technology sector. His leadership helped shift the organization from an outsourced model to an in-house manufacturing strategy, while simultaneously building a cloud supply chain from the ground up and deploying an end-to-end digital transformation platform. These efforts not only strengthened operational performance but elevated supply chain to a core competency within Lenovo's enterprise business.

Ben's influence extends beyond his enterprise responsibilities. As Executive Committee Chair for the SCLA Annual Executive Business Forum, he has demonstrated a deep commitment to advancing the profession through peer-driven dialogue and executive engagement. His leadership reflects a rare combination of precision, humility, and accountability, qualities that resonate strongly within the SCLA community.

"Ben is a humble leader with a razor-sharp mind and a high EQ. He brings a rare steadiness in uncertainty, the discipline to stay the course, and the strategic clarity to move people forward with confidence. He listens before he speaks, observes with intention, and leads in a way that brings out the best in others. His impact is felt not only in results, but in the trust, alignment, and strength he creates around him."

— Amy Thorn, CEO, SCLA

A graduate of Penn State with a degree in Business Logistics and an Executive MBA from the University of North Carolina, Ben's foundation in both operational discipline and strategic thinking is evident in his work. Yet it is his steady leadership style and commitment to developing others that truly set him apart.

Congratulations, Ben. Your leadership continues to shape the future of supply chain while strengthening the people and organizations around you. This recognition is a tribute to your enduring impact on the profession and the example you set for others through the way you lead. ■

John Fitzgerald: A Master Connector and a Supply Chain Ambassador

John Fitzgerald, Vice President of Business Development at project44, has been named the recipient of the prestigious Lifetime Achievement Award, jointly presented by the Supply Chain Leaders in Action (SCLA) and the Distribution Business Management Association.

For more than 50 years, Fitzgerald has built a career not simply on business success, but on something far more enduring: relationships. In a profession defined by movement, complexity, and change, he has stood out as someone who never lost sight of the most important truth of all—that progress happens through people.

His career began at IBM, followed by service as a Captain in the United States Marine Corps. After returning, he made an early bet on transportation, long before the term supply chain existed, joining Airborne Freight, now DHL. He went on to spend 30 years with Fritz Companies, later acquired by UPS Supply Chain Solutions, before reinventing himself in 2010 and moving into SaaS with GT Nexus and now project44.

Over more than five decades, he has seen the industry evolve from telex machines and typewriters to today's world of real-time visibility, IoT, and AI. Today, as part of project44, he sits at the forefront of a new era defined by AI-enabled, highly connected supply chain ecosystems.

And yet, through every phase of transformation, his focus has never shifted...

People.

That philosophy is captured in the title of his book, I Never Met a Stranger, a reflection of his lifelong belief in the power of relationships.

"John is a master connector," said Amy Thorn, CEO of the DBM Association. "His gift is his genuine love of people and his extraordinary ability to remember them, value them, and bring them together. His impact has not come through a single company transformation or one defining initiative. It has come through the people and leaders he has influenced, encouraged, and connected over the course of his career, many of whom have gone on to shape this industry in meaningful ways. At a time when supply chains and society are being reshaped by AI and rapid technological change, John stands as an important reminder that none of it matters without people. Relationships, trust, and human connection still sit at the center of everything, and John has lived that truth for more than 50 years."

Beyond his commercial success, Fitzgerald has been deeply committed to learning and giving back. He has taught since 1980, including at Northwestern University, and in recent years has served as a guest lecturer at Penn State, Arizona State, and Florida Gulf Coast University.

He is also especially proud of his longstanding support for women in supply chain, having championed their advancement for more than 40 years across both the organizations he has served and the broader industry.

Fitzgerald's connection to SCLA reflects something he has long understood: the value of the lifelines we create by prioritizing people and the connections we make along the way. In an industry defined by constant change, those relationships often become the very thing that sustains us and moves us forward.

Outside of his career, Fitzgerald is a devoted husband, father, and grandfather. He credits his wife, Patty, as his strongest supporter for more than 44 years, and together they have built a life grounded in family, generosity, and connection. Their commitment to giving back also extends into the Southwest Florida community through the Spring Run Charitable Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization that supports children and veterans.

The SCLA and DBM Lifetime Achievement Award was created to recognize those whose influence extends beyond traditional measures of success. In honoring John Fitzgerald, the SCLA community is recognizing something deeper. In a moment defined by technology, speed, and transformation, his career is a reminder of what must endure. That progress is not driven by systems alone. It is carried forward by people.

And over the course of a lifetime, John Fitzgerald has brought those people together, one relationship at a time. ■

www.SCLAsupplychain.com
Supply Chain Leaders in Action

From Initiative to Impact: Proving ROI Through Measurable Results

By Candace Palmarozzi, Vice President - Controller, Finance, BNSF

Proving ROI Through Measurable Impact

What is the ROI? Where are we going to see the results in the financial statements? Is this the best project to invest in vs. the others we have on the table?

Answering these questions for every investment opportunity can feel painful and requires discipline across the organization. But skipping this step can be the costliest miss of all, especially if you have limited tech resources and a full pipeline of projects.

ROI can be proven when organizations apply clear problem definition, disciplined Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) development, and a consistent evaluation framework. In today's environment of heightened cost scrutiny and constrained capital, this discipline becomes even more critical, particularly as many investments such as AI, visibility, and speed deliver value that is not always immediately visible in traditional financial metrics.

Start With the Problem Statement, Not the Technology

When teams ask, "Where can we best use AI" or "How can we deploy a chatbot?", they are already starting from the wrong place.

The better question is "What problem are we trying to solve?"

When companies lead with technology-first thinking, the result is often riddled with scope creep, unclear value, and poor alignment with business outcomes. Instead, anchor your brainstorming sessions with a sharply defined problem statement with impact in mind.

From there, the next step is ensuring that the problem is framed in a way that can ultimately connect to enterprise level value, even when that value spans multiple functions or is realized over time.

Establish KPIs That Can Measure Progress, Even for Qualitative Projects

My organization is undergoing a significant multi-year technological transformation where we have identified projects across nearly all functions using the problem statement method noted above. Once the projects were identified and valued, we aligned across all stakeholders about what KPI would highlight progress for that specific project. This was done for every project regardless of size.

If you can't answer all three of the following, the project isn't ready for consideration:

- What KPI will be improved?
- How often can it be measured?
- Where and when will we see the value in the financial statements?

As an example, say you have a great idea where you can automate ten hours of time per week for each person on a twenty-person team. Doing the math, that would result in roughly 10,000 hours freed up for that team.

I had this recently happen where someone had already had the idea and done the automation before aligning with the business on benefits. The tech leader wanted to report savings for the project by applying 10,000 hours x labor cost. However, we had not realized any actual savings from this project.

> *"Freed up time is not value unless the organization commits to how that capacity will be monetized."*

What about forecasting accuracy or reduction in decision lag? I am a big fan of improving forecast accuracy or speed to decision making as it can help organizations react faster in ever changing environments. The tricky part is quantifying the impact though.

How will speed actually help us improve the bottom line? Where will faster insights result in improved revenue?

When projects like these come along, do the legwork on the front end to really understand the intended impact to avoid a perceived lack of benefits at the end of the project. In many cases, this requires identifying the secondary and tertiary effects of improvement, such as how faster decisions improve service levels or prevent downstream costs, so that qualitative gains can be translated into measurable business impact.

Translate KPIs to your Financial Statements

Identifying the KPI is not usually the hardest part of this process. Translating it to the financial impact can often be the trickiest.

These are the primary ways to link KPIs to your financial statements:

Hard-Dollar Benefits (Easiest to Prioritize)

- Cost Reduction
- Volume Growth
- Price Growth

Risk-Based Benefits

- Safety
- Compliance

Soft-Dollar Benefits (Requires Further Work to Monetize)

- Employee productivity
- Customer experience
- Employee experience

Cost Avoidance (Requires Strong Data)

- Less cost increases in the future

Safety and compliance projects often receive priority because risk reduction is mission critical. The benefits won't always show up immediately in the financial statements, but the evaluation discipline remains the same with clear KPIs and timing of impact.

Soft dollar savings are much more complex to value. Productivity alone is insufficient; we need to press organizations to commit to how that capacity will be utilized.

For customer experience projects, guide the teams back to hard dollar benefits. If we are improving the customer experience significantly from this project, are you willing to sign up for incremental volume in your plan?

For employee experience projects, ask what this project would do for employee retention or training costs. That is a great way to ensure you are fully thinking through the benefits of the project and with the end goal in mind.

The risk of projects with only soft dollar savings is that they will be deprioritized. These may be valuable projects to the organization, so work with the business to understand the impact and translate value to hard dollar savings where possible.

Cost avoidance is a challenging category as well. Claiming value based on costs that don't yet exist requires strong data that these costs are highly likely to occur in the future absent this investment, for example, delaying incremental headcount as volume increases.

"ROI is not just a calculation, but a narrative that connects operational improvement to financial outcomes in a way that resonates with executive and finance leadership."

Regardless of how you link your KPI to the financial statements, the way you communicate this value is equally important.

Use a Uniform ROI Framework

Leverage a standard ROI framework across the organization to support transparency and comparability.

The key elements of the framework include:

- Baseline (current state performance)
- KPI uplift assumptions
- Benefits assumptions
- Projected benefits range
- Payback period, Net Present Value, Internal Rate of Return
- Named business owner

Having this reporting for all projects ensures leaders can clearly see where resources should be prioritized and also helps ensure accountability throughout the project life cycle.

This consistency is especially important when comparing investments that deliver value in different ways, some immediate and financial, others indirect or realized over time.

Start With Small, Time-Boxed Pilots to Validate Value

When benefits are uncertain but the team is confident the idea is worth pursuing, a pilot is a great next step to reduce risk, clarify benefits, and surface hidden dependencies.

An effective pilot includes:

- Defined hypothesis and measurable success criteria
- Limited scope, short duration
- Clear owners and data availability

Pilot results can then firm up benefit quantification and support scale-up decisions.

In general, we see better outcomes when teams can have a minimum viable product built in a few weeks, report out to key leaders weekly on learnings, and then iterate on the solution on a smaller scale before rolling it out more broadly.

This has a much better chance of building alignment between all stakeholders on the front end.

These pilots also play an important role in building executive confidence by turning theoretical value into observable results that support broader investment decisions.

Implement Monthly Reporting That Shows Measurable Impact and Progress

Build monthly metric reporting to highlight progress on key technology projects.

This reporting reinforces accountability and executive visibility and should include:

- Status of the project (planning, development, pilot, scaling, implemented)
- Planned timing of realized benefits
- KPI trends vs. target
- Planned benefits in the current year
- Realized benefits (Income Statement or Capital Savings)
- Commentary on learnings/pilot locations as needed

Always get buy-in with all stakeholders ahead of time.

Metric reporting can be emotional when groups see the results and they are not in line with what they expected. Agree on how projects will be measured from the outset and communicate to ensure alignment on how results will be measured and reported.

Additionally, it is critical that the finance function owns the benefits quantification from the initial valuation through metric reporting to ensure continuity in the calculations and confirmation that the reported results are actually realized in your financial statements.

This becomes even more critical when value spans multiple functions, ensuring that benefits are consistently measured, attributed, and communicated across the organization.

Make ROI a Discipline, not a Debate

Proving ROI is not about perfect precision. It is about disciplined thinking, shared accountability, and transparent assumptions.

Organizations that consistently define problems well, measure the right KPIs, and translate operational improvements into financial results will invest more confidently and scale what works.

As technology cycles accelerate, the ability to clearly articulate and prove ROI is no longer optional.

It is how leaders earn capital, trust, and influence. ■

GREEN MOUNTAIN
WELCOME TO THE FUTURE OF VISIBILITY;
IT'S ALREADY IN MOTION.
For complex logistics networks managing millions of shipments, multiple carriers, and constant disruption, the real shift isn't more data. It's turning data into outcomes.
Enter Intelligent Visibility by Oreamnos AI:
Green Mountain's AI-enabled platform experience built to deliver faster insights, smarter decisions and continuous optimization.
Powered by unified, real-time data, strong governance and deep logistics experience, Oreamnos AI helps your teams move from:
Visibility → Insight → Action → Outcomes
The result: Faster decisions, greater operational clarity, and smarter logistics performance at scale.
Welcome to the future of Intelligent Visibility.
Let's explore what it unlocks for you.
greenmt.com

DESCARTES

UNITING THE PEOPLE & TECHNOLOGY THAT **MOVE THE WORLD**

Delivering the Industry's Most Complete Offering of Logistics & Supply Chain Management Solutions

- B2B CONNECTIVITY & MESSAGING
- BROKER & FORWARDER ENTERPRISE SYSTEMS
- ECOMMERCE WMS, SHIPPING & FULFILLMENT
- CUSTOMS & REGULATORY COMPLIANCE
- GLOBAL TRADE INTELLIGENCE
- TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT
- ROUTING, MOBILE & TELEMATICS

Improving Logistics & Supply Chain Productivity, Security & Sustainability

The Descartes Systems Group Inc. | info@descartes.com | www.descartes.com | © All rights reserved

VUCA World & Supply Chain Planning

By Venkatesh Srinivasan, Diamond Foundry

What Is the VUCA World?

Supply chains today are being tested at a pace and intensity that often feels disproportionate to the value they are expected to deliver. Products are still making their way to market, but the systems behind them, once optimized for efficiency, are increasingly strained, fragmented, and reconfigured under pressure. The root cause is not a single disruption, but a broader operating environment: the VUCA world.

VUCA, meaning Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, and Ambiguous, has become the defining context in which modern supply chains operate. While the term itself is not new, its relevance has intensified dramatically over the past decade. Tariff uncertainty, geopolitical tensions, and the decoupling of global supply chains have forced organizations into repeated cycles of redesign. What once took years to optimize now requires constant reevaluation.

Consider the cumulative burden placed on organizations: identifying new production partners, establishing alternative manufacturing footprints, qualifying tool shops, retraining operators, and navigating Harmonized Tariff Schedule codes. Each of these efforts demands time, capital, and organizational focus. Taken together, they represent a continuous reset of the supply chain rather than incremental improvement.

Yet while the current environment feels uniquely challenging, it is not unprecedented. A longer historical lens reveals a recurring pattern. Periods of disruption, whether driven by global recessions or breakthrough technologies, have consistently reshaped supply chains. What distinguishes today's moment is not the existence of disruption, but its frequency, overlap, and speed.

> *"In a VUCA world, stability is no longer the baseline assumption. Instead, volatility is persistent, uncertainty is structural, complexity is inherent, and ambiguity is unavoidable."*

Organizations that continue to operate with traditional, linear supply chain models will find themselves reacting rather than leading.

Thriving in this environment requires a fundamental shift: from optimizing for efficiency alone to building resilience, adaptability, and clarity of purpose. It requires rethinking not just processes, but priorities.

Building an Integrated Supply Chain

To navigate VUCA effectively, supply chain leadership must evolve beyond its traditional boundaries. The supply chain can no longer be treated as a standalone corporate function responsible solely for sourcing, logistics, and execution. Instead, it must be redefined as an integrated network of partners embedded across the organization.

This shift is both structural and philosophical. Structurally, it requires deeper integration with product development, finance, operations, and commercial teams. Philosophically, it requires viewing the supply chain as an enabling system, one that shapes outcomes rather than simply supports them.

When supply chain teams are engaged early and meaningfully, they influence decisions that determine cost structures, product feasibility, and time to market. When they are brought in too late, they are left to execute within constraints they did not help define.

The question, then, is not whether supply chains should be integrated, but how they should prioritize their efforts within this broader role.

Supply Chain Priority Sets

In a VUCA environment, clarity becomes a competitive advantage. One of the most effective ways to create that clarity is through well defined, rank ordered priority sets. These priorities anchor organizational effort in what truly matters and prevent the dilution of focus across competing demands.

1. Define What Matters

This is the most critical priority set and the foundation upon which all others depend.

At this stage, supply chain priorities are derived directly from broader organizational objectives. The goal is not simply to understand what needs to be delivered, but to articulate it with precision: what is being built, when it must be delivered, and why it matters.

This requires a deep understanding of the target customer and the experience the product or service is intended to provide. What features are essential? How will those features influence engineering decisions across industrial design, product architecture, and software development?

These choices are not isolated. Feature selection drives certification requirements, which in turn influence testing costs and product launch timelines. Each decision has downstream implications that must be understood early.

Equally important is the financial dimension. Costs must be assigned at both the feature level and the total product level. These costs must align with the broader financial model, including cost of goods sold, gross margin targets, manufacturer's suggested retail price, and expected sales volumes.

Purchasing teams play a central role in this phase and should dedicate a significant portion of their time here.

Their insights into supplier capabilities, material alternatives, and cost structures are critical in shaping viable product definitions.

When executed well, this stage establishes clear success metrics for sourcing and commodity teams. It eliminates ambiguity and ensures that downstream execution is aligned with strategic intent.

2. Curate and Manage the Supply Chain

Once priorities are defined, the next step is to translate those decisions into a synchronized and operational supply network.

This is often the most time intensive priority set, as it involves converting intent into execution across multiple dimensions. The objective is to build a supply chain that reflects the realities of manufacturing, demand, and distribution.

Manufacturing constraints are a central consideration. Decisions around production methods, process yields, and factory locations directly influence cost, quality, lead times, and inventory strategies. These are not abstract variables. They define the performance envelope of the supply chain.

Demand profiles must be understood with equal rigor. The timing of production relative to demand is a primary driver of cash flow. Misalignment here can create excess inventory or missed revenue opportunities, both of which carry significant financial implications.

Distribution choices further shape outcomes. Selecting the right channels and configurations determines not only cost efficiency but also the speed and reliability of order fulfillment. These factors ultimately influence customer satisfaction and brand perception.

In this priority set, coordination is key. Each element, manufacturing, demand, and distribution, must be aligned to create a coherent and responsive system.

3. Simulate the Edge Cases

While much of supply chain management focuses on planned operations, resilience is built in how organizations prepare for the unplanned.

This priority set is often underemphasized or deferred to post launch reviews. However, leading supply chain organizations approach it proactively, using simulation and modeling to anticipate disruptions before they occur.

The goal is to identify potential breakpoints and test corrective actions in advance. This includes modeling scenarios such as fluctuations in commodity markets, currency movements, changes in shipment times, and extended lead times.

These simulations are not purely analytical exercises. They require cross functional alignment and often necessitate collaboration with finance, legal, and operations teams. Securing the ability to act on these insights, whether through financial instruments, contractual flexibility, or operational adjustments, is as important as the modeling itself.

By investing in this priority set, organizations can move from reactive problem solving to proactive risk management. They gain the ability to allocate time and resources more effectively, focusing on mitigation rather than crisis response.

4. Live and Learn

The final priority set addresses the realities that remain beyond direct control.

Macroeconomic forces, monetary policy shifts, and geopolitical developments will continue to influence supply chains in unpredictable ways. These factors cannot be fully planned for, and attempting to do so can create a false sense of control.

Instead, organizations must develop the capability to respond effectively when these events occur.

If the first three priority sets have been executed with discipline, the organization will be better positioned to adapt. Its supply chain will be more resilient, its decision making more informed, and its operations more flexible.

In such environments, well managed companies often outperform their peers. Periods of disruption create divergence: organizations that are prepared gain market share, while those that are not struggle to maintain stability.

This is not a function of luck, but of preparation and prioritization.

Conclusion

A company's supply chain is a direct reflection of its strategic choices. It reveals where the organization has invested its time, energy, and attention, and where it has not.

In a VUCA world, success is not determined by the absence of disruption, but by the ability to navigate it with clarity and intent. Organizations that integrate supply chain thinking across their value streams, define and adhere to clear priority sets, and allocate resources accordingly are better equipped to endure and excel.

"The orchestration of priorities is what ultimately transforms the supply chain from a reactive function into a strategic enabler."

The orchestration of these priorities is what ultimately drives performance. It transforms the supply chain from a reactive function into a strategic enabler.

The question for every organization is straightforward, yet profound:

What is your priority set? ■

Artificial Intelligence and ROI: An Operational Excellence Perspective

By Thomas Goldsby, Ph.D.
David P. Perrot, Haslam College of Business, The University of Tennessee
Deepak Iyengar, Ph.D., Georgia Southern University

"We get brilliant results from average people managing brilliant systems. Our competitors get average results from brilliant people working around broken systems."

– Fujio Cho, Chairman Toyota Motors

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is the latest tool in our toolkit to improve the productivity of people. There have been many tools that have been developed and invented in the past that have increased productivity. Starting from developing the humble wheel, to controlling fire, to harnessing the muscle power of animals, transitioning to using chemical energy since the dawn of industrialization, and now, to using bits and bytes—all have led to increased productivity, yielding greater efficiencies and, almost always, effectiveness of individuals, firms, organizations, and society.

In this context, AI should not be viewed as a standalone innovation, but as the next evolution in a long line of productivity-enhancing capabilities—one that must ultimately be evaluated through its ability to drive measurable operational and financial outcomes.

When we talk about enhancing productivity (outputs / inputs), the emphasis is on trying to decrease the number of inputs to achieve the same, if not more, outputs. These inputs could be monies, material, people, and/or information. The activities whose productivity is normally enhanced typically reside in processes and relationships both within and across organizations. These processes and relationships are the rules of the game that people frame to achieve certain strategic or tactical goals and objectives for the betterment of individuals, organizations, or societies.

Operational Excellence (OpEx), since the 1970s, has become a dominant set of principles that seeks to enhance organizational performance through continuous improvement with a focus on elevating customer value. It seeks to optimize processes by reducing waste using a combination of philosophical and scientific approaches where employees feel valued and invested in the process and outcomes.

"AI and Operational Excellence are not competing agendas — together they create a framework for sustainable productivity improvement and customer value creation."

In that sense, AI and OpEx are not competing agendas. Rather, they can coexist and reinforce one another as corporate initiatives. OpEx provides the disciplined problem-solving approach—define value, map the work, remove waste, stabilize the process—and AI can accelerate insight, automation, and experimentation when applied to the right problems.

This reinforces that the role of AI is not to replace Operational Excellence, but to extend its reach—enabling faster insight generation, more precise execution, and greater scalability of improvement efforts.

Operations Management Perspective (Productivity)

Remember that productivity is the output generated for a given set of input(s) (outputs/inputs). To enhance productivity, output can be increased and/or inputs can be reduced. If only outputs are impacted, the outcome would be increased revenue, assuming that increased outputs find customers. Reduction in inputs tends to lower costs and can increase net profits, all else equal, while increasing outputs and decreasing inputs together can improve both the top and bottom line.

Deploying AI requires investment in data, technology, change management, and ongoing operations. Organizations should weigh the cost of deploying AI against the expected benefits through a break-even analysis that reflects both the opportunities—speed, quality, new capabilities—and the constraints—adoption, risk, and integration.

As organizations mature in their AI journeys, the emphasis is increasingly shifting from experimentation to measurable, enterprise-level outcomes—reinforcing the importance of disciplined ROI evaluation.

Firms should also not assume that all increased output will necessarily lead to higher revenue unless customer value and demand are explicitly addressed.

OpEx, AI, and the Human Dimension

When we talk about OpEx, customer value and employee empowerment are key. A useful economic principle to keep in mind is the "fallacy of composition," where what appears beneficial for an individual firm in the short run may not be beneficial for the firm, the economy, or society in the long run.

This is particularly relevant as organizations evaluate how AI should support, augment, or in some cases automate decision-making—while still preserving accountability and sound judgment.

"The goal is not 'AI for headcount reduction,' but 'AI for better work' — eliminating non-value-added activity while empowering employees to focus on higher-value problem solving."

In practice, the goal is not "AI for headcount reduction," but "AI for better work," removing non-value-added effort, improving quality and speed, and freeing capacity for higher-value problem solving. Used well, OpEx can identify non-value-added work that should be eliminated first, or standardized and then automated, potentially using AI. Used well, AI can help teams see where time is consumed—rework, waiting, searching, handoffs, defects—and make waste visible at scale.

Organizations that are most successful with AI are those that pair technological capability with strong leadership, employee engagement, and a clear definition of value.

Lean Perspective

The lean management philosophy is rooted in the notion of eliminating waste from work processes. A key premise of lean is the concept of value-added. For an activity to be considered value-added, it should meet all three of the following criteria:

1. the customer is willing to pay for the product or service
2. the activity changes the form or fit of the product or service
3. it is done right the first time

When a firm decides to implement AI tools, it should begin with a comprehensive OpEx analysis of its processes to identify which activities are not adding value to customers. OpEx can clarify whether work should be eliminated, simplified, standardized, or then automated—potentially with AI.

This sequence remains critical: applying AI to unstable or non-value-added processes risks accelerating waste rather than eliminating it.

AI can also assist this discovery by mining logs, documents, tickets, emails, and workflows to highlight rework loops, approvals that do not change outcomes, frequent handoffs, and other patterns of non-value-added work.

Jidoka, or autonomation with a human touch, is another feature of lean management. Activities within a process that are repetitive, error-prone, or dangerous are places where AI deployment can readily help. Using data for preventive maintenance and advanced notice of failures is another strong use case.

In more advanced applications, AI may also support real-time decision-making and workflow orchestration, extending beyond traditional automation.

Importantly, lean management recognizes the value that employees, especially frontline workers, bring in improving and changing processes.

Six Sigma Perspective

The focus of six sigma methodology is to reduce defects. Six sigma uses control limits to determine where a process is in control. AI can pinpoint statistical anomalies in this process and can also help in generating analytical tools such as value-stream maps, fishbone diagrams, and FMEA calculations from internal data sources.

At the same time, AI is lowering the barrier to advanced analytics, shifting the role of practitioners from executing analysis to interpreting and validating results.

But extreme caution needs to be exercised in the interpretation of the results, as each firm's processes are unique, and recommendations must be validated by domain experts and leadership.

This underscores the continued importance of governance and expertise in AI-enabled environments.

Theory of Constraints Perspective

The theory of constraints aims to identify the "true" bottleneck in a process and make the throughput of the bottleneck as productive as possible. AI could, in theory, identify the "true" bottleneck.

However, as AI capabilities advance, constraints may increasingly shift from physical bottlenecks to decision latency, data fragmentation, or organizational silos.

AI can monitor strategic inventory placed before and after the bottleneck and alert operators whenever there are disruptions in the process.

More advanced implementations may enable dynamic, real-time adjustments to workflows and resource allocation.

Conclusion

The analogy of AI is that of fire: it is a great servant but a terrible master. When AI is deployed within an OpEx framework, with a clear definition of value, stable processes, employee involvement, and sound governance, it can significantly improve productivity and quality while also enabling new value for customers.

A robust business case, including break-even analysis, should be conducted before large-scale deployment to ensure that increased capability translates into measurable outcomes in cost, quality, speed, revenue, and customer experience.

Ultimately, the promise of AI will not be realized through adoption alone, but through disciplined application that converts technological capability into measurable operational and financial performance.

A cross-functional team should deliberate the opportunities and risks of introducing AI across functions and processes, using OpEx methods to identify and remove non-value-added work and using AI to help surface waste, defects, and new ways to serve customers. ■

nuVizz

nuVizz.com Info@nuVizz.com

Take control of your **delivery network** and **customer experience** with nuVizz

Specialized B2B Last-Mile Delivery for Global Enterprises.

Enabling Shippers with total network orchestration and actionable real-time visibility.

Empowering Carriers with seamless onboarding and real-time execution tools.

Real-Time Visibility

Seamless Integration

Scalable Efficiency

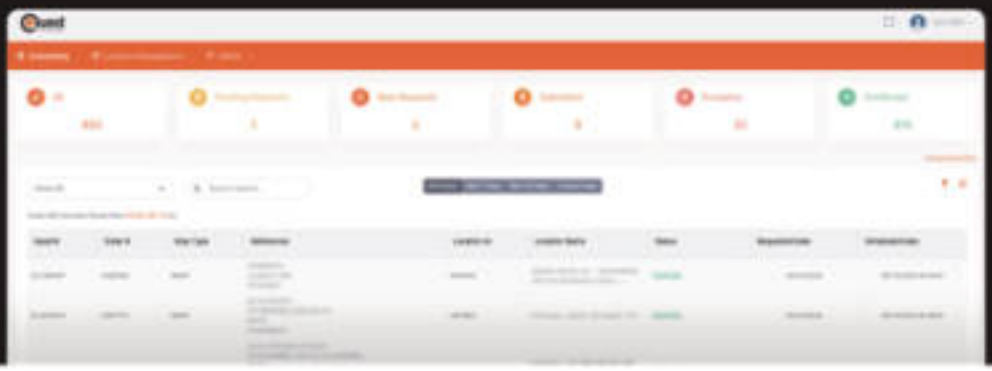
Redefine your last mile

VISIT nuvizz.com

Qued
Smart Appointments

An inch wide.
A mile deep.

Appointments are all we do.



We're the only scheduling platform that handles every mode, every portal, every location, directly inside your TMS.

Most freight tech tries to do everything. Load matching, visibility, billing, scheduling. The scheduling layer ends up three menus deep, works for the standard portals, and falls apart the moment a hot load needs to jump the queue.

Qued was built by a team that scheduled appointments at the dock for twenty years before writing a line of code.

We do one thing, and we do it across web portals, email, and voice, on 50,000+ shipper locations, with commodity priority logic baked in. Your CSR team stops chasing logins and starts managing exceptions.

Before Qued	After Qued
7–11 Minutes per Appointment	Under 1 Second
20+ Shipper SOPs	One TMS Integration
5–10% Bad Appointment Rate	1% Bad Appointment Rate
Reactive Scheduling	Orchestrated Scheduling

See the math on your volume. Qued.com

Leading Gen AI: Managing Generations and Artificial Intelligence in Supply Chains

By Misty Bennett, Ph.D., Associate Dean, Business Administration, Central Michigan University

The Generational Stereotype Cycle

Lazy. Entitled. Disloyal. Too Sensitive.

Now close your eyes and picture what generation those words describe. If you're a Baby Boomer, chances are you were thinking about Gen X or Millennials when you heard those words. If you are a Millennial, you were probably thinking about Gen Z or Alpha. And yes, even the Baby Boomers would have been called those things by the Traditionalists.

It turns out generational stereotypes are cyclical and predictable, and it shouldn't be a surprise to learn that they are not all true. In fact, academic research of "generational differences" often studies one sample in one time period rather than actually measuring each generation at the same period in time, and thus most studies that you read on generational differences are really studies of age effects (with some noted exceptions by Jean Twenge). Despite the lack of empirical evidence, perceptions of generational differences have played a large role in organizational behavior for decades, with most people being able to easily recall stories or negative perceptions of other generations ("OK Boomer!").

What leaders often interpret as fixed generational traits are frequently situational behaviors shaped by context, incentives, and stage of life.

In supply chain organizations, where four generations may be working side by side across plants, warehouses, planning teams, procurement offices, and control towers, these assumptions can quietly shape how managers assign work, communicate expectations, and introduce new technology.

Defining Generations: Shared Experiences, Different Perspectives

What defines a generation? Generations are a cohort of individuals who go through a shared set of experiences in a similar location during a set period of time. While there is no magic cutoff date range, a generation typically spans 15 to 20 years. Experiences like wars, economic recessions, and social changes often shape the experience of groups of people at certain ages, especially young adulthood, to form a "shared" experience that defines their generation.

For instance, Gen Xers were the first "latch key" kids whose mothers worked outside the home, they experienced the end of the cold war, a rise of computers, and the AIDS crisis. Millennials experienced terrorist attacks (9/11), the introduction of social media and smart phones, school shootings, and concerns over climate change.

The idea is that these events contributed to the way each generation views the world and influences their behavior.

Four Generations, One Supply Chain

The workforce today contains four generations of workers: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials, and Generation Z as shown in the accompanying Generational Snapshot. The Alpha Gen will be next, when the youngest of the cohort turns 18 in a few years.

An increased focus on generational differences in the workplace began as the large cohort of Baby Boomers were preparing for retirement and organizations feared the loss of knowledge as this mass exodus of senior employees occurred. At the time, Generation X was smaller, and the concern was that Millennials weren't ready for leadership. Millennials are now at the peak of their career and are experiencing some of the generational stereotype woes about Gen Z.

Managers often cite communication differences, work styles, and preference for remote or flexible work as leading challenges to intergenerational work. For older employees, rapid changes in technology and the introduction of AI have presented a challenge as well.

Unfortunately, as is the case with any stereotype, these are not always true and can bias the way a manager interacts with their employees.

> *"The greater risk is not misunderstanding generational differences, but relying on them in ways that reinforce bias and lead to misunderstandings."*

For instance, a manager may assume that a Gen Z employee won't be willing to come to team meetings in person, or that a Gen X employee might prefer phone calls over emails or texts, but this may not be the case and the manager runs the risk of imposing their own biases on the situation. Instead, managers should always ask each employee about communication preferences, work styles, and comfort with various technologies and adapt accordingly.

Meet your newest team member: AI

To make matters more complicated, a new worker has been introduced to the intergenerational team: AI.

As companies are increasingly moving toward the use of agentic AI, managers have to now give thought to how they need to manage AI directly. This is on top of having to already upskill their own AI skills, and govern the use of AI by their team members.

If AI is treated as part of the team, managers should ask the same questions they would ask about any new employee: What role is it supposed to play? What decisions can it support? What decisions must remain human? How will its work be checked? Who is accountable when it makes a mistake?

"AI is not simply a tool to be deployed, but a contributor that must be managed with clear role definition, decision boundaries, and accountability."

This reframing is critical. AI is not simply a tool to be deployed, but a contributor that must be managed with clear role definition, decision boundaries, and accountability.

One helpful framework might be for managers to think of AI as a new employee and use tools for employee motivation that they already have. For instance, prompt engineering is essentially a method of giving feedback to AI, not unlike feedback given to an employee. Feedback is always important for improving performance, and companies who use agentic AI should make sure their agents are given direct, continuous feedback. Just as you wouldn't expect a new hire to excel without some training and onboarding, AI cannot perform properly without careful prompt engineering.

Organizations that operationalize this approach reduce ambiguity, accelerate adoption, and improve decision quality.

The Hidden Cost: Technology's Impact on all Generations

The reality is that technology has changed so rapidly and integrated itself so fully into our daily lives that all generations are experiencing rapid change.

Long term effects of technology use will not be able to be examined for many years, but we are already seeing technology adversely impact our health. Chiropractors are seeing teens with "tech neck," anxiety, depression, and loneliness are at all time highs, and newer studies are showing that our memory and cognition are being changed by our use of devices.

The numbers tell a striking story: today the average working American gets 7 hours daily of screen time, and there may be some generational differences, with Gen Z showing the most use (around 9 hours daily).

For supply chain leaders, this is not just a wellness issue. It is an operational issue that directly impacts focus, decision quality, and execution.

Social media seems to be particularly problematic; a recent review of the literature by Fayize (2025) shows social media use contributes to fragmented attention, reduced focus, impaired memory, decision making and emotional regulation (all important executive function tasks that occur in the prefrontal cortex). Increased use of social media has shown to negatively impact older adults who use it as well; retirees who used social media for 6 hours or more per day were found to report increased anxiety, depression, and loneliness (Huang, et al., 2025).

As organizations scale digital tools and AI, they must also manage cognitive load or risk diminishing the productivity gains these technologies are meant to deliver.

Leading for the Future: Put the "human" back into Human Resources

Managers today have a very difficult task of managing an intergenerational workforce in a culture where the way we work is changing rapidly.

For supply chain organizations implementing digital transformation initiatives including AI driven analytics, agents, IoT monitoring systems, etc., these findings underscore the need for balanced technology integration strategies. We are working in an environment where workers feel overworked, underpaid, and burnout is at an all time high.

The problem is that burnout is often seen as a "you" problem and not an organizational problem.

In reality, burnout can be a systems design issue driven by workflow complexity, constant connectivity, and poorly integrated technology.

In essence we are blaming the flower for failing to bloom despite being in an environment with no sun. As supply chains become increasingly digitized, understanding the physiological and psychological costs of technology dependence becomes essential for maintaining operational excellence and workforce sustainability.

Simply put, we cannot let our technological resources downgrade our human resources so we must work to integrate technology use guidelines into our wellness plans.

Managers must consider today's work environment and examine how they can set up a safe, healthy work environment that will fuel rather than hinder employees' productivity. Attempts to reduce cognitive load, increase communication, offer movement breaks, and design workflows that mitigate prolonged device exposure can go a long way toward helping improve our work well being.

For instance, encouraging "device free" strategy sessions for S&OP planning, breaks during long shifts, adding 10 minute "buffers" between meetings, and encouraging "walking" meetings are all ways to reduce the use of screens.

To reduce cognitive load, consider how to simplify real time dashboards, or reduce alert fatigue by prioritizing critical exceptions over routine notifications.

Leaders should also consider how AI can be used not only to increase productivity, but to intentionally create capacity for higher value work, recovery, and strategic thinking.

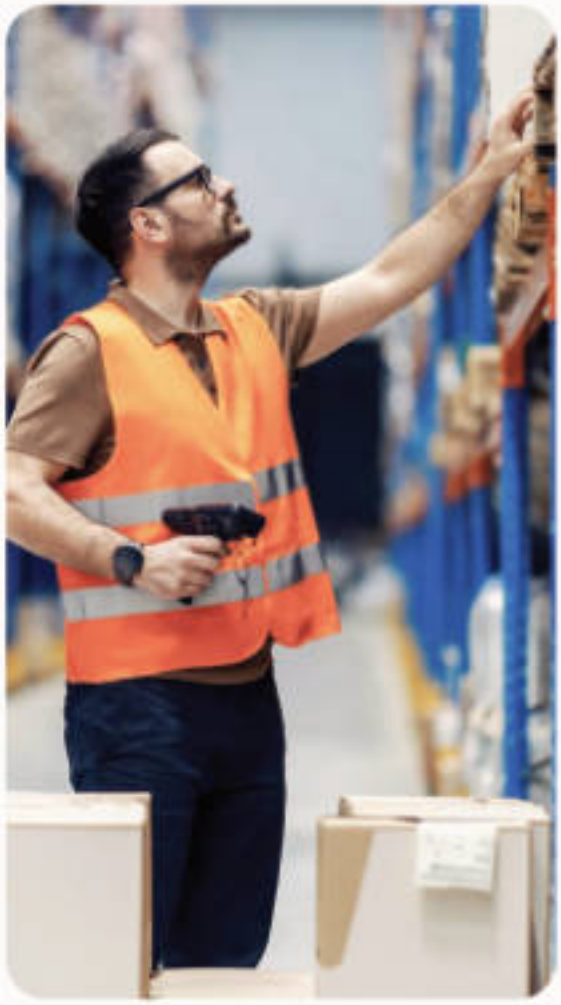
Finally, as AI helps us to "be more productive," also consider how it could help us to be more balanced or less stressed. Rather than adding onto an employee's job with the productivity savings tha...t AI has given us, consider allowing employees to have this time for rest, personal development, or creative space.

Managers who view AI as a helpful contributor to the team will also help dispel any concerns that AI is here to replace jobs. After all, the heart of any organization is its human resources, and as AI continues to learn new skills, it can't bring a delicious, homemade dish to the company potluck (yet). ■

Instawork

Never be short staffed. Connect with reliable, vetted workers *instantly.*

Avoid costly downtime. Get reliable, vetted warehouse and manufacturing workers in hours. Short-term, long-term, or permanent — we've got you covered.



9M+ *reliable workers ready to go*

100% *of jobs filled within 24 hours[1]*

4.8★ *average worker rating out of 5 stars by businesses*

Scan the QR code to get started today
or visit us at instawork.com

OneRail

How Faster Deliveries Changed the Game for ATD

- 21% decrease in cost per delivery
- Same-day delivery in 90 minutes or less
- Increased delivery radius 35 miles per DC
- From 16 to 0 min. order processing time

Optimize Your Fulfillment Like ATD

Manually entering delivery data and locating couriers. Customers not getting what they need when they need it. Massive returns. It all adds up.

Read how American Tire Distributors saved time and money: $2.1M in annual cost savings. Order processing time eliminated. 90-minute delivery.

GET THE CASE STUDY

Leadership, Trust, and the Pipeline Problem: Cultivating the Next Generation of Leaders in a Low-Trust World

By Rachel Clapp-Smith, Dean of the Mike Cottrell College of Business, University of North Georgia

A crisis in leadership is not a new concept. Less than 20% of companies have indicated confidence in their leadership pipelines for the last 15 years, with the low point in 2020 of 11%. Forty-one percent of CEOs identify developing the next generation of leaders as a top concern.

While building a strong leadership bench will always be a concern for companies, what is new, and a crisis, is how trust is evolving and affecting organizations, the work experience, and leadership development. The level of trust in society has been eroding for quite some time, and employers have become the most trusted institutions, most believed sources of information, and islands of civility globally over the past five years, according to the Edelman Trust Barometer. However, Edelman suggests that in 2026, 70% of respondents, globally, have an insular trust mindset, meaning that uncertainty and fear has made people less trusting of people with different backgrounds, cultures, values, and lifestyles. Gallup has found that employee trust in their organization's leadership fell to 19% in 2025, down from 23% in 2024.

The consequences are measurable. High-potential employees, those most critical to pipeline health, are 3.8 times more likely to leave if they don't trust senior leaders, 3.7 times more likely to leave without regular growth opportunities, and 3.1 times more likely to leave if advancement is too slow. Meanwhile, organizations with strong leadership benches are 2.9 times more likely to fill roles internally and to rank as top financial performers.

Research points to coaching as a key lever. Development Dimensions International's (DDI) findings show that employees with managers who coach effectively are 9 times more likely to trust their manager, yet the prevalence of coaching cultures has declined in recent years. The gap between what the evidence recommends and what organizations practice remains a central challenge in building sustainable leadership pipelines.

Why Leaders Aren't Developing Others and What to Do About It

If the evidence is this compelling, the question worth asking is why more leaders aren't actively coaching and developing the people around them. The answer is rarely indifference. Most leaders understand that developing others matters.

David Day and Stanley Halpin note that "Most development approaches focus exclusively on the individual and ignore the social context" (pg. 6). This approach assumes that developing leaders will result in better leadership. Instead, they argue, leadership development can be accelerated when "individuals learn how to learn from their experiences so that leader development becomes one part of ongoing self-development" (pg. 6).

Too often, leadership development is treated as a program, something that happens in a classroom or through an annual review cycle, rather than as an ongoing responsibility embedded in how leaders work. When development is something that happens to people rather than something leaders do, it becomes easy to deprioritize.

Formal training programs have attempted to fill this gap, but with limited results. Seventy-five percent of organizations rate their leadership development programs as not very effective. This is not an argument against structured learning. It is an argument against over-relying on it.

A two-day workshop cannot substitute for the sustained, relational work of development. The ineffective nature of training programs alone has been documented as early as the 1950s, when early studies on leadership training saw measurable results immediately following training workshops, but that did not persist once the managers returned to their regular contexts of work. Again, the social context of leadership matters as much for its development as it does for the practice of leadership.

What the research supports is something more integrated, a coaching culture in which developing others is not an event, but a practice woven into the fabric of everyday leadership. This, too, brings challenges and is a differentiator for individuals who do it well and for organizations that cultivate a culture of leadership development and coaching. Barriers are structural and familiar: managers feel enough pressure as it is to perform their daily tasks, let alone allocate time to developmental conversations. And yet, cultures that do support coaching and development do not view development as another task that needs to be scheduled, but rather as something that is part of the way of being, in the fabric of the day, with informal coaching conversations emerging regularly.

Building That Kind of Culture

Building that kind of culture requires more than encouraging managers to have better conversations. It requires a deliberate combination of approaches. Developmental assignments give emerging leaders the opportunity to build capability through real experience. Assessments create a shared language around strengths and growth areas. 360-degree feedback introduces multiple perspectives that a single manager cannot provide alone. And perhaps most foundational, a trusting relationship with a direct supervisor, one in which growth is discussed openly, feedback is given regularly, and development is treated as a genuine shared priority.

"Employees with managers who actively support development are 11 times more likely to trust their manager."

DDI's research makes clear that these are not peripheral factors. Employees with

managers who actively support development are 11 times more likely to trust their manager. That trust, in turn, is what keeps high potentials in the pipeline long enough to realize their potential.

No single approach is sufficient on its own. Coaching without structure lacks direction. Formal programs without relational context lack traction. The organizations that are successfully building pipelines are those that treat leadership development as a system, one where culture, relationships, and deliberate practices reinforce one another over time.

Developing the Next Generation of Leaders

Who is responsible for building the next generation of leaders? This is not merely a question of succession planning. Succession planning is a term that is often reserved for people who might be nearing the end of their career. And yet, grooming a replacement is something that makes sense at every stage of one's career, because the best way to move up rungs is to have someone prepared to take the previous rung. In short, you will always want to be replaced.

But leadership cultivation is not limited to grooming one's replacement, either. It is a practice that drives performance within teams. When one considers the fundamentals of leadership, that it is a relational process that involves aligning people to strive towards a collective goal, it becomes clear that cultivating the next leaders is and needs to be a core responsibility of a manager's role at any level of leadership. As Day and Halpin note, "there is a pervasive need for people at every level to participate in the leadership process."

"The path forward is not a program. It is a disposition — one that views the development of others as inseparable from the practice of leadership itself."

The path forward, then, is not a program. It is a disposition, one that views the development of others as inseparable from the practice of leadership itself. At its most fundamental level, this means leaders taking personal responsibility for the growth of the individuals on their teams: knowing where each person is in their development, what they are ready for next, and investing the time and attention to coach them there.

But this kind of individualized investment requires something that is itself a leadership act: trust. To develop others, a leader must first trust them. They must extend genuine faith in the capacity of their team members to learn, adapt, and rise to new challenges, even before those team members have proven it. That confidence, communicated through the quality of the coaching relationship, is often what makes growth possible in the first place.

In an era defined by insularity and eroding institutional trust, the leader who chooses to trust, and to develop, the people around them is doing more than filling a pipeline. They are creating the conditions under which trust, performance, and leadership itself can take root and endure. ■

What the 2026 SCLA Supply Chain Outlook Reveals About the Next Era of Leadership

By Amy Thorn, CEO, SCLA

The SCLA Supply Chain Outlook Report was created to serve as a strategic playbook for senior leaders navigating an increasingly complex and volatile environment. Drawing on the perspectives of SCLA's executive community, the report focuses on the forces most likely to define the next 24 months, including geopolitical disruption, AI and automation, labor market transformation, and the shift toward resilience by design.

The objective is straightforward. Help leaders turn uncertainty into advantage by identifying the moves that will separate those who merely react from those who shape the future of supply chains.

The findings are drawn directly from SCLA's executive network, reflecting the experiences of leaders actively operating complex, global supply chains. The report is developed by SCLA, with academic input from the University of Tennessee, to ensure both practical relevance and analytical rigor.

At its core, the Outlook is not about predicting what comes next. It is about equipping leaders with a clearer understanding of where they stand, what is changing, and how to respond with greater precision.

A Shift in the Nature of Leadership

One of the clearest insights from this year's Outlook is that supply chain leadership is entering a new phase...

Disruption is no longer the story. Capability is.

In recent years, organizations were forced into a reactive posture, responding to a series of external shocks. Today, that reactive muscle has been built. The next challenge is different. It is about designing supply chains intentionally for resilience, adaptability, and intelligence.

Expectations have also shifted. Cost, service, and resilience are no longer trade-offs. They are simultaneous requirements.

Three dynamics are shaping this transition.

Geopolitical volatility is now a constant condition, not an occasional disruption. AI has moved from experimentation to strategic priority, even as execution remains uneven. Talent and organizational capability, not technology alone, are emerging as the true constraints on progress.

> *"The defining question is no longer whether disruption will occur. It is which organizations are structurally prepared to perform through it."*

Four Strategic Pillars Shaping the SCLA Outlook

The Outlook is anchored in four strategic pillars that together define the current and future state of supply chain leadership.

Geopolitical Risk and Trade Realignment

Tariffs, shifting trade blocs, and political tensions are no longer background considerations. They are direct cost drivers and strategic constraints. Leaders must design networks that can flex across regions, diversify sourcing, and absorb disruption without eroding margins.

AI, Automation, and the Next Wave of Agility

AI is transforming supply chains from reactive systems into predictive and increasingly prescriptive ones. Automation is reshaping logistics, planning, and labor deployment. However, while the ambition is high, maturity remains early. A notable insight from the data is the growing inclination among companies to buy rather than build AI-enabled capabilities, reflecting both the pace of innovation and the challenge of developing these capabilities internally.

Labor Market Dynamics and Workforce Transformation

Labor continues to be a defining constraint, but the nature of the challenge is evolving. It is no longer simply about availability. It is about skills, adaptability, and alignment with increasingly digital operating models. Organizations must rethink how work is structured, how talent is developed, and how the workforce evolves alongside technology.

Resilience by Design

Efficiency alone is no longer sufficient. The most competitive supply chains are those built to absorb shocks, adapt to changing conditions, and maintain performance under pressure. Resilience is no longer a reactive capability. It is a design principle embedded into network strategy, inventory models, and supplier relationships.

Where Companies Stand Today

While the direction is clear, the data reveals a meaningful gap between strategy and execution.

Most organizations fall into emerging or expected levels of maturity, with only a small percentage operating at a truly leading level. This indicates that while awareness is high, capability development is still in progress.

Organizations continue to demonstrate strength in traditional execution areas such as demand planning, supply planning, and logistics operations. However, the weakest areas are those most critical to the future state of supply chain, including AI adoption, advanced analytics, end-to-end visibility, and cross-functional integration.

This gap is significant. It highlights that the challenge is no longer understanding what needs to be done. The challenge is building the integrated capabilities required to do it consistently and at scale.

AI: The Largest Opportunity and the Largest Gap

AI stands out as both the most transformative opportunity and the area with the greatest execution risk.

> *"AI stands out as both the most transformative opportunity and the area with the greatest execution risk."*

Leaders clearly recognize its potential to reshape decision-making, forecasting, and operational execution. Yet adoption remains uneven, and relatively few organizations have embedded AI into core supply chain processes.

The increasing preference to partner externally rather than build internally reflects a pragmatic shift. Organizations are acknowledging the speed of technological change and the difficulty of building internal expertise quickly enough to keep pace.

The implication is clear. Success with AI will not be determined by ownership of the technology, but by how effectively organizations integrate it into their operations and use it to drive measurable outcomes.

From Insight to Action

The SCLA Outlook provides a clear direction for the next phase of supply chain leadership.

Organizations must design for optionality, ensuring their networks can flex across suppliers and geographies as conditions evolve. They must accelerate AI adoption with a focus on high-impact use cases and rapid scalability. They must invest in capability, aligning talent, structure, and processes with the demands of a more advanced operating model. And they must close the execution gap by embedding new capabilities into day-to-day operations.

> *"The next 12 to 24 months will not be defined by strategy alone. They will be defined by execution."*

The Value of the Outlook

The SCLA Supply Chain Outlook distills global complexity into a clear leadership agenda.

It provides insight into how leading companies are navigating geopolitical volatility and trade disruption. It highlights where AI and automation are beginning to deliver measurable impact. It offers perspective on labor strategies that balance cost pressures with long-term workforce sustainability. And it outlines how resilience can be built into supply chain design in a way that supports both stability and growth.

More importantly, it allows leaders to benchmark their organizations against peers facing similar challenges and to identify where to focus next.

Why This Matters

What distinguishes the SCLA Supply Chain Outlook is not just the data, it is the context in which that data is generated.

These insights come from leaders actively managing complex global supply chains within the SCLA community. They reflect real decisions, real constraints, and real trade-offs.

The SCLA Outlook also serves as a foundation for ongoing dialogue. These findings will be carried forward into the SCLA June Executive Business Forum, where members will engage directly on these issues, sharing what is working, challenging assumptions, and advancing how supply chains are designed and led.

In that sense, the Outlook is not simply a report. It is an extension of the SCLA platform, connecting insight, dialogue, and execution among senior supply chain leaders.

Methodology

The 2026 SCLA Supply Chain Outlook Report is based on a survey of 44 senior supply chain leaders conducted on January 7, 2026.

Respondents evaluated current capability maturity across key supply chain functions, identified expected challenges over the next five to seven years, and outlined priorities for investment and transformation. The findings were synthesized through SCLA's executive network, with academic input from the University of Tennessee to support survey structure and analytical framing.

Acknowledgment

We extend our thanks to Thomas J. Goldsby, Dee and Jimmy Haslam Chair in Logistics, and Sara Hsu, Clinical Associate Professor of Supply Chain Management, both University of Tennessee, along with Chris Jones, Founder of Supply Chain in 5, for their input in helping shape the survey instrument. ■

STAY AHEAD OF SUPPLY CHAIN DISRUPTION.

Supply chains are more complex than ever. You need more than a provider - you need a **partner who keeps you moving**. At **Yusen Logistics**, we work alongside you to keep goods moving efficiently and reliably. Across **air, ocean, land, and warehousing**, we connect your supply chain to **improve performance from origin to final delivery.**

With **real-time visibility through Yusen Vantage**, you can **track shipments, respond faster, and make better decisions.** Our teams **anticipate challenges, reduce risk, and keep your operations on track.**

Whether you're **optimizing costs, expanding into new markets, or strengthening resilience**, we help you build a **supply chain that performs** - today and into the future.

Connect with our team today.

solutions@us.yusen-logistics.com
yusen-logistics.com

Yusen Logistics