LogiSYM

The Magazine for Supply Chain Executives

FEBRUARY 2026

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EDITORIAL MESSAGE

From the Editor

Welcome to the **February 2026** edition of **LogiSYM Magazine**, and very pleased with the announcement that our subscriber base has passed the 50,000 mark! Thank you!

I was fortunate to spend the last week on my first visit to the beautiful island nation of Sri Lanka. Still clearly visible was the impact of November 2025 floods and landslides which claimed lives and severely damaged infrastructure. The human cost was real. But what was equally real was the speed of recovery. Roads are largely operational, supply routes are functioning, businesses are open, and tourism continues. Rail infrastructure remains a work in progress, but the broader system is moving. What stood out most was not the damage, but the resilience - communities adapting, workers restoring access, people remaining positive and forward-looking despite years of political, economic, and natural turbulence. Life does not pause. It recalibrates.

That experience mirrors the current state of modern global supply chains. Disruption is no longer episodic but structural. Climate volatility, geopolitical realignment, trade fragmentation, regulatory shifts - these are not shocks outside the system, they are the environment itself. The question is not how to avoid disruption, but how to design for continuity within it. We should, by now, be well-versed that resilience today means restoring flow under stress, diversifying intelligently, embedding visibility, and strengthening partnerships before crisis hits. Sri Lanka's recovery is a reminder: infrastructure may be damaged, but networks endure when people mobilise with clarity and purpose. In a permanent state of disruption, disciplined resilience - not optimism alone - keeps our supply chains moving.

The Magazine's theme this month is **Technology-Driven Transformation of Global Logistics**. We have some excellent content, and share our first article from Martin Palmer with his expertise in global logistics and trade compliance, "Next Generation Tech Is Transforming International Supply Chains". Dr Shereen Nasser writes on "The Evolution of Logistics in a Technology-Driven Era", and Spencer Liu and Wolfgang Lehmacher share a very exciting new initiative in reverse logistics and sustainability in their article "Asia Pacific Reverse Logistics Boom: Reinventing the Economics of Returns Through a New Alliance". The expanded cyber-security risk parallels the expansion of technology in supply chains and Stephanie Krishnan illustrates this with her piece "Global Supply Chain Security: The 2026 Resilience Mandate". Kim Winter provides his thoughts in "Technology-Driven Transformation of Global Logistics", and we wrap up January's LogiSYM Global event with "The Future of Global Trade - The 2026 Landscape".

The LogiSYM event calendar for the Year of the Horse is action-packed, we look forward to seeing you out there!

Brett Marshall
Editor-In-Chief
LogiSYM Magazine



LSCMS PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

THE 2026 RESILIENCE MANDATE: From Transformation to Intelligence

Planning is in full swing for **CeMAT, CargoNOW, the LogiSYM Gala Dinner, LogiSYM Asia Pacific, ColdChain,** and **Planning & Procurement** in Singapore and **CargoNOW Malaysia** in May. Amidst all this hustle and bustle, I find myself reflecting on how the narrative of our industry has shifted. For years, we talked about digital transformation as a future destination. Standing here in 2026, it is clear that this is not a destination but a constant evolution as the supply chain landscape continues to evolve along with us.

The next-generation technology we explore in this issue isn't just about faster shipping or larger ships; it's about intelligence-led orchestration. In 2026, resilience isn't a defensive posture; it's a competitive advantage.

A Convergence of Minds

The events in Singapore and Malaysia are crucial platforms for logisticians, augmented by our media platforms. I encourage you to dive into these pages with a critical eye. Whether you are looking at how technology-driven transformation is altering your daily operations or how you can better secure your global footprint, the insights within this issue are designed to be actionable.
I look forward to seeing many of you on the floor in Malaysia and Singapore—and let's stop talking about the "future" of logistics. We're living in it!

To the journey ahead,

Raymon Krishnan, FALA, FCILT, CLP

President The Logistics & Supply Chain Management Society



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Next Generation Tech Is Transforming International Supply Chains

Feature Article by Martin Palmer, Co-Founder & Board Member, Hurricane Modular Commerce & Founder of Supply Chain Compliance Ltd.

The global logistics industry faces a defining year in 2026, as sweeping technological change intersects with a rapidly evolving trade and regulatory landscape. The stakes have never been higher. Logistics leaders are being called to reimagine not only operational resilience but the very architecture of global supply networks. Emerging technologies such as AI, machine learning, and digital twins are shifting logistics from a reactive function to a predictive, data-driven ecosystem capable of anticipating disruption before it occurs.

Yet innovation alone will not solve the sector's deeper structural challenges. As trade policy shifts, new carbon accountability rules and heightened geopolitical risks reshape market conditions; success will hinge on leadership that can balance transformation with transparency and competitiveness with compliance. The years ahead will reward those capable of aligning digital capability with strategic foresight turning complexity into advantage and disruption into opportunity.

WHAT'S DRIVING THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

Global logistics networks are increasingly shaped by unpredictable regulatory moves, geopolitical tensions and inflation. Trade volatility spurred by tariff shifts, retaliatory export controls, and sanctions demands continuous adaptation for companies reliant on cross-border flows. Some products, such as semiconductors, now face entirely new tariff structures, including country of diffusion (country of origin) duties that multiply complexity for importers. On top of this, economic headwinds and the search for growth prompt a rethinking of supply chain footprints, with many favouring nearshoring and regionalisation to reduce risk and transit times.

RISING COSTS, CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS, AND LABOUR SHORTAGES

In 2026, logistics budgets are increasingly squeezed by rising costs in fuel, fleet



maintenance, and compliance. Surging transportation and warehousing expenses, compounded with labor shortages and equipment shortages, are forcing companies to recalibrate service offerings and delivery timelines. During peak seasons such as China's Golden Week or major e-commerce events (Black Friday, Cyber Monday, Singles Day, etc.), capacity constraints bite hardest, driving up freight rates and stretching both staffing and infrastructure to the limit.

Warehouses and last-mile networks are often overloaded, leading to bottlenecks and higher lead times across the value chain. The pace of regulatory change in global trade has accelerated dramatically in recent years, making agility not just a competitive advantage but a fundamental requirement for survival.

Add to this the frequent last-minute adjustments to tariff rates, shifting de minimis thresholds, and the rapid evolution of customs and compliance frameworks across major markets, and it becomes clear that organisations must operate with unprecedented responsiveness. Recent changes to de minimis thresholds, coupled with higher tariffs and stricter compliance requirements largely influenced by U.S. policy, have led to overcapacity in some sectors and shortages in others. The days of static compliance programs and periodic reviews are over; today's trade environment demands continuous monitoring, real-time adaptation, and proactive risk management.

THE ROLE AND LIMITS OF TECHNOLOGY

Technology is now indispensable for managing this web of complexity. In 2026, AI and machine learning power predictive routing, scenario modelling, and capacity planning, while digital twins simulate everything from port operations to regulatory events.

These tools enable companies to anticipate disruptions, dynamically reallocate inventory, and navigate an increasingly fragmented compliance environment.

However, barriers remain:

- Integrating legacy and new systems across the supply chain is often complex and costly.
- Many organisations report gaps in skills, with a growing need for digitally fluent staff capable of leveraging advanced analytics, robotic process automation (RPA), and scenario modelling.
- Data security and standardisation are major issues. The race to digitise exposes networks to new cyber threats and reliability risks in mission-critical data flows.
- With each jurisdiction setting its own rules and standards, businesses often lack the visibility needed to connect the dots, making it difficult to grasp the true complexity and interconnected demands of a cross-border transaction.

REGULATORY AND SUSTAINABILITY PRESSURES

Sustainability requirements now directly impact both strategy and cost. Decarbonisation, environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria, and emissions reporting drive demand for greener transport options and low-carbon warehousing.





The regulatory burden keeps mounting, particularly in the EU, where companies must prove both the source and ethical handling of materials throughout complex supply chains. Supply chain resilience from a security perspective is rapidly evolving from a strategic advantage into a global necessity. Governments and businesses alike now recognise that transparency across the entire supply chain is critical to mitigating risks related to fraud, forced labour, and geopolitical disruption.

Knowing exactly where commodities are produced, including the origin of individual components, the facilities involved in their manufacture, and the identities of those handling them throughout transit, is increasingly a minimum requirement in leading economies.

The introduction of digital product passports will be central to this transformation, enabling end-to-end traceability by digitally recording a product's components, production data, and movement across borders. At the same time, implementation of the Single Trade Window concept in jurisdictions globally, aims to streamline trade data submission, allowing businesses to share verified information once and meet multiple regulatory obligations simultaneously. Together, these initiatives enhance transparency, compliance, and security, delivering the trustworthy, data-driven supply chains needed in a world where resilience is no longer optional.

CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS AND EXPERIENCE GAPS

Against this backdrop, global brands and ecommerce leaders face significant operational gaps. They are under pressure to deliver on accelerated promises, faster international shipping, seamless customs and duty management. Yet, meeting these expectations often reveals weaknesses in infrastructure and cross-border systems, as fast checkouts are only as good as the customs clearance, carrier reliability, and visibility supporting them.

Regulatory authorities worldwide are fast-tracking changes that were once planned years into the future. The pace of reform, particularly in areas such as product traceability, data transparency, and digital border processes, is accelerating rapidly. Businesses that fail to keep pace risk not only non-compliance but also exclusion from increasingly digitised global supply networks.



The urgency to understand, adapt to, and comply with these measures has never been greater. Organisations can no longer rely on manual processes or fragmented data systems to meet evolving regulatory expectations. Technology is the decisive enabler

Those who invest early in digital integration, real-time visibility, and interoperable systems will be best positioned to navigate this shift. The message is clear, regulatory transformation is no longer on the horizon, it is happening now, and technology is the key to staying ahead.

STRATEGIC RESPONSES FOR 2026

Innovators in supply chains are taking proactive steps:

- Understanding the specific obligations of a company engaged in international trade and recognising that each jurisdiction may impose its own unique requirements.
- Maximising the use of existing, proven software tools that support international trading, so companies can plug into what already works instead of reinventing the wheel.

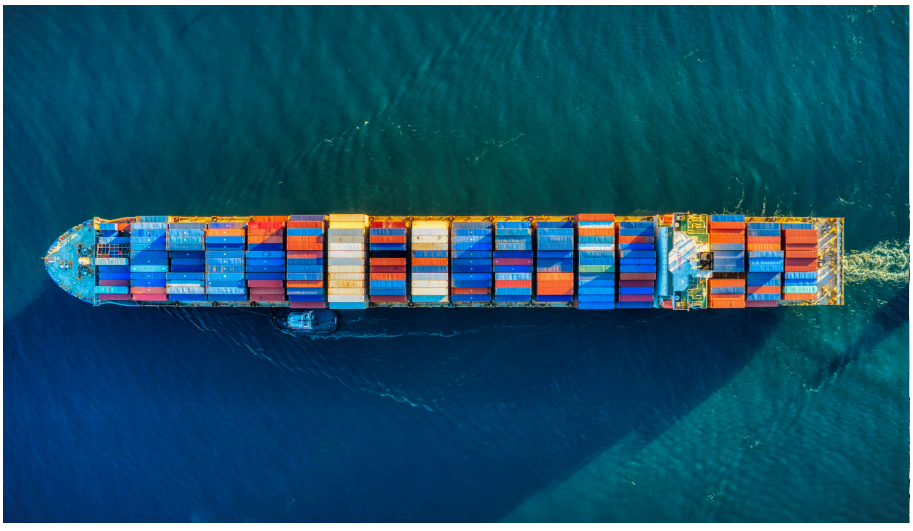
- Building multidisciplinary teams that combine internal know-how with external specialist providers so that tech skills and operational expertise come together to drive effective automation and data-driven decision-making.
- Expanding partnerships with carriers and third-party logistics providers to lock in reliability and diversify risk.
- Investing in sustainability strategies that meet consumer and regulatory demands for compliance, transparency, and carbon reduction.
- Developing modular, cloud-based platforms that ensure data is full, accurate, and complete for all parties in the international supply chain, while seamlessly interfacing with diverse provider and government systems to connect silos, automate workflows, and enable real-time responsiveness to global events.

CONCLUSION:

Opportunity Through Agility and Data 2026 is not rewarding the fastest movers, but the smartest, most adaptable organisations. The dual imperatives of technology adoption and operational resilience make this both a time of challenge and opportunity.

As logistics leaders harness AI, digital twins, and predictive analytics, those who successfully link these tools to new talent, sustainability, and strategic flexibility will set the standard for the next era of global trade.

Data is now the most powerful asset in international trade, and the businesses that treat it that way will win. When data is complete across jurisdictions, accurate, and readily available, it not only keeps you compliant with complex requirements but also unlocks greater agility, higher customer satisfaction, lower costs, and sustainable growth at a time when many others are struggling.





Martin Palmer

Co-Founder & Board Member, Hurricane Modular Commerce & Founder of Supply Chain Compliance Ltd.

With over 40 years in global logistics and trade compliance, Martin Palmer has made customs genuinely interesting and essential. Formerly Global Export Controls and Customs Director at TNT Express, he now helps businesses turn compliance from a burden into a competitive edge.

As co-founder and board member of Hurricane Modular Commerce and founder of Supply Chain Compliance Ltd, he builds smarter cross-border solutions and embeds governance into everyday operations. A Fellow of CILT and member of the Chartered Institute of Export & International Trade, Martin also advises NGOs and agencies on countering illicit trade and promoting ethical, sustainable commerce.

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The Evolution of Logistics in a Technology-Driven Era

Feature Article By **Dr. Shereen Nassar, Global Director of Logistics Studies, Heriot-Watt University Dubai**

The global logistics sector is undergoing a major transformation driven by technological advancements, evolving customer expectations, and geopolitical events. According to IMARC projections, the logistics sector was valued at USD 5.65 Trillion in 2024 and is forecast to reach USD 8.07 trillion by 2033, with a CAGR of 4.02 percent over the forecast period.

This rapid growth is driven largely by technology-driven innovations that are reshaping how supply chains function in the modern era. As they form the backbone of the global economy, improvements in logistics and supply chains can streamline processes across other industries and yield better economic outcomes at scale. Cloud-based technology also allows organisations to centralise enormous amounts of data and access real-time information in warehouses, transportation systems, and distribution centres. This has greatly enhanced scalability, collaboration, and decision-making capabilities for organisations in a supply chain, as well as boosting trust among different entities in the chain.

However, the IoT technology allows devices such as sensors, vehicles, and equipment to interconnect or sync up over the internet; hence, it has transformed many aspects of the industry to make it even more dynamic and responsive. For example, IoT sensors can be used to monitor environmental factors such as temperature and humidity when transporting perishable items to ensure they are transported safely and reduce any losses. The availability of large amounts of real-time data has made data analysis and interpretation critical for organisational success. In this particular scenario, there is a wide scope of AI to contribute significantly towards optimising the business, providing important insights, and creating a more efficient supply chain. For instance, AI-based tools can be utilised to determine the best route to deliver products, considering current road conditions and time slots.



This, apart from giving customers a sense of satisfaction, will also contribute significantly to reducing carbon footprint, fulfilling sustainability. Digital twins, in the logistics sector, provide a virtual copy of the actual supply chain network. This allows companies to create replicas of various components, including warehouses, vehicles, production units, etc., to assist companies in conducting system testing and evaluating performance without affecting actual business operations.

The digital twin is connected to real-time information from various sensors and devices, enabling accurate simulation of the system, which is important in resource allocation. The digital twin is important,

especially when it comes to supply chain disruption management, where scenarios are simulated, enabling companies to be prepared to respond to any situation, even when there is unpredictability. The adoption of robotics is growing rapidly in the logistics industry, transforming a sector known for extensive manual labour into one that is automated and digital-first.

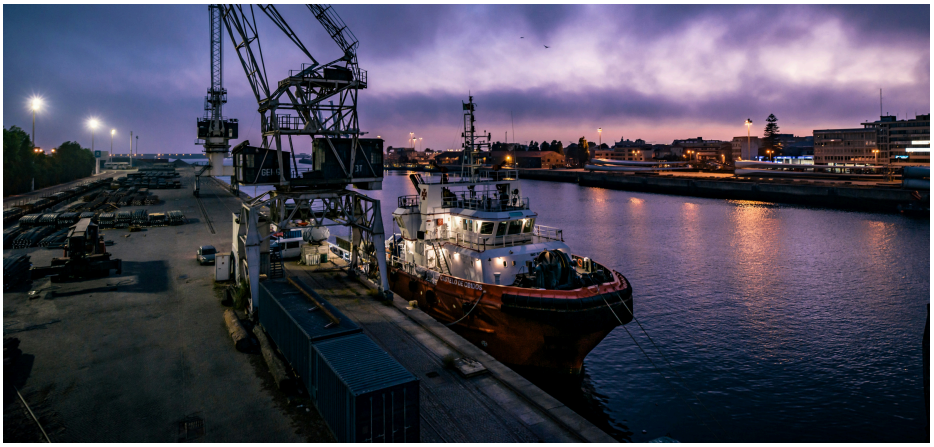
According to Fortune Business Insights, the robotics market within the logistics sector is projected to grow from USD 7.11Billion in 2022 to USD 21.01Billion by 2029, with a CAGR of 16.7 per cent during the forecast period.

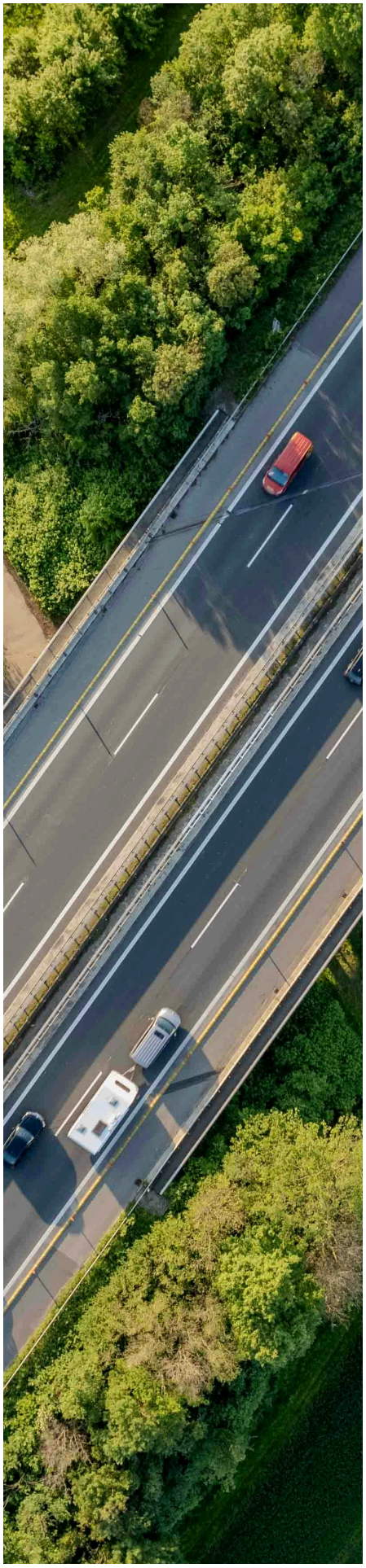
The most common use case for robotics is in repetitive and high-volume tasks like sorting, picking, and packing, which are performed with unmatched speed and precision. In addition, the adoption of technology also helps organisations to minimise accidents and protect the lives of employees from injuries, as high-risk tasks are automated. Another application of technology, autonomous vehicles, also provides the same benefits, as the vehicles are able to work around the clock, ultimately enhancing productivity across the sector.

In this regard, 3D printing or additive manufacturing enables firms to leverage on-demand production and distribution services and, in this context, has shown promise for third-party logistics firms. This is because such firms have traditionally handled the logistics and handling of products on behalf of their suppliers.

However, due to the availability of 3D printing technology, firms can leverage this technology to manufacture certain products at the premises, such as spares, fixtures, and other components, thus enabling a 'micro-factory' within a warehouse environment. The implementation of the technology-driven transformation in the global logistics industry, particularly through AI, machine learning, and digital twins, also poses some major challenges.

These include the need to integrate the existing systems, which may require a high level of investment to upgrade them; the need to manage the data to carry out the analytics; and the need to address the skills gap in the workforce, which requires training to work with these new technologies. There are also the challenges







of change management to deal with the resistance to change, the costs of implementation, which are high, the need to comply with regulations, and the complexity of the global supply chain. In order to deal with these challenges, it is necessary to adopt a strategic approach that requires planning and investment in the training of the workforce to acquire the skills.

Change management can help to develop a culture that accepts the use of technology. In addition, it is necessary to invest in the development of solutions that are scalable to meet the needs of the organisation without incurring high costs.

By being compliant with regulations and improving real-time visibility of the supply chain, it is possible to implement a technology-driven change that meets the needs of the customers. These technologies are leading the way to smarter, faster, and more resilient supply chains and are crucial for meeting industry demands in today's rapidly changing global market.



Dr Shereen Nassar

Global Director ofLogistics Studies and the Director of the MSc Logistics and Supply

Chain Management Heriot-Watt University Dubai

Dr Shereen's main research interest is sustainability and supply chain resilience. She has published numerous research papers and book chapters in areas such as automotive recall risk and social sustainable supply chain performance, sustainable maritime logistics, supply chain information security, contemporary disruptive business applications of blockchain technology, smart cities and implementation challenges.

Dr Shereen has extensive international teaching experience across UK and MENA region. She teaches both postgraduate and undergraduate levels. Her teaching proves the diverse expertise she has developed over a decade.

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Mastercard Launches Portfolio of Fleet Solutions in Asia Pacific

Mastercard Launches Portfolio of Fleet Solutions in Asia Pacific
Purpose-built payment solutions bring greater visibility, control and intelligence to modern fleet management

Singapore, 4 February 2026 – Mastercard today announced the launch of Mastercard Fleet: Next Gen in Asia Pacific, a portfolio of innovative solutions that expands fleet payments beyond fuel to support the full range of mobility needs for fleet operators today. The solutions are strategically engineered to support different market maturities and customer segments – from SMEs with small fleets to large logistics operators.

As the fleet ecosystem becomes increasingly complex, operators need clearer visibility across spend, stronger controls, and data they can act on in real time. When payment data sits in silos, it creates blind spots and limits efficiency and optimization – preventing the ability to reconcile fuel, maintenance and EV-charging transactions in one place, or making it more difficult for managers to identify anomalies across routes.

Mastercard Fleet: Next Gen unifies payments data – turning transactions into actionable insights embedded across fleet management workflows. Asia Pacific is the fastest-growing region for fleet management, with the market projected to grow at 18% CAGR through 2030. All the while, operators continue to balance cost pressures, evolving sustainability mandates and heightened expectations around security and compliance. In this environment, the ability to access consistent, enriched payment data across fleet activities is essential for scale and long-term performance.

Backed by more than two decades of global fleet expertise, Mastercard Fleet: Next Gen brings together a set of solutions designed to support the evolving needs of fleet operators and issuers:

- **Global acceptance across millions of locations,** including fuel, EV charging, maintenance, tolling, and ancillary fleet spend
- **Network-based fleet data** captured at the point of sale, aligned with global standards
- **A set of market-specific solutions** that enable enhanced data capture at forecourts and fleet-related merchants
- **Digitally assigned and issued fleet cards** for vehicles or drivers for seamless contactless or mobile payments, as well as specific



virtual card solutions tailored to fleet use cases

• **Integration with established technology**, including mobility platforms, acquirer networks and fleet management tools.

"Fleet needs vary widely across Asia Pacific, and connecting payments, data and controls into a single experience reflects what fleet managers require," said Anouska Ladds, Head of Commercial & New Payment Flows, Asia Pacific, Mastercard.

"Mastercard's fleet solutions are designed to help specialist fleet issuers and payment providers bring advanced fleet capabilities to market faster, while reducing the complexity and investment typically required to build these capabilities."

MASTERCARD ENABLES FLEET PROGRAM OWNERS TO DELIVER:

• **Smarter authorization controls and spend policies** by vehicle, driver, merchant category, location, time, and amount.

• **Fleet data management** to support compliance, accounting, and analytics - enabling better cost management and improved forecasting.

• **Real-time monitoring of fraud** and misuse, adaptable to operational fleet needs

The launch of our latest suite of fleet solutions in Asia Pacific further scales our offerings in this key segment - extending our expertise and innovation in fleet and mobility across the globe.

This move also demonstrates Mastercard's commitment to simplifying B2B payments by connecting fragmented commercial flows through a single, trusted infrastructure —helping businesses of all sizes grow in complex operating environments.





ABOUT MASTERCARD

Mastercard powers economies and empowers people in 200+ countries and territories worldwide. Together with our customers, we're building a resilient economy where everyone can prosper. We support a wide range of digital payments choices, making transactions secure, simple, smart and accessible. Our technology and innovation, partnerships and networks combine to deliver a unique set of products and services that help people, businesses and governments realize their greatest potential.



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The Future of Global Trade – The 2026 Landscape

LogiSYM Global, LogiSYM Magazine

LogiSYM Global 2026 kicked off the LogiSYM calendar on 22 January with a high-energy global webinar on the future of trade and supply chains, a stellar cast of panellists - Bruno Guella, Evan Armstrong, Glyn Hughes, Peter Tirschwell, Raafi Sieff, Scott Luton, Stephanie Krishnan, and Yann de Feraudy, and hosts Raymon Krishnan and Brett Marshall - attracting over 300 delegates across time zones.

In a world shifting from rule-based to power-based trade, speakers agreed that resilience has become a structural requirement, not a defensive reaction. Event partners Tetrixx, France Supply chain and Armstrong & Associates supported a stellar panel spanning policy, ocean and air freight, e-commerce, technology, 3PLs and shipper communities.

Dr Raymon Krishnan framed 2026 as a “fragile calm” where geopolitics, tariff volatility under President Donald Trump, and shifting alliances are driving an evolution rather than one-off disruption in global supply chains. Sector-wise, panellists highlighted a challenging but opportunity-rich year for air cargo, a resetting parcel/last-mile landscape dominated by platforms like Amazon, accelerating 3PL consolidation and digitalisation, and a pivot in warehousing from expansion to sweating assets for efficiency. Strategic network shifts are visible in Canada’s diversification away from the US, intra-Asia growth, and rising Asia–Latin America corridors, with ASEAN emerging as a major EU trading partner and “volatility eaten for breakfast” in the region.

Speakers showed how trade policy is rewiring flows in real time: US tariff and de-minimis changes rapidly redirected China-origin e-commerce capacity from the US to Europe and Latin

dominated by platforms like Amazon, accelerating 3PL consolidation and digitalisation, and a pivot in warehousing from expansion to sweating assets for efficiency. Strategic network shifts are visible in Canada’s diversification away from the US, intra-Asia growth, and rising Asia–Latin America corridors, with ASEAN emerging as a major EU trading partner and “volatility eaten for breakfast” in the region.

Speakers showed how trade policy is rewiring flows in real time: US tariff and de-minimis changes rapidly redirected China-origin e-commerce capacity from the US to Europe and Latin

America, while consolidation and digitalisation, and a pivot in warehousing from expansion to sweating assets for efficiency. Strategic network shifts are visible in Canada’s diversification away from the US, intra-Asia growth, and rising Asia–Latin America corridors, with ASEAN emerging as a major EU trading partner and “volatility eaten for breakfast” in the region.

Speakers showed how trade policy is rewiring flows in real time: US tariff and de-minimis changes rapidly redirected China-origin e-commerce capacity from the US to Europe and Latin America, while



Chinese platforms such as Temu and Shein are compressing lead times and re-setting customer expectations. Data shared on US–China trade flows, the rise of Vietnam and other "China plus one" destinations, and record Chinese surpluses illustrated how both production ("China+1") and consumption ("USA+1") de-risking are reshaping global manufacturing and logistics footprints.

Technology, AI and automation were presented as indispensable to cope with complexity—from digital twins and predictive analytics to robotics and AI agents in forwarding, brokerage and warehousing—but panellists repeatedly stressed that people, skills and governance remain the limiting factors. Boards and leaders are now being pushed to treat resilience—multi-tier visibility, risk-managed contracts, diversified networks and talent pipelines—as the core design principle for supply chains that must thrive in an increasingly power-based, multi-polar trading system.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

1. Resilience has shifted from a "nice to have" defensive posture to a structural design requirement for supply chains in a power-based trade environment.
2. Geopolitics, tariff volatility, and regional realignments mean disruption is now continuous evolution, not a one-off shock.
3. Trade policy is actively reshaping flows: US tariffs and de minimis changes are redirecting China-origin e-commerce capacity across regions almost overnight.
4. "China+1/2/3" in production and "USA+1" in consumption are driving new manufacturing and routing footprints, with winners in ASEAN, India, Mexico, Latin America, and others.
5. Freight forwarders and 3PLs benefit from complexity but must double down on digitalization, data, AI, and strategic, not transactional, customer relationships.
6. E-commerce platforms like Temu and Shein are redefining demand-driven production, micro-runs, and lead-time expectations, creating both efficiency gains and sustainability tensions.
7. Multi-tier visibility and true transparency are becoming prerequisites
8. for resilience, ESG compliance, and managing mechanisms such as EU CBAM and evolving US tariffs.
9. AI and automation offer major gains in forecasting, planning, execution and emissions reduction, but only when anchored in clear business problems and robust data foundations.
10. Talent is a looming constraint: organizations risk a "talent cliff" if they rely on AI instead of systematically developing human capability and domain expertise.
11. The next 12–24 months demand scenario planning, strategic foresight, and closer ecosystem collaboration so that organizations can "prepare for what they do not know and look for what they cannot see."



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Managing Disruption: Why Resilience Can No Longer Be Treated as a Project

For much of the past decade, supply chain resilience was approached as a discrete initiative triggered by crisis, delivered through contingency planning, and then deprioritised once conditions appeared to stabilise. That model reflected a world in which disruption was less regular. Today's operating environment no longer supports that assumption. Across Asia- In Pacific and global trade networks, disruption is persistent, overlapping, and constant.

Trade policy volatility, climate-related events, cyber exposure, labour constraints, and infrastructure pressure now occur with enough frequency that resilience can no longer be managed periodically; it must be managed consistently.

This shift is reshaping how organisations design supply chains and why industry platforms such as the Hannover Messe's CeMAT group of events have expanded across Southeast Asia, Australia, and New Zealand: to support the translation of resilience strategies into operational execution.

FROM CRISIS RESPONSE TO OPERATIONAL DISCIPLINE

While most supply chain leaders understand the risk of disruption, far fewer are set up to respond effectively. Although 88% agree that scenario planning improves decision-making, only 19% have made it a core part of how their supply chains are managed.

This gap highlights a critical distinction: recognising disruption is not the same as managing it. While awareness of supply chain risk remains high, consistency in how that risk is managed has declined. In 2023, nearly half of organisations tracked supply chain risk regularly. Yet in practice, resilience efforts often fall short because they are treated as standalone projects rather than capabilities that must function every day inside real operations. In many organisations, the early warning signs of disruption already exist, but they are dispersed across suppliers, transport providers, warehouse systems, and internal teams.

As a result, problems are often detected late, leaving fewer options and higher resolution costs. Scenario planning often fails when it ignores real operational limits such as



labour, space, and system capacity, resulting in plans that work on paper but not in practice. At the same time, many logistics and warehouse networks are designed for stable conditions, making them vulnerable when volumes shift or disruptions occur. It is within this context that platforms such as CeMAT Southeast Asia have taken on a more strategic role, through curated exhibitions where resilience concepts are tested against operational reality. Reframing Resilience as a Management System
To manage disruption effectively, organisations are adopting a systems-based view of resilience. Rather than treating it as a linear workflow, resilience should be managed as a continuous loop repeating the sequence of steps:

Sense → Simulate → Decide → Execute

Taking each step into consideration, it is clear that resilience cannot be delivered through isolated initiatives.
Sense: Early Warning as an Operational Capability
Early warning is not only about external risks. Many of the first signs of trouble appear inside operations, such as missed scans, rising exceptions, delayed put-away, congestion on the floor, or gaps in labour coverage. Organisations that capture and review these signals regularly are far better positioned to respond quickly and with more options.

Research from the World Economic Forum shows that organisations with strong end-to-end visibility are significantly more likely to contain disruption before it escalates into major service or financial impact. This emphasis on visibility is reflected across CeMAT events, where data capture, warehouse management systems, Execution software and system integration are widely recognised as core foundations of resilience. This emphasis recognises that in interconnected markets, disruption rarely stays local; delays, system outages, or labour constraints in one node can quickly affect others. By focusing on integration, execution software, and scalable automation,
CeMAT Southeast Asia supports organisations seeking to manage complexity and maintain performance across regional supply chains.

SIMULATE: SCENARIO PLANNING BASED ON REAL CONDITIONS

Scenario planning only adds value when it reflects how operations work. Leading organisations test realistic disruptions against live systems, rather than relying on high-level models.
Typical questions include:

- What happens if inbound lead times extend by two weeks?
- Where does throughput break first if labour availability drops?
- How does service change when volumes rise or fall sharply?

Research from INSEAD shows that scenario planning is most effective when scenarios are grounded in real operational constraints, reviewed regularly, and tied to clear decision points.

DECIDE: GOVERNANCE THAT ALLOWS FAST DECISIONS

Disruption quickly exposes weak decision-making structures. When it is unclear who owns decisions, responses slow and actions become fragmented across teams. High-performing organisations address this by putting clear playbooks in place before disruption occurs. These define trigger points, decision ownership, and acceptable trade-offs between cost, service, and risk. This governance layer is what turns scenario planning into action in real time. It also shapes how organisations



assess solutions, with greater emphasis on deploying ability, reliability, and ease of integration. These priorities are consistently reflected across the CeMAT group, where solutions are evaluated against real operating constraints rather than idealised scenarios.

EXECUTE: OPERATIONAL FLEXIBILITY UNDER PRESSURE

Execution then becomes a question of speed and flexibility. Inside warehouses and distribution centres, this typically means adjusting inventory placement to protect service, reallocating labour as conditions change, and modifying picking strategies to manage congestion while maintaining safety and throughput. Research into supply chain resilience consistently shows that operational flexibility and system integration are key determinants of performance under disruption.

EXPLORING OPERATIONAL SOLUTIONS ACROSS THE CEMAT NETWORK

CEMAT SOUTHEAST ASIA

12–14 May 2026 | Singapore EXPO, Singapore

CeMAT Southeast Asia reflects the complexity of operating across highly connected, cross-border supply chains. In a region where goods move through multiple jurisdictions, ports, airports, and distribution hubs, resilience depends heavily on visibility, coordination, and integration across partners.

The event brings together warehouse systems, automation, robotics, and supply chain technologies that strengthen data integration and operational alignment across networks. Co-located with the exhibition is CargoNOW Singapore, which focuses specifically on cargo, freight, and infrastructure-linked supply chain operations, extending the resilience discussion beyond the warehouse into multimodal transport and logistics ecosystems.

CEMAT AUSTRALIA

23–25 June 2026 | Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre, Australia

CeMAT Australia addresses resilience through the lens of operational performance in a mature but geographically expansive market. With long transport distances, ongoing labour pressures, and strong scrutiny on safety and return on investment, Australian supply chains require systems that deliver consistent execution under fluctuating conditions. The event highlights automation, materials handling solutions, warehouse execution systems, and intralogistics design that improve labour flexibility and throughput stability. In this context, resilience is closely linked to the ability to maintain service levels when labour availability shifts or volumes fluctuate. CeMAT Australia therefore centres on practical, deployable solutions that strengthen on-floor performance while reducing operational fragility.

LOGISTICS AUTOMATION NEW ZEALAND

10–11 November 2026 | Auckland Showgrounds, New Zealand

Logistics Automation New Zealand reflects the realities of a smaller market where Scale, labour availability, and capital allocation must be carefully balanced.

In such an environment, flexibility is less about large-scale transformation and more about incremental, adaptable improvement. The event showcases modular automation. robotics, and materials handling solutions that can be introduced



progressively and integrated without major operational disruption. This approach supports organisations seeking to increase productivity and flexibility while managing investment risk. By focusing on scalable technologies suited to right-sized operations, the event reinforces resilience through practical capability building rather than extensive system overhauls.

SUPPLY CHAIN INDONESIA

25–27 November 2026 | Nusantara International Convention & Exhibition (NICE), Jakarta, Indonesia

Supply Chain Indonesia responds to the challenges of operating within one of Asia's fastest growing and most diverse logistics environments. Rapid industrial expansion, varied infrastructure maturity, and complex domestic distribution networks require greater coordination and digital oversight to maintain reliability.

The event brings together freight, warehousing, automation, and digital supply chain solutions that support visibility, multimodal integration, and operational control at scale. In this setting, resilience is closely linked to the ability to standardise governance while adapting execution across different regions and infrastructure conditions.

By addressing these challenges directly, Supply Chain Indonesia contributes to strengthening supply chain stability within a rapidly developing market. CeMAT Southeast Asia, the next event in the network, will be held in Singapore in May 2026.

About CeMAT

CeMAT is planned and delivered in multiple locations around the globe, with CeMAT South East Asia organized by Hannover Fairs Australia, a subsidiary of Deutsche Messe.

Australia | China | Italy | Turkey | Singapore

CeMAT South East Asia is coming to Singapore on 12-14 May 2026 at Singapore EXPO as the platform for the latest industry innovations and for exchanging ideas and insights on the warehouse of the future.
he CeMAT exhibition will be a one-stop-shop of the leading technology and service providers in intralogistics, robotics and automation, warehousing, supply chain management and materials handling.



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Asia Pacific Reverse Logistics Boom: Reinventing the Economics of Returns Through a New Alliance

Feature Article by Spencer Liu, Strategic Advisor and Venture Builder in Climate Tech &
Wolfgang Lehmacher, Global Supply Chain Advisor & Former Director, World Economic Forum

Imagine a future in Asia Pacific (APAC) where the return journey of goods is as streamlined as their forward delivery. In this APAC region, every discarded device, every mountain of used packages, and every unwanted item is either profitably reused or responsibly recycled. That is an ambitious target, but we can get close. There is always a bit of entropy. Our vision lies at the heart of a circular economy, driven by both innovation and collaborative action.

Here, reverse logistics is not a cost center, but a core differentiator: it delivers bottom-line value, trust, and the green credentials that today's society and regulators increasingly demand.
This future is not a utopian dream. It is poised to become a reality as the APAC's reverse logistics market advances, driven by the region's leadership in e-commerce and manufacturing. Consultancy analyses and market studies now identify the APAC region as the most significant[1], accounting for slightly over 50% of the global reverse logistics market and the fastest-growing worldwide. Key actors worldwide[2] are offering services ranging from recall returns to business-to-business (B2B) returns, commercial returns, repairable returns, end-of-use returns, and end-of-life returns, contributing to developments in the region.

The stakes go far beyond operational efficiency; mastering reverse flows will separate those prepared for global regulation, consumer scrutiny, and resource scarcity from those who ignore the opportunity.

THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE: GROWTH, INNOVATION, AND HARSH REALITIES

Asia Pacific's rise toward becoming a reverse logistics powerhouse is remarkable. China and India, with their vast e-commerce bases and industrial output, lead the charge. Their economies thrive on both massive consumer demand and high volumes of returned or end-of-life goods, such as smartphones, home appliances, and apparel. Online retail alone is predicted to surpass US$2 trillion in the region by 2026, with China holding the largest share



globally, and India's e-commerce market is expected to reach $120 billion by that year, further driving the demand for return and recycling mechanisms.
What's powering this acceleration? First, the region's digital boom. Internet and smartphone penetration have turned "returns" from an afterthought into a business-critical process for every major retailer and logistics provider. Next, a rising sustainability imperative: governments and consumers now prioritize closed-loop solutions, making green practices in recovery, repair, resale, and recycling non-negotiable.

Innovations in digital traceability and AI-powered computer vision, supported by IoT, blockchain, automation, and AI sorting, are being rapidly deployed to maximize transparency, sorting accuracy and automation, and speed in return flows. China's Circular Economy Promotion Law, India's E-Waste (Management) Rules, and Right to Repair are driving China's return rates, mirroring Western trends and an explosion of secondary markets.And yet, Asia Pacific's reverse logistics sector is at a crossroads.

Resource constraints, regulatory inconsistencies, and geopolitical tensions all have a profound impact. The region lacks standardized processes and frameworks that enable favourable economics for reverse logistics. Cross-border returns risk delays amid evolving trade disputes, diverse customs rules, and variable infrastructure, even as customer expectations for rapid, no-hassle returns remain sky-high. While nations like Singapore,China, and Japan are spearheading the move towards sustainability, many others struggle with basic waste management or integrating technology on a large scale. The environmental promise is real, but circular economy ideals still face practical challenges.

THE GAP: FRAGMENTATION, INEFFICIENCY, AND REGULATORY FRAGMENTATION

What is holding back the next wave of progress in reverse logistics? First: fragmentation. Processes and compliance regimes differ not just between countries, but often between adjacent provinces or competing companies. There is no universal system for tracking, certifying, or incentivizing the return, refurbishment, or recycling of goods. Consumer, enforcement and governmental agency dynamics add to the challenge. Inconsistencies in regulations and collection standards lead to wasted time and resources. Collaboration is undermined by distrust over data, technology, and cost-sharing. Smaller enterprises and less affluent economies are regularly left behind, unable to access or afford cutting-edge solutions. Infrastructure, too, is uneven. While leading countries invest in automated return hubs and advanced warehousing, others still rely on manual, labor-intensive workflows.

The result? Delays, increased handling costs, and, most concerning, waste that ends up in landfills, burning value, and violating sustainability commitments.
Importantly, at the heart of APAC's reverse logistics challenges lies a fundamental economic misalignment. Without region-wide pooling of commodity categories (e.g., electronics, batteries), volumes per stream remain too low to





justify the fixed costs of sorting, processing, and transport. Collection networks lack density, and, critically, few end users pay dedicated fees for material returns. When recycled-commodity prices fall below the cost of recovery (where the cost to prepare feedstock for recycling adds another layer of challenge), operational expenses consistently outstrip revenues, discouraging private investment and infrastructure build-out.

The gap is fundamentally one of vision and collective action. In its absence, the environmental and economic promise of reverse logistics remains only partially realized. The region cannot afford inefficiency or complexity if it expects to lead in tomorrow's global economy.

THE ALLIANCE OPPORTUNITY: TOWARDS INTEGRATION AND SHARED PROSPERITY

The answer lies in a robust Reverse Logistics Alliance, purpose-built for the APAC region's diversity and ambition.Imagine a consortium that brings together policymakers, industry leaders,logistics providers, technology platforms, and regulators. With a shared mandate, it would work to:

- Standardize protocols for accepting, processing, and certifying returns, recycling, and resale, while taking into consideration local/national regulations and policies.

- Identify opportunities to pool commodity categories across borders to aggregate sufficient volumes for economic sorting and recovery.

- Build interoperable data and tracking platforms, leveraging distributed ledger technology, IoT, and AI for supply chain visibility from the consumer back to materials recovery, across every border in the region and beyond.

- Harmonize environmental and compliance standards, making it easier for companies to operate efficiently and meet the growing list of regulatory requirements.

- Share best practices and resources. Larger players could support infrastructure development in smaller economies, ensuring that no market is left behind.



Spencer Liu

Strategic Advisor and Venture Builder in Climate Tech, Scaling Climate Innovations

Spencer Liu is a climate-focused venture strategist.As Founder & Managing Director at Riverwood Climate Solutions, he advises Asian corporations and startups in sustainable transportation value chains on strategy, go-to-market, and growth topics. Former McKinsey Associate Partner, CFA charterholder and CESGA holder.

Founder of Riverwood Climate Solutions, which partners with corporates and startups across Asia to scale climate technologies in the sustainable transportation value chain. Mainly focuses on sustainable aviation and maritime fuels, batteries and energy storage, green transportation infrastructure, and carbon management SaaS. Supported 30+ clients across the transportation, energy, industrials, and private equity sectors to drive climate-aligned growth.

● Foster public-private partnerships to finance and promote sustainable return centers, digital platforms, and community engagement campaigns. Green and sustainable finance can be a strong incentive for return/reverse systems and to drive green growth.

Such an alliance would not only address gaps in processes, technology, and compliance but also create opportunities to extract value from waste, support the region's ascent as a global leader in sustainable supply chains, and deliver social and environmental benefits.

With governments, businesses, and civil organisations under one roof, the APAC region could banish fragmentation and set the benchmark for the world's circular economy ambitions. Reverse logistics and circular economy at scale and across the region need innovation. Hence, the most straightforward name for the alliance is ARLIA (APAC Reverse Logistics Innovation Alliance).

REVERSE LOGISTICS AS THE HEARTBEAT OF ASIA'S GROWTH STORY

As the world's old supply chains strain and sustainability imperatives sharpen, reverse logistics in the Asia Pacific stands at a moment of rare promise. It is not simply a niche practice for discarded goods or broken appliances; it is on track to become the new engine of value preservation, resilience, and climate responsibility.

The remarkable growth in market value and scale is proof: what once lurked at the back door of supply chains now commands the front stage of boardrooms, policy summits, and community debates. The grand twist? Successful reverse logistics is the new symbol of leadership in a low-carbon future. When waste becomes a resource, when returns enrich rather than diminish the bottom line, Asia Pacific's collaborative embrace of reverse logistics will not only lift business fortunes. It may decide the region's standing in the global story of progress, partnership, and renewal.





Wolfgang Lehmacher

Global Supply Chain Advisor & Former Director, World Economic Forum

Wolfgang Lehmacher is a renowned expert in global supply chain and logistics. The former director at the World Economic Forum and CEO Emeritus of GeoPost Intercontinental serves as an advisory board member of The Logistics and Supply Chain Management Society in Singapore, an ambassador for F&L in Brussels, and an advisor to RISE. He contributes to the knowledge base of Supply Chain Innovation.

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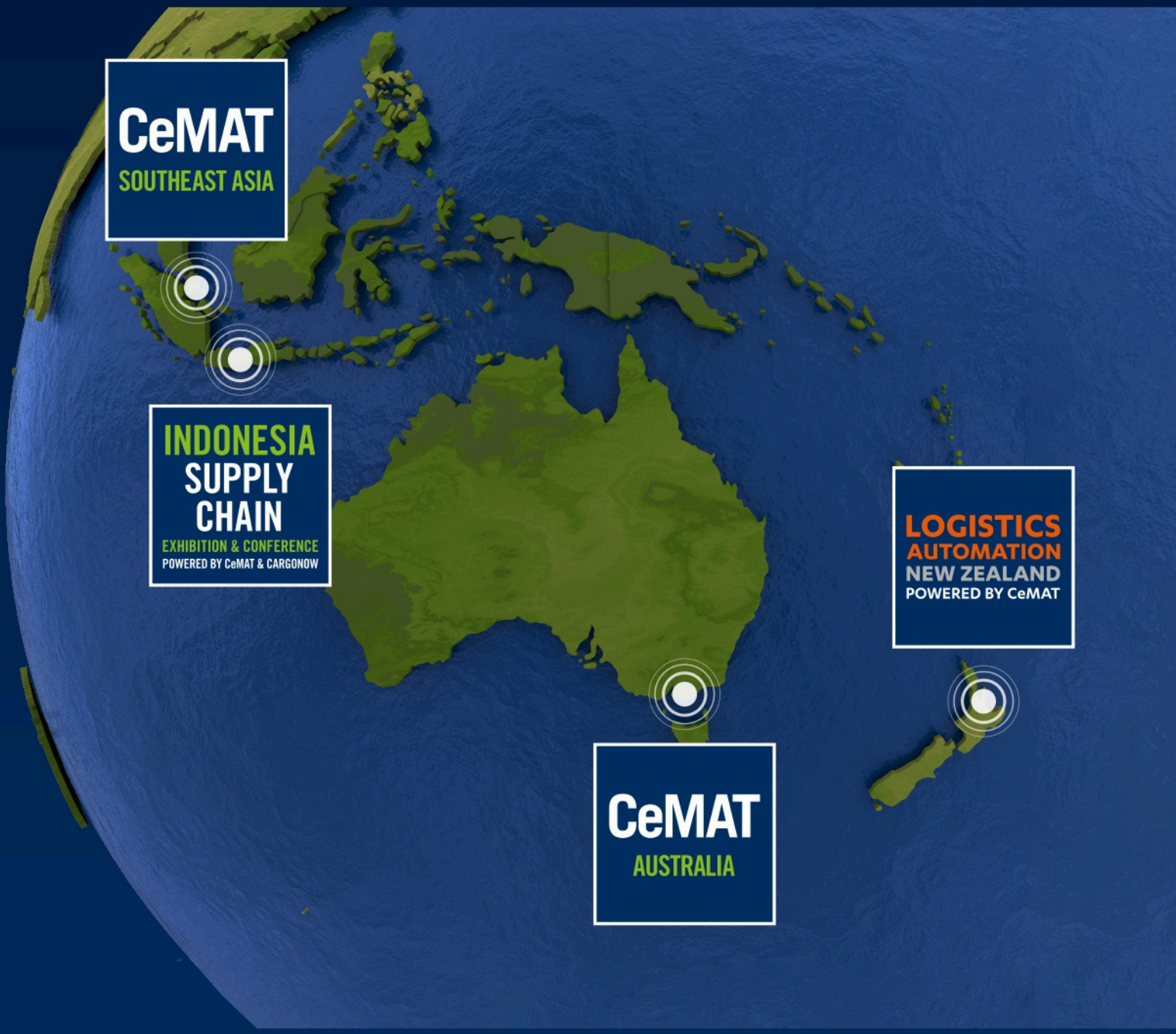
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Global Supply Chain Security: The 2026 Resilience Mandate

Feature Article by Stephanie Krishnan, Associate Vice President, IDC Insights

As we move through 2026, the global supply chain has undergone a fundamental transformation. What was once viewed as a linear flow of goods is now a hyper-connected digital ecosystem. However, this efficiency has come at a significant cost: a surge in sophisticated cyber-adversaries who no longer target the front door of large enterprises, but rather the side entrances provided by smaller partners, logistics providers, and software vendors.

THE NEW ERA OF ECOSYSTEM VULNERABILITY

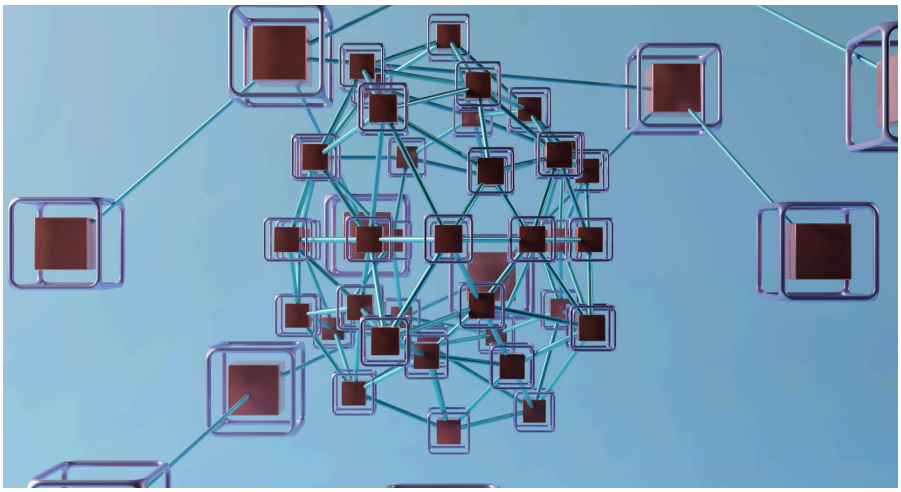
The threat landscape in 2025 and 2026 has shifted from isolated attacks to systemic compromises across the ecosystem. According to the World Economic Forum's Global Cybersecurity Outlook 2025, more than half of large organizations now rank supply chain interdependencies as the single greatest risk within their business environment.

This anxiety is driven by a tactical evolution among attackers. Rather than battling the robust defenses of a major corporation, threat actors are weaponizing the "trusted pathways" between partners. By infiltrating a single logistics provider or software component, an attacker can move laterally across hundreds of downstream targets simultaneously.

PRIMARY THREAT VECTORS IN THE MODERN SUPPLY CHAIN

Current incident patterns reveal four critical areas where supply chains are most vulnerable:

- **Software Supply Chain Weaponization:** Attackers are increasingly exploiting zero-day flaws in widely used software components or hijacking update channels to distribute malicious code to a broad user base.
- **The Credential Crisis:** Logistics firms and third-party contractors often hold privileged access to client systems. Adversaries target these partners to harvest credentials, thereby bypassing traditional perimeter security by appearing as "trusted" users.
- **AI-Enhanced Social Engineering:** Phishing has become terrifyingly effective. By using AI-generated content, scammers can perfectly mimic the tone and style of partner communications, tricking procurement and freight teams into granting access to sensitive systems.



- **Exploitation of Deep Integrations:** The reliance on APIs and OAuth applications for real-time tracking and ERP synchronization has created "invisible" entry points. Attackers exploit misconfigurations in these integrations to extract data or manipulate operations without ever deploying traditional malware.

A stark example occurred in 2025 when a shared delivery provider for major UK retailers, including Marks & Spencer and Co-op, was breached. Using stolen vendor credentials, attackers accessed the order data of 6.5 million individuals, forcing immediate system shutdowns and highlighting how operational continuity is now inextricably linked to the security posture of partners.

THE PULSE OF THE MARKET: IDC DATA INSIGHTS

The urgency of this issue is reflected in recent market research. IDC's Worldwide Supply Chain Survey reveals a dramatic shift in executive priorities. Between 2023 and 2025, the importance of cybersecurity as a long-term supply chain risk jumped by 15 percentage points. This represents the highest level of concern since the mass migration to the cloud a decade ago.

In 2025, three specific threats emerged as the most pressing for supply chain leaders:

1. D**ata Breaches:** Theft of trade documents and transaction records.
2. **Cyber-Physical Attacks:** Targeting IoT devices and automated warehouse equipment.
3. **Ransomware:** Paralyzing both IT and operational technology (OT) systems.

Geopolitical factors also play a role; for instance, IDC data indicates that GPS and AIS (Automatic Identification System) spoofing of maritime vessels is a particularly acute threat in the Asia/Pacific region due to the high volume of trade and regional complexities.

THE AI PARADOX: ACCELERATION VS. RISK

The rise of AI, particularly Agentic AI (AI capable of autonomous decision-making), is the primary driver of this renewed focus on security. Much like the cloud transition 10 years ago, the adoption of AI creates a perceived loss of control. IDC research indicates that the primary challenge preventing manufacturing and retail organizations from achieving their security objectives is the rapid advancement of AI-driven threats, which are outpacing current defensive measures.

This issue now surpasses traditional concerns such as talent shortages or the increasing sophistication of attackers. These changes show that organizations are shifting their view of supply chain cybersecurity. As AI drives greater automation and bothattackers and defenders use advanced tools, companies

	Logistics	Manufacturing
OFFENSIVE	Automated mapping of shipping routes to find vulnerable IoT devices.	Exploiting vulnerabilities in industrial control systems to halt production.
	Personalized and targeted phishing and deepfake scams can be aimed at logistics staff to access tracking or financial data.	The creation of "shape-shifting" viruses that constantly change their appearance to sneak past the standard security software protecting factory equipment.
DEFENSIVE	Predictive anomaly detection in shipping manifests to spot tampering.	Real-time monitoring of equipment behavior to detect cyber-physical attacks.
	Analyze threat data to identify safer shipping routes and improve route security.	Supports predictive maintenance for security by identifying potential hardware or software failures that could create security gaps before they

*AI presents a "**Dual-Role**" challenge in 2026:*

need to rethink the resilience oftheir supply chains. Cybersecurity is no longer just about reacting to threats, but is now a key requirement for protecting operations and maintaining trust in an AI-driven world.

IT/OT CONVERGENCE: THE FOUNDATION OF DEFENSE

To address more capable cyber attackers, organizations are moving to a converged security model where Information Technology (IT) and Operational Technology (OT) are managed together rather than in silos. This makes OT telemetry, from assets such as robotic arms, sensors, and autonomous vehicles, essential for effective detection.

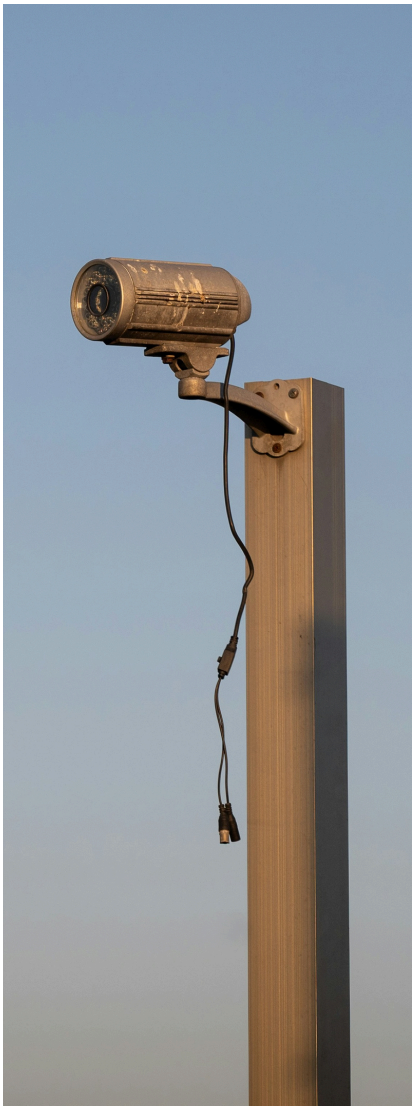
Without reliable OT signals, AI-driven security tools lack the context to distinguish between normal operational issues and malicious activity. In 2026, strong defence depends on visibility across the factory floor and the warehouse, not only the corporate network.
This shift challenges the Purdue Model, which historically protected industrial environments by separating systems into layers and limiting connections between OT and IT, often supported by “air gaps.”

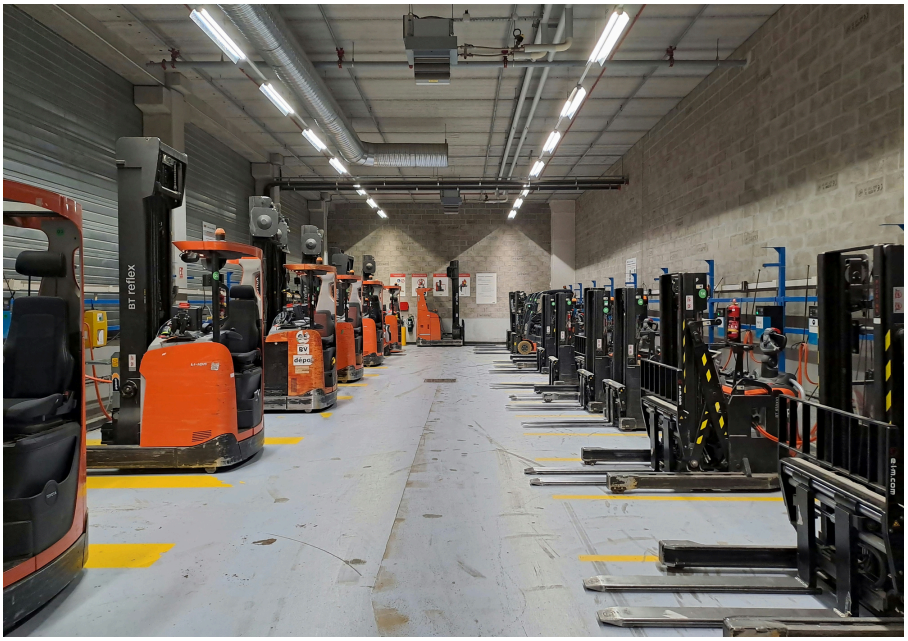
Convergence increases the need for data to move across layers in near real time for monitoring, automation, and AI-based detection, creating more access points and reducing the practicality of relying solely on isolation. The impact is higher because OT incidents can affect physical operations, including downtime, safety risk, and product loss, not just data. Securing IT/OT convergence, therefore, requires a shared baseline across both domains, including accurate asset inventory and segmentation, strong identity and access controls for users and machines, continuous monitoring of OT telemetry, and an incident response process that is run jointly by IT and OT teams, since OT environments have different uptime and safety constraints than office IT.

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2026

For organizations looking to build a resilient supply chain, the following strategies are essential:

·**Establish OT Visibility:** You cannot protect what you cannot see. A continuously updated inventory of every connected device across the ecosystem is the mandatory baseline.







Stephanie Krishnan

Associate Vice President, IDC Insights

A supply chain and manufacturing strategist, Stephanie delivers research-driven advisory and market intelligence that helps organizations navigate technology adoption, supply chain resilience, and ESG priorities. In 2025, Stephanie significantly exceeded performance targets, contributing nearly double their contract value goals and supporting business development initiatives totaling approximately USD 1.3M in contracted business.

With deep experience working across technology vendors and enterprise buyers, Stephanie brings a 360-degree perspective on supplier ecosystems, risk mitigation, and operational efficiency. Their work spans global enterprises across retail, distribution, manufacturing, and supplier networks, translating market insights into strategic sourcing, supplier evaluation, and partnership development.

·**Adopt Zero Trust for Partners:** Do not grant permanent access to suppliers. Implement strict identity controls and verify every request, regardless of whether it comes from a long-term logistics partner.

·**Prioritize Data Quality for AI:** Ensure your security platforms generate structured, high-fidelity data. This is the only way to prepare for the future of automated, AI-driven incident response.

·**Unified Investigation Workflows:** Security teams must be able to correlate signals from a warehouse sensor in one country with a login attempt on a corporate server in another.

·**Secure IT/OT Convergence**: As IT and OT systems become more connected, segment OT from IT, enforce least-privilege access, and monitor OT and IT signals together to enable coordinated responses.

CONCLUSION

It is difficult to protect a 21st-century digital ecosystem with 20th-century physical infrastructure. Organizations must recognize that modern threats require modern defenses, and investments in upgrading legacy systems will be crucial for resilience.

As a result, cybersecurity has transitioned from a back-office IT concern to a strategic prerequisite for global trade. As AI continues to automate decision-making across the supply chain, the “weakest link” in a partner network can now trigger a global operational shutdown.

Resilience in 2026 depends on transparency, IT/OT integration, and the recognition that in a digital world, your security is only as strong as your least-secure partner.



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Technology-Driven Transformation of Global Logistics

Feature Article by Kim Winter, Founder & Group Managing Director Logistics Executive

In an era defined by volatility and accelerated change, global logistics is experiencing one of the most profound transformations in its history. What was traditionally a linear, process-centric function has become a dynamic, intelligence-driven ecosystem. At the heart of this evolution lies the accelerated adoption of artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML), and digital twin technologies that are fundamentally redefining supply chain agility, predictive response, and network orchestration for logistics providers and manufacturers worldwide.

“We are no longer just moving goods from point A to point B” says Kim Winter, a logistics transformation strategist, “we are moving insights, adaptability, and foresight. Technology has turned logistics into a living, learning network that responds in real time to global demand.”

This transformation is not incremental; it is exponential. As businesses navigate increasingly complex geopolitical, economic, and environmental conditions, traditional supply chain models that relied on historical trends and manual coordination have reached their limits. In response, organizations are leveraging AI, ML, and digital twins to build smarter, faster, and more resilient operations capable of withstanding disruption and capitalizing on opportunity.

INTELLIGENCE AT THE CORE: AI AND MACHINE LEARNING

Artificial intelligence has emerged as the linchpin of modern logistics operations. By ingesting massive volumes of real-time data from shipment statuses and traffic flows to weather patterns and market signals AI systems can forecast, optimize, and automate decisions that were once manual and error prone. “AI is not just a tool; it is the nervous system of the modern supply chain,” Winter explains. “It interprets data at a scale and speed no human can achieve, turning complexity into clarity and reaction into prediction.” Machine learning takes this a step further by enabling systems to learn from past performance, continuously improving over time. This capability is vital in environments where conditions shift rapidly and unpredictably.

For example, ML-powered demand forecasting models can identify patterns invisible to conventional analytics, enabling companies to preempt shortages or surpluses before they materialize. Retailers, manufacturers, and logistics service providers are deploying these systems to anticipate demand spikes, optimize inventory levels, and streamline distribution planning. Winter notes,



"The smartest logistics networks aren't those with the most data they are the ones that learn from it. Machine learning transforms raw data into strategic foresight."

DIGITAL TWINS: A VIRTUAL MIRROR OF PHYSICAL REALITY

If AI and ML serve as the brain of the modern logistics ecosystem, digital twins act as its eyes and ears. A digital twin is a real-time digital replica of a physical asset, process, or entire supply chain. By synchronizing data from IoT sensors, transportation management systems, and enterprise software, digital twins make complex operations visible and actionable.

"Digital twins allow us to see around corners," Winter says. "Instead of reacting to disruptions after they happen, we can simulate scenarios and plan accordingly. You can experiment virtually before executing in reality."

This capability is invaluable in a world where disruptions are not the exception but the norm. For instance, a digital twin of a global distribution network can simulate the impact of a port closure, labor strike, or sudden demand surge. Planners can then evaluate mitigation strategies rerouting shipments, reallocating inventory, or engaging alternative carriers without disrupting real-world operationsIn practice, digital twins are enhancing collaboration among stakeholders as well. Shared, synchronized views of the supply chain build transparency and trust between suppliers, carriers, and customers.

Winter emphasizes, "Visibility isn't just about data access it's about shared understanding and coordinated action across the supply chain."

PREDICTIVE RESPONSE: FROM REACTIVE TO PROACTIVE

One of the most transformative outcomes of these technologies is the shift from reactive logistics to predictive response. Logistics systems can now anticipate problems and opportunities before they occur. By combining AI-derived insights with digital twin simulations, organizations can forecast disruptions and trigger preemptive actions.

"Predictive response turns uncertainty into advantage," Winter observes. "When you can foresee delays or demand fluctuations before they materialize, you can pivot rather than patch."For example, if a feeder vessel is delayed due to severe weather, AI can assess how that delay will cascade through the supply chain, flagging at-risk customer orders and suggesting remedial actions such as expediting alternative routes or adjusting inventory buffers. This level of responsiveness was unthinkable in legacy systems, which often surfaced problems only after they had already impacted performance. Network orchestration tools bring all of this together. These platforms serve as command centers, coordinating carriers, warehouses, inventory, and fulfillment channels.

With real-time insights and predictive alerts, orchestration engines can sequence activities, adjust priorities, and allocate resources dynamically ensuring that supply chain performance remains aligned with strategic goals. "Orchestration is not about control; it is about coherence," Winter explains. "It ensures that every part of the network is informed, aligned, and capable of acting in concert."

REAL-WORLD IMPACT: SMARTER, FASTER, MORE RESILIENT

Across industries, early adopters of technology-driven logistics are realizing tangible outcomes. Retailers are achieving higher



service levels with leaner inventories. Manufacturers are minimizing waste while maximizing throughput. Third-party logistics providers are delivering faster transit times with greater reliability. In automotive supply chains long characterized by tightly coupled, just-in-time processes AI and digital twins are enabling suppliers and OEMs to synchronize complex multi-tier networks.

"What used to require weeks of manual coordination now updates in real time," Winter points out. "The entire network becomes adaptive rather than awkwardly reactive." Smart warehouses powered by robotics and AI are another standout example. These facilities can operate around the clock, dynamically routing materials, managing labor, and optimizing space utilization without human intervention.

Winter says, "Automation is not just about speed it is about resilience. Smart systems keep moving even when human resources are constrained." Looking Forward: Integration, Sustainability, and Human Potential While these innovations are already reshaping logistics, the journey is far from complete. Emerging technologies such as edge computing, autonomous vehicles, and blockchain promise to add new dimensions of speed, trust, and decentralization. Winter offers a forward-looking perspective: "The next frontier is not just smarter technology it is seamless integration. AI, digital twins, blockchain, and connectivity will converge to create networks that are predictive, transparent, and self-healing. "Sustainability is also becoming central to logistics strategy. AI can now optimize routing not only for cost and speed, but also for carbon emissions. Winter notes, "A resilient supply chain is also a sustainable one. Technologies that reduce waste and emissions are no longer optional they're strategic imperatives." Despite the centrality of technology, Winter stresses that human ingenuity remains indispensable:

"Technology amplifies human capability it does not replace it. The future of logistics belongs to people who combine domain expertise with tech fluency." Indeed, the logistics workforce of tomorrow will be less focused on repetitive tasks and more on strategic analysis, collaboration, and innovation. As routine decisions are automated, professionals are freed to tackle complex problems, design resilient networks, and cultivate relationships across global ecosystems.

CONCLUSION

The adoption of AI, machine learning, and digital twins is more than a technological upgrade it is a redefinition of how global logistics operates. These technologies empower organizations to move beyond reactive, siloed processes toward networks that are intelligent, predictive, and adaptive. As global demands continue to evolve, so too must the systems that support them.

"The logistics transformation we're experiencing is not just technological it is philosophical," Kim Winter concludes. "We are shifting from managing supply chains to orchestrating living networks. And that is the future of global commerce."



Kim Winter

Founder & Group Managing Director Logistics Executive

The founder of Logistics Executive Group, Kim delivers 40 years of executive leadership experience spanning Executive Search & Recruitment, Leadership Development, Executive Coaching, Corporate Advisory, Consulting & M&A, Media Interviews & Vodcasts, across the Supply Chain, Logistics, 3PL, E-commerce, Life Science, Cold Chain, FMCG, Retail, Maritime, Defense, Aviation, Resources & Industrial sectors. He is a regular contributor of thought leadership to industry and media, is a professional Master of Ceremonies and is frequently invited to chair / moderate face to Face international events and media platforms.

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