



Supply Chain Resilience

E-BOOK SERIES



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Supply Chain Resilience

Introduction

Supply chain stressors are a fact of life for supply chain professionals; they are inevitable. Therefore, how supply chain leaders respond is what matters most. There are myriad examples of external stressors like an economic downturn, exacerbated by internal stressors like ineffective leadership, bringing once-thriving businesses to a premature end.

This e-book uses the story of a fictitious company to walk through RCSG's supply chain stress testing framework. The e-book helps supply chain leaders envision their path to supply chain resilience. Additionally, we included some thoughts at the end of each chapter and the visual in **Figure 1** for additional context.

FIGURE 1



ROAD TO RESILIENCE: SUPPLY CHAIN STRESS TESTING

Measuring the ability of a supply chain to maintain continuity when disruption exists or is expected.

SUPPLY CHAIN STRESSOR:

A strain on the supply chain from an internal or external source.

TARGET RISKS

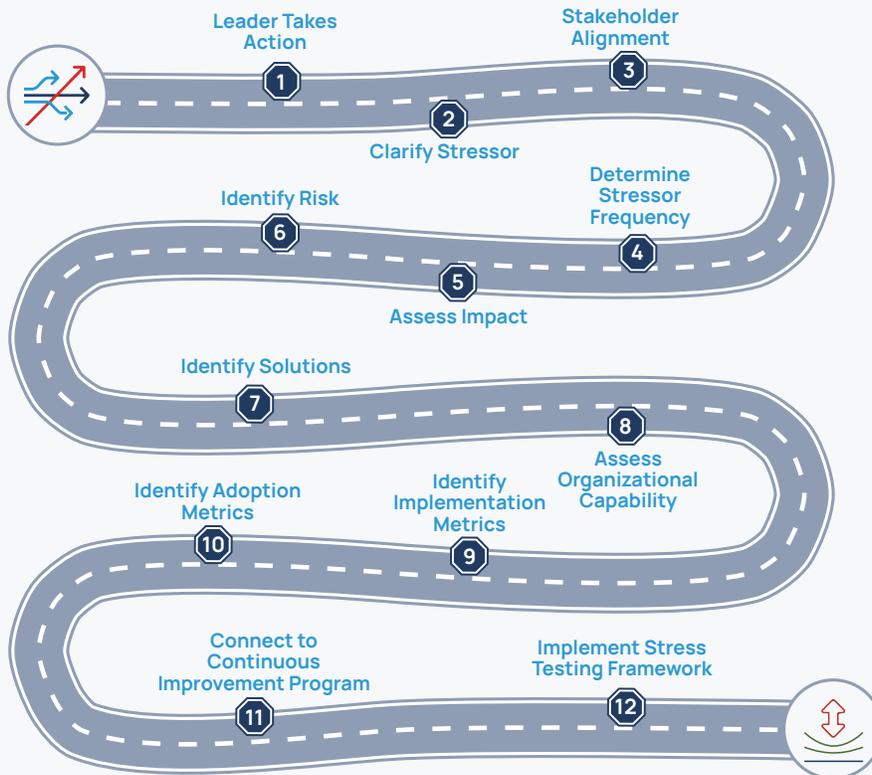


Find risks to the supply chain and determine how they impact continuity.

CREATE ROADMAP



Constrain solutions with success measures that normalize adoption, focus implementation, and establish milestones.



CREATE FOCUS



Understand the internal and external stressors and frame the response.

BUILD SOLUTIONS



Find the right responses to the stressor(s) and rationalize with current supply chain capabilities.

SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE

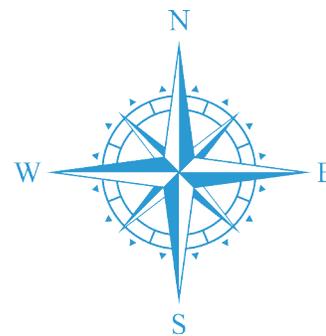


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Chapter 1

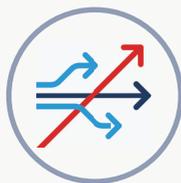
CREATE FOCUS



Understand the internal and external stressors and frame the response.

SUPPLY CHAIN STRESSOR:

A strain on the supply chain from an internal or external source.



Monday morning seems to be going well for Bill Robertson, Chief Supply Chain Officer at Widget, Inc., a global original equipment manufacturer for major lawnmower brands. After reviewing his daily reports, Bill has a series of pleasant visits with the headquarters team and calls with his regional offices and distribution centers. Bill prides himself on being in tune with the health of operations and the quality of the workplace for the nearly 5,000 supply chain professionals on his team. The amount of care Bill shows his team and operations are consistently reflected in annual workplace climate surveys; the supply chain receives high marks every year.

While Bill believes the morning is going well, he cannot shake the ominous tone of news reports about a virus outbreak in Asia. Bill was unable to pull much from the reports other than the outbreak is bad and spreading. Ever the vigilant leader, Bill decides to ask Rebecca Purcell, Vice President of Supply Chain Innovation and Planning, to research the matter and determine whether the outbreak has the potential to impact their supply chain and to what extent.



Leader Takes Action

Rebecca rose through the supply chain ranks quickly after proving herself time and again in challenging roles. She masterfully shielded the company from the worst of the economic downturn in 2008 when demand for lawnmowers dipped due to fewer homeowners and recycled/reused lawnmowers. Rebecca convinced Bill, who held her role at the time, to support two additional product categories, self-propelled and electric lawnmowers, offsetting revenue lost due to the economic downturn. Rebecca's solution worked well and resulted in her being affectionately referred to as "the fixer" among Widget's executive team. Fast forward ten years, a much wiser and more experienced Rebecca is in the very early stages of facing down an event of comparable risk to their business.

Shortly after successfully responding to the economic downturn, Rebecca began building a framework to anticipate major disruptions and guide the supply chain through an appropriate response. The framework started with understanding the potential disruptor, which Rebecca referred to as a supply chain stressor. Once the stressor was understood, Rebecca's framework would have key stakeholders align on the problem, scope, and goals for the response. She would then help her team assess the risk to their supply chain. After understanding the risk, the team can use the framework to design a solution, confirm the solution works, and ensure the solution is continually matched to any future permeations of the stressor.

Rebecca is proud of her framework and how helpful it has been to Widget. Executives have grown to appreciate Rebecca's framework because it provided visibility into external and internal stressors during a many months of long port strike that followed the economic downturn. With Bill's support and the confidence of her peers, Rebecca employs her framework and asks her strategy team to begin investigating the outbreak in Asia. The team moved quickly to provide Rebecca with the insight she needed to help Bill decide on the next steps.



Clarify Stressor

“So, what did you find, Rebecca?” Bill asked during a meeting to review details on the outbreak. Rebecca shared a few key insights and cautioned Bill that the situation is likely to evolve. Rebecca believed the outbreak would become a stressor on the supply chain. Referencing the stimulus types in her stress testing framework, Rebecca explained how Widget is **likely to be affected by Extraordinary Event, Political, Geopolitical, and Organizational Performance** stimuli if the outbreak continues to spread. Bill was intrigued. He asked Rebecca to explain why the stimuli matter.

Rebecca started with the Extraordinary Event stimulus. She explained that the outbreak is an extraordinary event and likely to disrupt working conditions and consumer buying habits if similar to outbreaks in recent history. How the outbreak will disrupt working conditions and consumer buying habits is not fully understood yet. Bill nodded in agreement.

Rebecca continued with the Political stimulus. Given this is an election year, her team found political motives in the government’s response to be likely if the outbreak is not contained in Asia. The political decisions are likely to be focused on limiting access to the country and containment, which will affect shipping timelines.

Rebecca shared details of the third stimulus, Geopolitical. Given how dependent global supply chains are on host Nations, Rebecca’s team believed the government would impose restrictions, penalties, and incentives to limit activity in countries where the outbreak is likely to present the most risk. These actions are likely to affect the cost and flow of goods. Bill sighed and silently hoped the outbreak would be contained before this happens.

Rebecca shared details of the final stimulus, Organizational Performance. The company has not had to respond to an outbreak since 2009 and has no contingency plan should the outbreak continue to spread. If Widget does not reimagine success during an outbreak, existing performance

standards could affect the quality, speed, precision, and cost of supply chain operations. This stimulus unnerved Bill as he asked Rebecca to clarify the expected impact on Widget.

Rebecca assured Bill they can move fairly quickly to understand the impact and begin designing solutions. She cautioned Bill again that the stimuli she shared were based on what they know now and that things can change. She committed to surface any new stimuli with Bill as soon as they are known.

After the meeting with Bill, Rebecca pulled Eric Smith, the strategy director, into her office and asked him to make the outbreak a priority. She praised the excellent work Eric's team had done so far and challenged him to move quickly with developing a strategy to eliminate risks associated with the outbreak.

What is a supply chain stressor?

A supply chain stressor is a strain on the supply chain from an internal or external source. When faced with a stressor, consider the following:

- What type of stressor(s) are you facing?
- How do they trigger disruption to your supply chain?
- Where will you see the disruption to your supply chain?

Chapter 2



TARGET RISKS

Find risks to the supply chain and determine how they impact continuity.

After two weeks of researching and assessing their supply chain, Eric presented the outbreak's likely supply chain impact to Rebecca. During the update, Rebecca expressed general agreement with what Eric shared and invited him to join her status meeting with Bill.

Bill started the meeting with a recap of a conversation with the CEO and other senior executives about growing anxiety surrounding the outbreak. The CEO asked everyone to move quickly to develop options to ensure Widget is prepared for the outbreak. Bill reiterated the CEO's desire to be prepared and praised Rebecca and Eric for their work to date.

After crediting Eric for the progress made so far, Rebecca asked him to share their latest update with Bill. Eric summarized his understanding of the last conversation between Bill and Rebecca, which Bill acknowledged. He then broke down impact into four levels, **governance, management, operations, and enablement.**



Governance. Eric explained how the outbreak could impact what organizational outcomes are approved by the Board of Directors. For example, Eric explained how the Board might accept slower revenue growth and push to accelerate activities that protect market share if an economic downturn causes their industry to shrink.

Management. Acknowledging how robust and effective management practices are at Widget, Eric noted that they were designed to guide a supply chain in a relatively stable operating environment. Rebecca added that an outbreak could impact how they manage resources, how they manage throughput, and more. Bill nodded, and Eric continued.

Operations. Eric explained how the outbreak could affect nearly 20 supply chain functions, over 100 processes, and almost 5,000 supply chain employees at over 15 locations. Health and safety requirements can affect working conditions; maritime conventions and government advisories can influence shipping. Bill asked Eric if he had a sense of the magnitude of the impact on operations. Rebecca reminded Bill that this is just an update on where they might see an effect and that in their next update, they should have an answer to his question.

Enablement. Eric noted how the supply chain would likely have an effect on, and be affected by, non-supply chain functions. As an example, Eric explained how shutting down a facility affected by the outbreak is likely to impact finance, sales, human resources, legal, technology, and security, to name a few.

After Eric provided his update, Bill asked when he will have something actionable to review. Rebecca recommended Bill share Eric's update with the CEO and use it to align the C-suite. Bill agreed and acknowledged they would need to be aligned as an executive team to be successful. Following the meeting, Rebecca and Eric met briefly to align on deliverables for the next meeting with Bill.

Four weeks after initial reports, the source of the outbreak has an official name, and its spread has a name, as well, “pandemic”. As Bill continues to bear the weight of uncertainty amidst a pandemic, he welcomes Rebecca and Eric into his office to discuss how Widget should respond.

Eric projects his presentation on the screen near the conference table in Bill’s office. The first slide shows the name Eric’s team has given this effort, “**Operation Supply Chain Resilience (OSCR)**” or “**Oscar**”. Bill is amused by the name but more interested in the recommendations. Rebecca begins the meeting with a recap of their previous conversations with Bill. She highlights that the focus of **Oscar** is to create visibility into the new landscape, minimize disruption for their customers, maintain stability at production facilities, and diversify their supplier network. Lastly, Rebecca shares a new stimulus type that has surfaced since their last meeting, which Eric will cover.

Eric starts the presentation with the background that led to their recommendations. He describes the pandemic as an **episodic stressor** because its spread seems inevitable and likely to affect Widget in sporadic waves. Initial responses to the pandemic appear to be uncoordinated with individual plans from varying levels of government, humanitarian organizations, and the business community. These responses are driving a new stimulus, Economic.

Eric describes the **Economic stimulus** as a growing influence on market trends in developed countries affected by the pandemic, explaining how it can create difficulty maintaining expected flows of goods and services. Bill nods as he patiently encourages Eric to provide more details regarding the impact of the pandemic and how they will respond.

Eric explained how his team aligned on two models to simulate the impact of the pandemic. The first set of simulations focused on the effects of each stimulus; the second set of simulations focused on the effects resulting



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Determine Stressor Frequency



Assess Impact

from a combination of stimuli. After running a series of simulations, the team was convinced the response needed to focus on protecting Widget's ability to Source raw materials, Produce goods, Ship goods, and adequately Forecast demand and supply. Eric explained that disruption to any of these supply chain areas would likely present risks that cannot be isolated within the supply chain; other business areas will be affected. Bill seemed to agree and asked for a little more context.

Eric highlighted **vulnerabilities** found during the simulations and explained how they are connected to the aforementioned critical processes, Sourcing, Production, Shipping, and Forecasting. He started with **Sourcing** and noted how their sourcing criteria are focused on scale to reduce costs associated with managing multiple suppliers. "This leaves us vulnerable if we are de-prioritized by suppliers who scale back production. We are not designed to cobble together multiple, smaller suppliers to preserve our inventory levels.", Eric stated. Given current trends, Eric said the impact is likely to reduce production by 20 percent at our factories in Asia and overall production by 5 percent. He asserted that the threat of Widget being de-prioritized by suppliers is imminent after conversations with two significant suppliers who refused to commit to meet agreed-upon service levels. Bill made a note to confer with legal on options.

Eric moved on to **Production**. He noted Widget's significant production vulnerabilities are staffing and space. Eric continued, "Our process automation initiatives are not far enough along to offset any immediate productivity losses. Our staff-to-authorized position ratio is 0.95:1, and our resource productivity rates are practically 100 percent. Our ability to acquire external talent is limited, given we do not have a unique talent pool for many of our roles." At the rate the pandemic is spreading, Eric's team expects staffing to decrease 2 percent weekly and to hold at about 85 percent if the government's pandemic response and preventive measures are successful. Moving on to the space issue, Eric noted that their safety stock levels



are conservative due to steady throughput rates and returns at less than 1 percent of total sales. He explained how Widget does not have space to grow beyond a safety stock level increase of 2 percent or to manage increases in returns and cancellations. Eric expects facility utilization rates to increase by 4 percent weekly and reach 100 percent planned utilization in 2 months and 100 percent of contingency utilization in 3 months. Rebecca noticed Bill's expression turn from excitement to concern and reassured him that Eric's team had developed a plan that she believes will address the vulnerabilities. Bill nodded, and Eric continued.

Eric moved on to **Shipping**. He explained how Widget's heavy reliance on vessels as a transportation mode makes them more vulnerable to government restrictions. He noted that Widget does not have strong relationships with air cargo carriers limiting their ability to pivot at a reasonable cost. Lastly, Eric indicated that Widget does not have enough space to receive goods returned by a vendor or canceled shipments if returns exceed 1 percent of sales. Widget will have to stop receiving returns and canceled shipments in 2 months due to capacity constraints. Eric cautioned that the more carrier capacity Widget consumes by pausing receiving, the more costly the fees and the less likely carriers will prioritize Widget shipments.

Eric concluded the impact portion of the presentation with **Forecasting**. He noted a vulnerability in predicting demand due to the company's reliance on historical data and a lack of investment in predictive analytics capabilities. As the pandemic continues to spread, Eric's team expects demand to become increasingly challenging to predict, meaning plans relying on the demand plan will become unreliable, as well.



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Identify Risk

Bill was disheartened because he had no idea his supply chain was plagued with so many vulnerabilities; he needed a brief break. Once Eric left Bill's office, he turned to Rebecca, annoyed, and asked how so many vulnerabilities could exist in his supply chain. He asked Rebecca to explain what is so unique about the pandemic that would cause them not to see these vulnerabilities before now. Rebecca wanted to de-escalate the situation, but not at the expense of Eric having an opportunity to share the recommended solutions and provide proper context. So, she calmly asked Bill to be patient and explained that a vulnerability is not a threat, and a threat is not a risk without intent, capability, and access. She explained that they are in the right place because Bill was astute enough to proactively ask Rebecca to investigate the outbreak. As Eric entered the room, Rebecca assured Bill that after hearing the solutions, he would leave the meeting much more comfortable with the current state of Widget's supply chain.

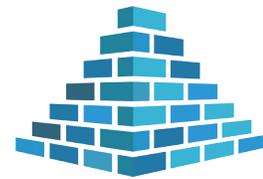
Should I be concerned?

The answer to this question is dependent on whether you feel you have enough information and context. When faced with uncertainty about the impact on your supply chain, consider the following:

- How frequently do you expect to be impacted by the stressor(s)?
- To what extent will your supply chain be affected by the stressor(s)?

Chapter 3

BUILD SOLUTIONS



Find the right responses to the stressor(s) and rationalize with current supply chain capabilities.



Identify Solutions

Rebecca explained how the team brainstormed responses to each stressor and prioritized them based on their ability to prevent or minimize risks associated with the pandemic. She reminded Bill that the focus of **Oscar** is to create visibility into the new landscape, minimize disruption for their customers, maintain stability at production facilities, and diversify their supplier network. Bill nodded, and Eric transitioned to the next slide showing a table with prioritized solutions in one column, organizational capability in another column, and time window in another column.

Eric said, “**Oscar** consists of seven solutions; two are intended to be implemented **immediately**, three are intended to be implemented **within the next six months**, and the remaining two are intended to be implemented **within a year** if the pandemic is still spreading.” He shared that four of the solutions can be implemented with existing capabilities, one is part of an existing contingency plan, and two will require an investment in new capabilities. Rebecca noted that there are more solutions, but the team agreed the seven solutions Eric shared are the most effective use of any funds available to minimize the effects of the pandemic.



The first priority is **FORESIGHT**. The team recommended contracting with a data scientist and supply chain planning expert to implement quicker decision-making models and increase the reliability of future pandemic-related planning.

The second priority is **SPACE**. The team recommended activating their off-site production contingency plan. The plan would provide additional space and already accounts for necessary facilities, fixtures, furniture, and equipment, as well as process, resourcing, oversight, location, and scale.

The third priority is **DYNAMIC SOURCING**. The team recommended adjusting the supplier selection criteria and procurement standards to increase the population and diversity of potential suppliers. The team believed three things needed to occur: 1) eliminate supplier size requirements in entrance criteria; 2) include category leads in supplier prioritization discussions; and 3) establish a supplier diversity role to build and manage relationships with smaller and disadvantaged suppliers. As Eric continued, Rebecca noticed Bill's regular expression conveying confidence, and contentment was returning. Bill stared at Rebecca and smiled to affirm her assessment.

The fourth priority is **PROCESS AUTOMATION**. The team recommended accelerating existing process automation initiatives. These initiatives were intended to keep labor costs steady as the company grew, and if accelerated, Eric's team believed they would help offset lost productivity should employees be affected by the pandemic.

The fifth priority is **ESTABLISHING A CRISIS ACTION TEAM**. Crisis action teams would be quickly deployed at locations affected by the pandemic with a crisis management cell at Widget's headquarters. Eric's team believed they

would need to be able to act quickly to unknowns as the pandemic reaches their employees, facilities, and markets. The crisis action team would be a local decision-making body that would coordinate directly with the crisis management cell to share learnings and decisions, as well as expedite decisions that cannot be made locally.

The sixth priority is **PERMANENT WORKPLACE SAFETY CHANGES**. The team recommended establishing permanent policies, procedures, and equipment for work during the pandemic if the pandemic is expected to be active for greater than a year.

The seventh priority is permanently **INCREASING SAFETY STOCK LEVELS**. The team recommended permanently increasing safety stock levels by an average of 10 percent. Eric noted that the team has initial thoughts on levels by SKU but would need the first priority in place to validate this priority and ensure their initial thoughts will produce the value they believe it will.

Rebecca reiterated the goals of **Oscar** and asked Bill if he felt confident in the recommendations and their ability to create visibility into the new landscape, minimize disruption for their customers, maintain stability at production facilities, and diversify their supplier network. Bill said “yes” and asked how the team intends to minimize disruption to current operations while implementing these changes and how they will help him keep tabs on implementation progress. Rebecca turned to Eric, who continued with his presentation.



Assess Organizational Capability



What do we do?

Any action taken should effectively respond to the risk and adequately support your desired outcomes. When the causes of stress become clear, consider the following:

- How do you respond to the stressor?
- How much of the response are you able to deliver through existing capabilities?

Chapter 4



CREATE ROADMAP

Constrain solutions with success measures that normalize adoption, focus implementation, and establish milestones.



Identify Implementation Metrics

Eric said implementation would be tricky because the impact of the pandemic is evolving and expected to affect most of Widget. Still, he believed **Oscar** is the right plan to move forward. Rebecca nodded in agreement, and Bill said, “Great! Let’s hear the plan.”

Rebecca explained how the adoption of **Oscar** has four measurable areas:

- 1) Articulating the changes;
- 2) Ensuring readiness for change;
- 3) Implementing changes, and
- 4) Managing adoption of the change.

Eric pulled up a slide titled “Adopting **Oscar**”. He started this portion of the presentation by explaining how they intend to “**Articulate the change.**”

Bill was glad to see that this phase has his executives actively involved in defining the changes. Eric explained how the team developed taglines to focus messaging for the **Oscar** initiative:

- 1) Articulating the change. “Do you know **Oscar**?”
- 2) Ensuring readiness for change. “How is **Oscar** doing today?”
- 3) Implementing changes. “Are you ready for **Oscar**?”
- 4) Managing the adoption of the change. “Do you have **Oscar**?”

Eric explained how, after consulting with corporate communications, they recommended the project team’s messaging have a positive tone focused on solutions and to coordinate with a corporate communications specialist on any pandemic-specific messaging. Bill liked this approach because it kept sensitive messages in the hands of experienced communicators.

Eric moved on to “**Ensuring readiness for change.**” He shared that he and Rebecca are working with the portfolio management team to have the solutions added as “out-of-cycle” submissions. Rebecca said she discussed this with the executive steering committee for the supply chain portfolio, and they will meet next week to re-prioritize the backlog of initiatives to meet **Oscar**’s timelines if approved.

Eric moved on to “**Implementing changes.**” He stated that the team has already started documenting current structures and processes that supported earlier simulations, and they will continue to build a view of the current state, so the team has a baseline for each solution. Eric noted that they intend to measure nearly everything to ensure they can prove the success of each solution.

Eric closed the solution portion of the presentation with “**Managing adoption of the change.**” He shared their training plan, resource center, and details surrounding the transition teams that will support the initial operating capability for each solution. Bill asked Eric how confident he is in adopting the solutions. Eric said he felt very confident and turned to Rebecca. Rebecca shared that all four areas Eric covered are not mutually

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Identify Adoption Metrics

exclusive and work independently and collectively to help bring the organization along. She noted that Bill's focus on having a healthy work environment will make adoption much easier because the supply chain teams trust leadership. Bill nodded while fighting back a grin. He asked Rebecca and Eric what comes next.

Rebecca said they would move forward with scheduling project "kick-offs" for **Oscar**. She will continue working with the **executive steering committee** to ensure the work stays on track and creates visibility into the new landscape, minimizes disruption for their customers, maintains stability at production facilities, and diversifies their supplier network. Eric said he would be the program director for **Oscar**. The project management office has assigned a program manager, change manager, and program coordinator to help him build out the project teams and get **Oscar** ready for kick-off. Rebecca asked Bill to sponsor the **Oscar** initiative to give it the priority necessary to minimize roadblocks and maintain leadership engagement. Bill agreed.

After a productive meeting with Bill, Rebecca and Eric moved quickly to implement **Oscar**. A couple of weeks into **Oscar**, the team experienced a new stimulus type, "Social". The population had varying assessments of the government's handling of the pandemic, and some of Widget's customers were taking positions. Those positions were affecting Widget's ability to forecast demand as consumers switched to brands that shared their views. Eric's strategy team quickly identified the stimulus type, stress on the supply chain, and worked with the **Oscar** team and project management office to make adjustments to ensure **Oscar** was still able to create visibility into the new landscape, minimize disruption for their customers, maintain stability at production facilities, and diversify their supplier network. In the end, Operation Supply Chain Resilience or "**Oscar**" was a success, and the supply chain was able to help minimize the impact of the pandemic on Widget.

12

Implement Stress Testing Framework



Supply Chain Resilience

In the spirit of the unexpected, Bill established a new office he called “Supply Chain Resilience” to formalize Rebecca’s framework and standardize the processes Eric’s team established. Bill aligned the new office within Rebecca’s Innovation and Planning organization, and Rebecca promoted Eric to senior director rolling his strategy team into the new Supply Chain Resilience office. The decision was timely as Widget’s CEO released a statement assessing the government’s response to the pandemic. Consequently, Eric’s team was hard at work leveraging Rebecca’s framework to protect Widget’s supply chain from any new stimuli.

Will this work?

When you have the right solutions, it is important to consider how you are going to achieve your outcomes with the solutions. When building your roadmap, consider the following:

- How do you know you can implement the solutions?
- How do you know your organization will adopt the solutions?
- While executing, how will you know when your view of success must change?

Conclusion

In Widget's case, the company was fortunate to have a leader like Bill, who created the right environment for Rebecca to design an effective framework and develop influential leaders like Eric. Rebecca had the foresight to build a framework for addressing the unexpected. Eric had the business acumen and leadership skills to guide a cross-functional team through Rebecca's framework. What would have happened if Bill did not follow his instinct and ask Rebecca to investigate the outbreak? How would they have known where to look for information and assess the relationship between the outbreak and their supply chain without Rebecca's framework? When would they have been able to produce a coherent and adequate response without Rebecca's framework, Eric's leadership skills, and Bill's support? How many additional issues would Bill have had to manage if he were unable to use Eric's initial update to create focus among the senior executives?

As supply chain stressors become more complex and unpredictable, it is imperative you have the right capability to preempt or recover from disruption while building supply chain resilience.

Supply chains are complex systems with many organizational factors that contribute to a resilient supply chain.

If you are unable to see a supply chain problem clearly, understand the impact, assess the risk, define the solution, and create a path to the solution, [contact RCSG](#).



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jamie Robinson,
RCSG, Founder and CEO,

is an experienced supply chain leader, adviser, and practitioner with a passion for supply chain transformation. He founded RCSG to help companies realize superior supply chain success through expert consulting, last mile logistics, and stress testing. Jamie has more than twenty years of retail, supply chain, military, and leadership experience. His career has involved overseeing successful startups, standing up headquarters organizations, and implementing supply chain solutions.. He holds a master's degree in logistics and supply chain management and professional certifications in strategy execution, change management, and business optimization.



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WE MAKE ACHIEVING SUPPLY CHAIN RESILIENCE EASIER

Our framework leverages 166 activities, 43 inputs, 258 analysis items, over 20 deliverables, and more than 20 years of supply chain, organizational design, and data science experience to help you achieve supply chain resilience.

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