Citwell

Accelerators of transformation

Convictions

#6 - June 2026



Purchasing, industrial performance, supply chain, commercial operations, logistics...

Are you truly in control of your operations?

Citwell
Accelerators of transformation

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EDITORIAL



Crises, events, and unexpected disruptions are following one another at such a pace that we must wonder whether the exception has become the norm. The question is no longer whether a crisis will occur, but when.

In this decidedly chaotic context, companies must demonstrate adaptability, often under urgent conditions, and sometimes painfully.

In this issue, we offer an overview of solutions and best practices to turn these challenges into opportunities.

As the testimonials and analyses in this magazine illustrate, resilience is not only a defensive posture. It is also a powerful driver of transformation and value creation for organizations that know how to embed it at the heart of their strategy.

Nicolas HENRY,
Partner and Publication Director



06

RESILIENCE: THE NEW BE-ALL AND END-ALL FOR COMPANIES FACING OVERARCHING RISKS
The crisis is no longer the exception: how can it become a lever for transformation?



12

BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANS: THREE KEYS TO PROTECTING VALUE CREATION IN TIMES OF CRISIS
Prepare, respond, recover: the three-part approach to keep going when everything is shaken.



16

DATA GOVERNANCE: REGAINING CONTROL FOR A HIGH-PERFORMING AND RESILIENT COMPANY
Reliable data means controlled operations: regaining control starts here.



22

SUPPLY CHAINS AND PROCUREMENT: MAKE YOUR SUPPLIERS WANT TO CHOOSE YOU
In a fragmented world, your supplier relationship is your strongest competitive advantage.



26

S&OP IN TIMES OF CRISIS: BEST PRACTICES FOR MANAGING UNCERTAINTY
Before, during, and after; how S&OP becomes the pillar of decision-making under pressure.



30

THE LOGISTIC NETWORK DESIGN AS A COMPASS FOR RESILIENCE
A resilient network is not built by reacting; it is designed, scenario-planned, and managed.



34

CUSTOMER SERVICE: BURIED IN DAY-TO-DAY TASKS AND OPTIMIZING AI
AI does not replace customer service teams. It frees them up for what truly matters.



38

TOMORROW IS BUILT TODAY: BUILDING A VALUE CHAIN READY FOR THE UNPREDICTABLE
Building a value chain ready for the unpredictable.



RESILIENCE: THE NEW BE-ALL AND END-ALL FOR COMPANIES FACING OVERARCHING RISKS

Nicolas HENRY, Partner
Citwell

A new reality?

Anticipating, protecting against, and preparing for disruption are all objectives pursued by Operations teams and their stakeholders in companies. Of course, it is impossible to predict everything, all the time. Yet always maintaining control of resources and flows, in every location, and despite unexpected events can seem vital to keeping operations running - otherwise they may be interrupted, or even stopped, perhaps permanently.

Disruptions are everywhere. Their increasing frequency and intensity have made resilience an essential compass for executive teams: what direction will ensure the most robust and stable position, one that secures the value chain from resource supply through to the delivery of products and services to customers?

We distinguish between two major categories of operational disruption risk: global events that affect a sector, a region, or even the entire world; and local incidents that are specific to one company while its competitors continue operating.

Global risks affecting an entire area of activity

Among global risks, many hypothetical cases have become reality in recent years, like a steep plunge that will sink some companies and elevate others - as the saying goes, when the going gets tough, the tough get going.

One obvious theme, traditionally placed in the corner of risk matrices because of its very low probability but devastating impact, is global pandemics. In 2019, we were far from

imagining what our daily lives would become in the months that followed. The spring of 2020 is still remembered today, with varying degrees of nostalgia. Consumption, distribution, and the production of goods and services were disrupted in every country. When the shock is strong enough, everyone is in the same boat, with government agencies involved. The drastic reduction in available capacity and resources, despite continued demand for more or less essential goods, severely tested many supply chains, which had to find ways to adapt.

Another cataclysm is geopolitical or armed conflict, which can block an entire territory and its inbound and outbound flows. Even when localized, these situations create pressure on resources normally originating in those regions
• natural resources, manufactured products
• in addition to the loss of a market and its customers.

Even setting aside the possibility of a global conflict, which no one wants, the impacts are truly worldwide, particularly for materials and resources already under pressure because of scarcity, whether geological or political. Beyond the resources themselves, the concern created in markets disrupts the business climate and limits investment and development strategies that drive growth and social progress.

Logistics routes can also be affected by the cases cited above, such as reduced sea and air traffic during Covid or limitations on traffic near armed conflicts, as with the blockage of the Strait of Hormuz in 2026. They may also face unpredictable events, such as the blockage of a maritime route - the Suez Canal, which accounts for 12% of global trade, was blocked for around ten days in 2021 by the grounded Ever Given cargo ship - or a landslide blocking a rail or road route.

Geopolitics can also influence borders, whether by reducing traffic or by imposing tariffs that can become more volatile than commodity or currency prices. Companies must then find new logistics routes, adapt their networks, or even change their industrial allocation in order to maintain some continuity in supply and delivery flows around the world.

Local risks with sometimes global origins

Among major disruption risks that are still relatively infrequent but may unfortunately become recurring in the near future are the consequences of climate change. Whether it is the forced closure of an industrial or logistics site due to extreme temperatures for operators, a natural disaster damaging site infrastructure, or pressure on local energy capacity, the likelihood of encountering such events is becoming less like science fiction. This vigilance must extend to the company's entire ecosystem, especially suppliers, by assessing the risks specific to each one as well as the routes used for supply.

Technological and mechanization advances will help limit the impact of these events, but they will not solve everything. Potential labor shortages, both in availability and in expected skills, which are evolving rapidly, add to the list of risks that must be considered at site level. The same applies to possible blockages, for example due to labor action.

Two types of occurrences may arise: an announcement creates a risk that the site will be blocked, in which case a precise mitigation plan can be considered, though it creates an additional risk if information leaks before the official communication; or an unexpected blockage, potentially shorter but also unpredictable.

These disruptions can range from the simple unavailability of a system for a few hours to a complete shutdown of all systems for several weeks, including denial-of-service attacks or executive identity theft.

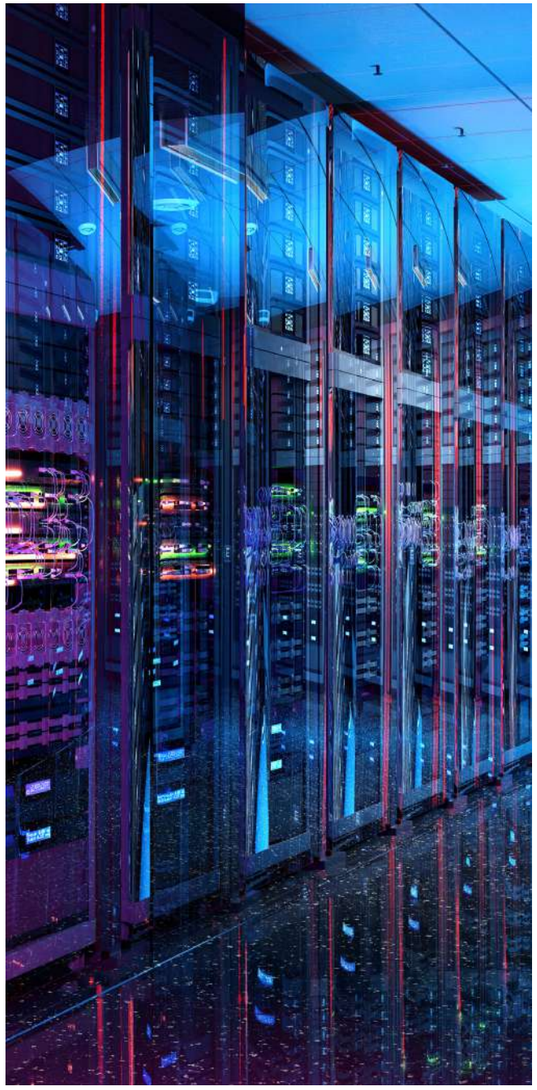


Finally, a company itself may be the source of a highly disruptive event for its operations. This may include a product quality issue requiring a recall; worse, a poorly managed or unmanaged quality problem; a communication mistake damaging the company's reputation; or having to face third-party accusations, whether justified or not. These possibilities must be anticipated so the right response protocol is available.

> ***The risk of cyberattack has moved in recent years from "if" to "when." There is no longer any doubt that every company will face attacks on its IT infrastructure, with obviously varying levels of severity.***

How can companies regain control?

The response to a risk must be proportionate to the presumed scale of its impact. Sometimes companies must move quickly, even excessively - for example, shutting down all servers in a multinational group in the event of a suspected



cyberattack - but it is just as important to keep a cool head.

In this respect, people can be seen as a keystone: they can find solutions to resolve situations, while also sometimes being the very source of the situation. Having procedures and plans prepared in advance - inspired, for example, by practices in the aeronautics industry - at least makes it possible to begin acting rationally without falling into panic or paralysis.

Technology can provide support, whether by compensating for possible human failures or detecting weak signals well before they become a full-blown crisis. Conversely, many false positives will need to be defused to avoid applying remedies worse than the problems themselves, especially when those remedies are unfounded.

How, however, could we fail to take advantage of the computing power now available to us, with artificial intelligence models capable of performing immense analysis and synthesis of different probabilistic pathways and their impacts in a fraction of a second? This requires control over data, as well as sovereignty over tools, to ensure that they will operate properly when needed.

Value chains must be reviewed from two perspectives. First, they should include a degree of redundancy and alternative routes, preferably already used for some share of the flow, even if less optimized, to guarantee their operational readiness if needed. Second, these logistics chains should be assessed against different scenarios: what happens if...? Preparation becomes critical, including the definition of Business Continuity Plans (BCPs) that allow the value chain to be transformed quickly.

The creation of a continuous monitoring and assessment body is therefore required. It can then rely on plans outlined in advance and adapt them to the situation as needed, including the mobilization of required resources and expertise. It is urgent to accept that crises have become permanent and may arise at any time - when they are not already the new norm.

It bears repeating: we cannot always predict everything but thinking through the different risks and how to address them will build the reflexes needed to respond in a crisis. This is an opportunity to recall Dwight D. Eisenhower's famous maxim: plans are useless, but planning is indispensable.



BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANS: THREE KEYS TO PROTECTING VALUE CREATION IN TIMES OF CRISIS

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In 2025, the risks most top-of-mind for executive teams are business interruptions—particularly across supply chains—and cyberattacks, both of which have a direct impact on operations and, by extension, on value creation. At Citwell, we support our clients along three structuring dimensions—Preparation, Response, and Recovery—allowing us to share grounded perspectives and practical convictions to better withstand disruptions and maintain operational continuity.

Given the scale of today's challenges, key questions emerge: How do you secure the future of your operations? Which types of crises should be prioritized based on potential impact? Which critical activities must be protected—and with what means?

Chapter 1 – Building Resilience Before the Shock

Anticipating to Act more effectively: Risk Mapping

Mapping potential crises and their impacts—whether global or local, operational or logistical, including service levels and end-customer implications—enables organizations to anticipate disruptions and focus efforts on the most critical scenarios. This prioritization is essential to deploy the right response when a crisis hits. For instance, increasing the agility of an industrial footprint can significantly enhance responsiveness to systemic risks such as cyberattacks.

Back to contents

A detailed understanding of the value chain is equally critical. It allows organizations to focus on what truly matters: high-margin products or strategic markets, constrained flows, and critical assets.

Resilience should not be treated as a standalone initiative but embedded within the broader corporate strategy. Structural decisions—such as developing dual sourcing strategies or securing inventory at key nodes—can strengthen operational resilience. These choices, however, require careful arbitration, balancing their protective value against the resources they mobilize.

Preparing for the unthinkable: Structuring Crisis Management

How do you operate with severely constrained capacity? How do you execute exceptional operations under crisis conditions? How do you limit impact through structured response mechanisms and decision-making frameworks?

These questions lead to the definition of degraded modes of operation, dedicated resources, streamlined governance, and simplified communication flows—typically formalized through Business Continuity Plans (BCPs). A BCP can be defined at various levels: site (plant, distribution center), flow, function, or system.

Equally important is ensuring access to the resources required to activate these plans—data, tools, and physical assets—often consolidated into an "emergency toolkit" that supports execution under pressure.

Acting Without Delay: Activating Crisis Mode

Beyond preparation, the activation of an agile and empowered crisis cell is essential to steer priorities and limit the impact on customer value. Decision-making in such contexts often requires accepting a loss of control over parts of the value chain—moving beyond incident management into full crisis mode.

Chapter 2 - Leading Under Pressure, Deciding Under Uncertainty

Crisis situations fundamentally change the rules of the game. Operational priorities shift from optimization and value maximization to impact minimization. Pragmatism becomes critical: prioritizing certain products or activities requires trade-offs, and rapid decisions must often be made with incomplete information.

In this context, "perfect" is often the enemy of "good." What matters is the ability to act decisively.

Adaptability is equally essential. Predefined responses must be continuously adjusted as the situation evolves—whether revisiting priorities based on inventory levels or adapting degraded modes to the actual nature of the disruption. Under pressure, short decision loops enable faster and more effective arbitration.

Chapter 3 – Recovering and Growing After the Crisis

Preparing for recovery should begin during the preparation phase. Ensuring an adequate level of traceability for critical information significantly facilitates the return to normal operations.
Once the crisis has passed, organizations must take the time to extract lessons learned: stepping back from decisions made under pressure, identifying gaps in existing processes, and adapting organizational structures accordingly. This is where resilience becomes a dynamic capability rather than a static objective.

In Closing, building resilient operations is a broad, technical, and pragmatic endeavor that must be fully integrated into the company's strategic agenda.

The question is no longer whether a crisis will occur, but when it will test your operations. When that moment comes, will you be truly equipped to absorb the shock, make decisions under pressure, and protect what drives your value creation? Do you have today the foundations, reflexes, and capabilities required to turn disruption into a demonstration of resilience rather than a breaking point?
At Citwell, we continue to support organizations in structuring these capabilities—bridging strategic foresight with operational execution.

** According to Allianz's annual Risk Barometer. https://newsroom.allianz.fr/barometre-des-risques-dallianz-2025-incidents-cyber-en-tete-changement-climatique-a-son-plus-niveau/*

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Discover our expertise to Strengthen the Resilience of Your Operations and Supply Chain - Citwell



DATA GOVERNANCE: REGAINING CONTROL FOR A HIGH-PERFORMING AND RESILIENT COMPANY

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Pierre ABOU HAMAD, Country Manager *Citwell USA*

The loss of control over data quality has become a clear symptom of digital transformation initiatives that have often moved too quickly, without sufficient safeguards. Over the years, companies have multiplied their information systems, outsourced critical processes, and accelerated digitalization, creating a true technological patchwork in which data flows without real oversight. The result is tangible: obsolete data coexisting with recent data, duplicates proliferating without detection, and critical information scattered across inaccessible silos. For supply chain leaders, this drift translates into an inability to make reliable real-time decisions, an excessive dependency on IT teams for basic corrections, and growing vulnerability in the face of regulatory requirements.

In an environment where international flows are becoming increasingly complex and every decision must be made instantly, inaccurate data can block a flow, generate customs-related cost overruns, compromise product traceability, or cause a customer service disruption, with direct impacts on revenue and market share. Conversely, rigorous data governance becomes a powerful performance lever. Regaining control is no longer optional; it is a strategic necessity. It means once again taking ownership of the company's information assets in order to regain control of operations. This effort requires structured, methodical governance that is firmly anchored in operational reality and built around four key pillars: roles, mapping, processes, and quality-driven performance management.

Breaking down Silos: A prerequisite for Effectiveness

In a context where organizational and system silos too often continue to hinder the flow of information, some companies are choosing to adopt a cross-functional perspective. One of the guiding principles of data governance is to avoid silos by breaking down barriers between systems and roles.

In value chain management, this approach is critical: the data produced must circulate across procurement, production, logistics, and sales without loss of information or inconsistency. A significant step forward can be achieved by structuring responsibilities around three key roles:

• **The Data Owner** is the business reference who understands operational challenges and the consequences of poor data quality. The Data Owner defines the business rules governing data and validates its relevance, freshness, uniqueness, and completeness. In a supply chain context, the procurement manager may be the Data Owner for supplier data, ensuring its reliability across the entire chain.

• **The Data Administrator** is the operational reference on the front line, responsible for monitoring the data lifecycle: creation, modification, and archiving. The Data Admin supports business teams in understanding the rules and facilitates the relationship between tools, users, and processes. In a multi-site company, a Data Admin may be responsible for collecting local data on behalf of all Data Owners at a given site.

• **The Data Officer** coordinates the overall governance framework without managing each data item individually. The Data Officer creates shared reference materials such as glossaries, data dictionaries, and quality KPIs. This person facilitates governance rituals with the community of Data Officers and Data Admins, centralizes best practices, and monitors the action plan.

The golden rule is to clearly differentiate these three roles and assign responsibility for data quality to the entity that functionally produces the data.

Data Mapping as a Management Tool

Seeing clearly is the first step toward managing effectively. Data mapping consists of identifying, locating, and documenting the types of data processed by the company, their origin, usage, storage, and associated flows.

An effective data map allows companies to visualize their critical data, identify duplicates and redundancies, and focus governance efforts where they truly matter. This approach distinguishes three main types of data:
• **Local data,** created and used by a single department or business function.
• **Enterprise data,** which requires cross-functional sharing between departments, and potentially across regions or entities.
• **External data,** originating from third-party sources such as regulatory databases, open data, or partners.

From Criticality to the "Source of Truth": Value-oriented Governance

Good governance prioritizes the identification of critical data, whose potential impact on the business would be significant in the event of an error. Criticality is measured by combining sensitivity, usage, frequency, and regulatory exposure.

For a company, poorly managed critical data directly translates into delivery delays, additional costs, and deteriorating customer satisfaction.
Several golden rules guide this mapping exercise: only manage data that has a clear business purpose, assess the benefit-cost ratio before governing a new data set, and respect the "primary-secondary" principle, whereby a data attribute should be editable in only one place — the primary system — and then redistributed to downstream systems through interfaces.

Finally, data should only be maintained in its natural tool: management data in an ERP, and lifecycle data in a PLM, or Product Lifecycle Management system.

Processes to Ensure Reliability from the Point of Creation

Long considered a secondary objective, the formalization of data management processes has now become essential. A sound governance process is based on clear, repeatable steps to manage data throughout its lifecycle: creation, update, verification, and archiving.

This reflects the expectations of operational teams, who are increasingly aware of the impact that poor-quality data can have on their daily activities.
• **Creation and referencing:** Who can create data? How? Is there a standardized model and a validation workflow?
• **Updates:** How often should the data be updated? Who is responsible? What control rules should be applied?
• **Cleansing and correction:** Are there tools to detect errors or inconsistencies? Is there a recurring "duplicate-hunting" ritual?
• **Archiving and deletion:** What is the retention period for each type of data?

> ***"For effective implementation, companies are advised to create a checklist for each process and to regularly update their data dictionary and validation schemas.***

Measuring to Improve: Data-Quality KPIs

The development of innovations in data quality management has, over time, enabled companies to move beyond the historical tension between control and operational agility.

Data quality is measured across five essential dimensions: **completeness**, meaning the percentage of mandatory fields completed; **uniqueness**, meaning the percentage of duplicates detected; **freshness**, meaning the actual versus expected frequency of updates; relevance, meaning the actual usage rate of the data created; and **integrity**, meaning the logical consistency between related fields.

Beyond data quality itself, companies must also manage the performance of governance. This includes tracking the number of anomalies reported and corrected, the average validation and creation lead time, and the adoption rate of workflows.
These indicators must be defined according to the SMART framework: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound. They must also be linked to concrete action plans.

Security: Beyond Cybersecurity

Data security is not limited to technical cybersecurity. It also includes proper data classification, access management, and regulatory compliance.

Overall, securing data makes it possible to protect sensitive information, comply with laws and regulations, prevent leaks, and identify who does what with which data.

Categorization into four levels is essential: **public data**, which is open without restriction; **private data**, which is sensitive internal information; **personal data**, which can identify individuals; and **legal data**, which is subject to strict legal obligations.

Best practices often revolve around defining RACI responsibilities for security, restricting access based strictly on business needs, separating sensitive roles, and integrating security by design. For instance, in international supply chains, the EU GDPR compliance act requires identifying all personal data collected, implementing clear and traceable consent systems, and appointing a DPO, or Data Protection Officer, to coordinate the initiative. Data confidentiality challenges are becoming even more significant with the rise of AI. Because these tools make data exploration much easier, the probability that any confidentiality vulnerability could have a major impact is increasing dramatically.



From data quality to sustainable competitive advantage

Data governance is a strategic investment for the supply chain of tomorrow. It is not solely a matter of tools; above all, it is a mindset, an organization, and a collective discipline. Even with limited resources, every company can initiate or strengthen its approach by appointing clearly identified owners, prioritizing high-impact data, formalizing simple and pragmatic rules, and establishing rituals that embed best practices over time.

For the supply chain, the impact is direct: reliable data helps reduce processing times, optimize inventory, secure international flows, streamline collaboration with partners, and improve customer satisfaction. The efficiency of tomorrow's company is built today, one data point and one process at a time.

This requirement becomes even more critical with the rise of artificial intelligence, which acts as an amplifier of both risks and opportunities. Predictive algorithms and generative AI promise to dynamically optimize inventory, anticipate shortages, intelligently manage flows, and automate complex operational decisions. But these promises depend on one absolute prerequisite: the quality of both training and operational data.
AI powered by inconsistent, incomplete, or biased data will produce erroneous decisions at scale, turning a performance lever into a systemic risk factor. Conversely, organizations that have invested in rigorous governance will gain a decisive competitive advantage: more reliable models, faster deployment, and auditable systems capable of meeting growing regulatory requirements, particularly around algorithmic transparency.

Data governance is therefore not a barrier to innovation. It is the "sine qua non" for securing today's performance and preserving the ability to innovate tomorrow.

To go further

Discover our expertise in data governance and data management



SUPPLY CHAINS AND PROCUREMENT: MAKE YOUR SUPPLIERS WANT TO CHOOSE YOU

Vincent LEROY, Senior manager
Citwell

In today's economic context, one central question stands out for procurement and supply chain leaders: how can companies keep, or sometimes regain, control of their operations in an environment that has become structurally unstable and unpredictable?
For large international groups, the stakes go far beyond simple operational performance. This is now a matter of business continuity, industrial sovereignty, and long-term competitiveness.

Loss of Control: A Risk that has Become Systemic

Historically, procurement and supply chain strategies were built around cost optimization, globalization of sourcing, and supplier specialization. While these choices delivered significant gains for several decades, they also increased complexity and dependence on ecosystems that are sometimes distant, fragmented, and opaque.

In the pharmaceutical industry, the concentration of active-ingredient production in certain regions has highlighted major shortage risks. In luxury, dependence on rare know-how and poorly visible tier-2 or tier-3 suppliers weakens the ability to meet quality and delivery commitments. In aerospace and defense, long and highly specialized supply chains expose programs to critical delays and geopolitical risks.

Controlling operations therefore begins with awareness: uncontrolled complexity has become a factor of strategic vulnerability.

Regain Visibility to Make Better Decisions

Without a detailed and up-to-date understanding of supply chains, every decision becomes partial and potentially risky. This means going beyond the traditional view focused on tier-1 suppliers and mapping the entire ecosystem, down to

critical raw materials.
• Dynamic mapping of suppliers and flows
• Identification of critical dependencies such as single sourcing, at-risk geographies, and constrained capacity
• Continuous assessment of financial, operational, regulatory, and ESG risks
This visibility is not an end solution. It makes it possible to arbitrate faster, prioritize actions, and anticipate rather than merely react.

Rebalancing Economic Performance and Resilience

Keeping control does not mean giving up economic performance; it means redefining it. Recent crises have shown that the lowest apparent cost can become the highest total cost in a disruption.

Large industrial groups are gradually moving toward more balanced strategies:
• Reasoned diversification of supply sources
• Securing strategic suppliers through long-term partnerships and reciprocal trust
• Targeted reshoring or regionalization of certain critical activities
• Creation of strategic inventories for key components or materials

In regulated sectors such as pharmaceuticals or defense, this approach is often reinforced by requirements for sovereignty and compliance, which must be integrated from the procurement strategy stage.

Recognize the Strategic Role of Procurement and Supply Chain Functions

Procurement and supply chain departments can no longer be seen only as support or execution functions. They are now at the heart of the company's strategic decisions.

This requires stronger dialogue with suppliers to create trust, transparency, and long-term strategic relationships; earlier involvement in industrial and innovation projects; stronger dialogue with executive, finance, industrial, and R&D leadership; and the development of skills in risk management, data analysis, strategic negotiation, and partner management.

The ability to work closely with key suppliers, sometimes highly specialized ones, becomes a decisive competitive advantage. This pushes some manufacturers to build long-term partnerships or even acquire suppliers to integrate certain know-how that competitors will no longer be able to access.

Utilization of Data and Digital Tools without Losing Judgment

Digitalization is a major lever for managing and controlling operations, provided it serves a clear vision. Advanced planning solutions, risk management tools, supplier collaboration platforms, and predictive analytics make it possible to anticipate disruptions more effectively and simulate scenarios.

However, technology does not replace human judgment. Critical decisions - sourcing trade-offs, customer prioritization, capacity allocation - require a nuanced understanding of the industrial, regulatory, and geopolitical context. The best results are achieved when data informs the decision without dehumanizing it.

Toward Stronger Supply Chain Governance

Finally, keeping control requires clear and shared governance. Roles and responsibilities must be defined between corporate and local entities, global procurement and project procurement, and supply chain and operations.

The most advanced companies establish dedicated bodies for supply chain risk management, capable of deciding quickly in a crisis while also steering deeper transformations. Yesterday, risks could be managed at the planner level, often masked by comfortable inventory coverage. Today, they are more regularly managed by purchasing, supply chain, or plant managers. Tomorrow, they will become a business issue requiring risk management at higher levels of hierarchy because they are becoming strategic and differentiating topics.

Conclusion

Do not wait until your suppliers stop choosing you. Keep or regain control of procurement and supply chain activities by implementing true risk management at the highest levels of the company, upskilling teams, digitalizing in a controlled and reasoned way that delivers value to operations, and acting for the long term. Consider your suppliers as pillars of your value contribution, whatever your sector - pharmaceuticals, defense, automotive, luxury, and others. Treat your supply chains as a major strategic advantage in the service of sustainable performance and industrial sovereignty.

To learn more

Discover Citwell expertises in Supplier Relationship Development



S&OP IN TIMES OF CRISIS: BEST PRACTICES FOR MANAGING UNCERTAINTY

Eva BORNE, Senior manager
Citwell

Crises have become a constant feature of today's business environment, capable of emerging at any moment. The key challenge for organizations is no longer just to detect disruptions, but to rely on a planning model that enables fast, informed decision-making under pressure.

Sales & Operations Planning (S&OP) is one of the most effective levers to manage through disruption and support a return to stability. But what does "good" look like in practice? How should S&OP evolve before, during, and after a crisis? This article explores these three critical phases through a practical lens.

1. Before the Crisis: Embedding Risk Management into S&OP

Preparation is the first line of defense against uncertainty. Risk management must be fully embedded into the S&OP process well before any disruption occurs. This starts with identifying major risks and assessing their potential impact.
One useful metric is "revenue at risk," which helps prioritize risks based on their potential financial exposure. These risks—and the indicators used to detect early warning signals—should be reviewed monthly as part of the standard S&OP cycle.

Equally important is the development of predefined response scenarios. Organizations that have already explored alternative courses of action are better positioned to respond quickly when disruptions materialize.

Tool agility is another critical factor. While advanced planning systems are valuable, the real differentiator lies in the ability to quickly adjust key parameters—demand assumptions, capacity constraints, lead times, and transportation flows. If reconfiguring the system or generating new views is too complex or time-consuming, it will not withstand the pressure of a crisis. During COVID-19, it was not necessarily the companies with the most sophisticated tools that performed best, but those with the most adaptable ones.

2. During the crisis: adapting S&OP to the new reality

Controlling inbound data

In times of disruption, information quality becomes critical. Organizations must establish mechanisms to gather reliable, validated external data while clearly separating facts from noise.

For instance, during the global semiconductor shortage, one industrial client established frequent, high-level touchpoints with key suppliers. This approach provided more reliable insights than relying solely on market reports or media coverage. Demand forecasting also requires a shift in mindset. In crisis conditions, demand can change dramatically—sometimes overnight. Rather than relying on detailed historical models, companies should work with broader assumptions and use "what-if" scenarios to explore different demand trajectories.

One home appliance manufacturer we supported during COVID-19 faced highly fragmented lockdown policies across European markets. Instead of attempting overly granular modeling, the company focused on high-level demand patterns to guide decision-making.

Adjusting S&OP parameters

Several structural adjustments are required during a crisis. First, the level of granularity must reflect where the disruption is most impactful—whether by geography, product family, or distribution channel.

> ***This evolution reflects an essential realization: in a volatile and uncertain environment, the search for a single perfect forecast is an illusion.***

In the same home appliance case, the company shifted its analysis from product categories to sales channels, as digital and traditional distribution channels were affected very differently.

Planning horizons must also be revisited. In response to semiconductor shortages, one client extended its firm planning horizon to secure supply and stabilize pricing. Conversely, a pharmaceutical company reduced its firm horizon to 2–3 months, prioritizing short-term clarity while maintaining flexibility further out.

S&OP cycle frequency typically increases as well. Weekly cycles—sometimes referred to as "S&OP express"—enable faster scenario testing and decision-making. However, this acceleration comes with a risk: excessive focus on the short term. Maintaining a monthly cycle remains essential to step back, consolidate decisions, and prepare for recovery.

Strengthening cross-functional alignment

S&OP is inherently cross-functional, but this becomes even more critical in times of crisis. Finance, sales, marketing, and supply chain must operate in close alignment.

In many organizations, crises act as a catalyst, helping stakeholders fully understand both the value of S&OP and their role within it. Executive leadership must also be highly engaged to ensure consistent communication and alignment across the organization.

Finance plays a central role. Volatility in transportation, procurement, and operating costs can significantly impact profitability. Validating assumptions and understanding financial implications becomes essential to avoid costly missteps.

3. After the crisis: Toward a New Standard

A return to normal does not mean reverting to previous practices. Instead, it often leads to the establishment of a new baseline.



Crises highlight the critical importance of effective S&OP and strong stakeholder alignment. Organizations should build on this momentum to further integrate finance, sales, and marketing, and to elevate overall S&OP maturity.

Beyond process adjustments, repeated disruptions are accelerating a deeper transformation in planning models. Probabilistic, simulation-driven approaches are challenging traditional Advanced Planning Systems (APS). Rather than producing a single forecast, these models generate multiple scenarios, each with associated probabilities and outcomes.

This shift reflects a fundamental reality: in a volatile environment, the pursuit of a single "perfect" forecast is no longer viable. True maturity lies in the ability to anticipate multiple possible futures and pivot quickly as conditions evolve.

Organizations that embrace these new approaches and foster a culture of decision-making under uncertainty, will be better equipped to navigate the increasing complexity of their operating environment.

To learn more

About our S&OP expertise



THE LOGISTIC NETWORK DESIGN AS A COMPASS FOR RESILIENCE

Anaïs FONTAINE, Senior manager
Citwell

Logistics Robustness: An Imperative that has Become Critical

Recent years have profoundly disrupted global supply chains. The exception has become the norm. Companies have needed to adapt, often urgently and sometimes painfully.

In this context, logistics resilience has become a strategic priority. It is no longer only a matter of "holding on" during crises, but of actively preparing chains to face the unpredictable without compromising performance, service, or CSR ambitions. We are moving from a defensive logic to a proactive and systemic approach.

The Master Plan: A Key Lever of Resilience

Faced with systemic instability, the logistics master plan is a central strategic tool. Long perceived as a one-off project, it is now becoming a living system in the service of resilient, agile, and sustainable logistics.

It aligns major structural decisions - warehouse locations, flow networks, transport coverage, sourcing, and inventory levels - with business ambitions, customer expectations, and real-world constraints.

Above all, it provides a coherent framework for arbitrating in complexity: balancing economic performance, business continuity, customer service, and environmental requirements.

Design a Resilient Logistics Network from the Outset

Resilience is not added at the end of the chain. It is built upstream, in network design choices and in the network's ability to adapt to unexpected events.

Designing a robust logistics network means considering performance in all its dimensions: service, cost, flexibility, carbon, and risk. This approach is based on a multi-criteria analysis

integrated from the earliest stages of the master plan:

- Customer performance: on-time delivery, service level, delivery quality
- Total costs: transport, storage, stockouts, and network CAPEX/OPEX
- Growth and scalability: growth projections, high-potential areas, changes in mix or channel
- Lead times and flexibility: delivery times
- Carbon footprint: possible regulatory constraints
- Risk: critical dependencies and geopolitical or climate exposure

This also means choosing the right level of modeling based on the objectives and risks to address: upstream flows from suppliers or production sites, flows between primary and secondary warehouses, mother-daughter structures, or distribution to the end customer. This level of granularity determines the precision of simulations and trade-offs.

A good master plan is therefore not a fixed answer, but a framework that enables arbitration over time while integrating uncertainty as an input.

What-if Scenarios: Anticipating Uncertainty

Logistics resilience depends on the ability to simulate and test alternatives before they become mandatory.

A robust and resilient master plan relies on what-if scenarios that answer strategic questions: what happens if a warehouse becomes unavailable; if a new market is launched; if capacity must be doubled in a growth area; if a logistics corridor becomes unusable; if 30% of supplies are reshored?

These simulations must be multi-criteria: customer service, total cost, coverage, capacity, lead times, and CO2. They must also be realistic and actionable: based on field data, re-playable, and understandable by business leaders.

This scenario-planning work is becoming a true decision-making compass in rapidly changing environments.

Update, Replay, Manage: A Living Process

Resilience cannot rely on a static view of the network. The most mature companies now treat the master plan as an evolving process, connected to daily data and revised regularly. This requires:

- Regular updates to assumptions such as volumes, mix, sourcing, costs, and capacities
- Integration of weak signals such as social tensions, energy prices, hub saturation, and regulatory pressure
- Model re-playability, meaning the ability to quickly simulate new scenarios
- Cross-functional management, with supply chain, finance, CSR, and operations aligned around a common network vision

The master plan thus becomes a true tactical tool for dialogue and collective arbitration.

Make the master plan a lever for continuous transformation

At Citwell, our conviction is that the master plan should be a lever for continuous transformation. This means not merely modeling a target state: we confront logistics choices with realistic disruption or evolution scenarios to build networks capable of lasting over time.

We integrate active monitoring of sensitive topics in connection with our partners and field realities. The goal is to make concrete, appropriate, and realistic choices that strengthen the resilience of the logistics network.

Conclusion

When unexpected events have become the norm, the difference is not made by speed of reaction but by the quality of design. A resilient network is not built by reacting to each crisis; it is designed to remain operational even when reference points change.

Is your master plan ready for the next shocks?

To learn more

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CUSTOMER SERVICE: BURIED IN DAY-TO-DAY TASKS AND OPTIMIZING AI

Vanessa BRETON, Senior manager
Citwell

***"My customer service department is not doing well. There is a lack of meaning, the teams are overworked, and I feel we are going to have to do something."* This exchange comes from real life. It is not an isolated case. In addition to the surveys we conduct to map the status of this key function, those who have recently spoken with a customer service manager has heard similar words.**

At the simplest level, customers expect accurate and fast answers to every request. At the other end of the channel, the back office is facing challenges that go beyond its historical scope of intervention.

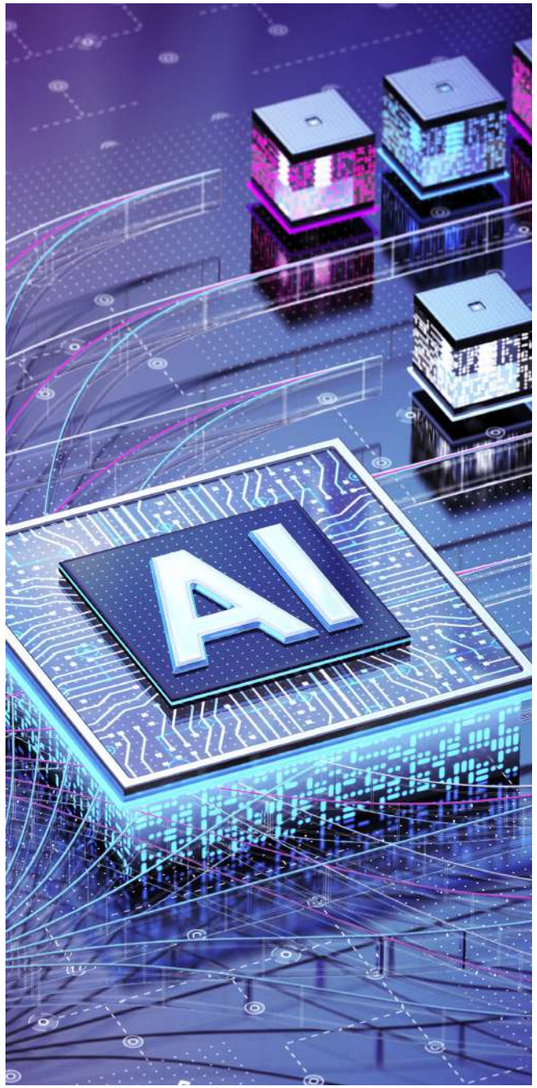
What are the Underlying Reasons?

• Core work that has changed little technologically: order entry and tracking, invoicing management, delivery follow-up, and dispute handling - the well-known order-to-cash process.
• The multiplication of channels adds complexity, as new channels would rarely resemble traditional ones, relying on different digital tools and formats.
• Fragmented orders: the number of customer accounts explodes with the introduction of D2C - direct to consumer - into the codified B2C or B2B environment.
• Customers are increasingly demanding because their personal experiences expose them to dozens of innovative experiences, often at a higher level than what they experience in their professional world.

Add to the equation fluctuations in customer demand, the ability to express dissatisfaction through new channels, and the multiplication of events that can create workload peaks, and all the signals are there: it is time to transform.

A Clear-Eyed Diagnosis but Renewed Ambition for Customer Service Teams

Periodic Esker/Citwell surveys show that



awareness of the importance of customer service within companies is increasing. However, the willingness to invest remains low because companies need to take a cautious approach with teams where moral fatigue and concern often coexist. Leaders are therefore asking what measures to take, and these can appear drastic and ethically debatable:

• Outsourcing?
• Moving staff to roles where absorbing additional tasks will not create a meaning problem?
• Phasing in “chatbots”?
• Adding a heavy dose of AI in some critical customer service steps?
• None of the above - or all of the above at once?

There is fortunately no single answer to these questions. My most recent appointment with an automaker began with a conversation with a confident chatbot, and then a smiling, available human called me back to clarify the technical details. At the other end of the line was a satisfied customer.

Customer service teams must accept that time-consuming, repetitive tasks will be taken over by an AI assistant. This is not obvious when - as a reminder - this is the historical core of the job. Reserving the management of complexity, which requires contextualization, discussion, and relationships, may seem attractive, but it also requires support.

All of this must be prepared, organized, and positioned step by step with a simple idea: not all actions performed within a customer service department have the same level of complexity; not all customers have the same level of maturity; and not all customer service teams have the same field of expertise.

After a necessary diagnostic phase covering customer service operations and case qualification through these criteria, responses combining processes, organization, and tools can be positioned.

The key to resilience is robustness, and that requires an organized patchwork of responses whose pathways must be built and adapted to each customer context and culture.

Companies do not transform for the sake of transformation, but for a simple equation: serve better, faster, at lower cost, while giving teams meaning again. A short diagnostic, pragmatic pilots, and phased scale-up: the method matters as much as the ambition. AI does not replace; it augments. The rest is a matter of culture, data, and measurement.

What if the next step were to define together where humans create the most value?

To learn more

Deploy AI to serve your operations | Citwell US



TOMORROW IS BUILT TODAY: BUILDING A VALUE CHAIN READY FOR THE UNPREDICTABLE

Adeline BRET, Senior manager
Citwell

At the end of this series, one certainty stands out: disruptions are no longer statistical accidents. They are now a structural component of the global economic environment. The last Allianz Risk Barometer once again ranks business interruptions among the risks companies perceive as most important, along with cyberattacks and natural disasters. In its Future Risks Reports, the insurer estimates that a major global disruption event occurs on average every 1.4 years.

These figures reflect a measurable acceleration in the frequency and intensity of shocks. For decades, the supply chain was designed to minimize costs, speed, and asset turnover. It must now be designed to absorb shocks, protect revenue, and preserve customer trust. This is a paradigm shift.

Supply chain performance is no longer measured only by service level or inventory level. It is also assessed through resilience indicators adapted to our value chains: time to recover - the time needed to return to a nominal performance level after a shock - and time to survive - the length of time during which the company can continue operating in degraded mode.

These KPIs, integrated into executive committee dashboards, reflect a turning point: resilience becomes a managed asset, not a concept.

This transformation runs across every link in the supply chain, from procurement to customer service. The most advanced companies have institutionalized early-detection systems, business continuity plans with formalized crisis scenarios, and governance cells that can be activated within hours.

Back to contents

Procurement, on the front line, secures critical supplies through multi-sourcing, long-term contracting, or vertical integration.
Data and AI play a key role in this evolution, but they do not eliminate the human dimension. Customer service is often the first visible arena of the white-collar revolution, with the automation of simple interactions.

As during the Industrial Revolution, the issue is not to replace people, but to redefine their added value: arbitration, relationships, and management of uncertainty.

In organizations where Generations X, Y, Z, and soon Alpha coexist, the convergence of digital skills and business expectations becomes a factor of stability.

Finally, the trend toward regionalized production networks confirms this shift. Reshoring and geographic diversification are progressing despite real obstacles: costs, availability of skills, environmental requirements, and social acceptability.

This movement also fits into a logic of circularity. Beyond recycling, the aim is to preserve the value of products through repair, reconditioning, or refurbishment. Resilience and sustainability are no longer opposed; they converge.

Tomorrow's value chain will not simply be the fastest, nor exclusively the least expensive. It will need to strike a more demanding balance between performance and robustness.

The question is no longer whether the next disruption will occur, but whether our organizations are ready to absorb it without compromising their strategic trajectory. Where do you stand?





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