INFOGRAPHIC

The Visibility-Execution Gap: Why Visibility Doesn't Guarantee Supply Assurance

Knowing where goods are doesn't mean you can respond to what's actually happening.

Logistics visibility has improved dramatically over the past decade. Tracking tools now show shipment location, status, and estimated arrival with impressive accuracy. Yet many supply chain leaders are discovering a troubling paradox: **knowing where goods are doesn't automatically improve supply outcomes.**

The real problem isn't a lack of shipment visibility. It's a lack of alignment between logistics, supply, and decision execution. Disruptions surface too late to respond. Procurement, logistics, planning, and production teams operate from different data and different timelines. Commitments are made before the execution reality is known. By the time a delay is flagged, the window to act has already closed, undermining supply assurance.

This gap between seeing a problem and acting on it is quietly costing companies with global supply chains millions.

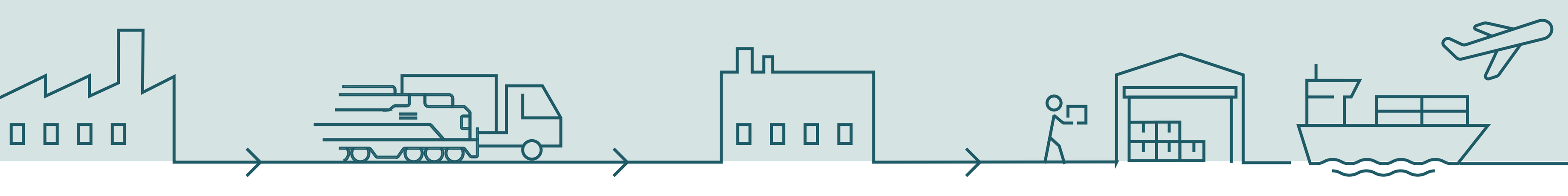
THE IMPACT ON YOUR BUSINESS

Cost
Expediting costs

Speed
Production delays

Supply
Excess inventory

Service
Missed commitments



Four structural gaps that complicate supply assurance

CHALLENGE 1

Visibility without business context

A container delayed at port is tracked and reported. A shipment stuck in customs is flagged in the system. A supplier running behind schedule is visible in the data. But without connecting these events to orders, inventory levels, and production commitments, visibility becomes noise. A two-day delay might be irrelevant for one component but catastrophic for another.

Without business context, supply teams chase every alert instead of focusing on the ones that matter. Procurement teams escalate work that doesn't need escalation. Time and resources are consumed on false positives, eroding supply assurance and effective exception management.

As part of Gartner® 2023 Risk and Resilience Survey, leaders reported their alignment with their boards, C-suites, enterprise and business partners on proactive mitigation:

- 74% felt aligned on the number of resources dedicated to proactive risk mitigation
- 68% felt aligned on what risks the proactive mitigation should prioritize

However,
82%
of these same leaders agreed their organizations' proactive mitigations were **spent on the wrong risks**, and up to **44% of proactive and reactive mitigation was dedicated to noncritical assets.**[1]

KEY INSIGHT

Without business context, visibility is just noise. The disruption might be a non-event or a catastrophe, but your system needs to know the difference.

CHALLENGE 2

Decisions lock in before execution reality emerges

Supply commitments and production schedules are locked in weeks in advance, based on supplier assumptions and historical logistics timelines. But the actual pace of manufacturing, real carrier performance, and supplier delays don't emerge until goods are already in motion. By the time a disruption becomes visible, decisions have already been committed. The production line has already been scheduled. Inventory has already been allocated. The decision window has closed.

For most organizations, the average decision window before commitment is three to five weeks. By the time execution reality surfaces, the time to act has passed. The only options left are reactive (and expensive): emergency expediting, line stoppages, or customer delays.

3–5
WEEKS
decision window

KEY INSIGHT

A production line stoppage can be extremely costly. Early logistics visibility could prevent that. Instead, most organizations see the disruption when it's too late to act.

CHALLENGE 3

Fragmented execution ownership across functions

Procurement operates in one system with one timeline. Logistics operates in a different system with a different timeline. Planning and production operate in yet another. Each function has valuable data about what's happening across the supply network, but that data doesn't flow across boundaries. Each team maintains its own view of truth.

Manual escalations across functions consume a considerable amount of time. When something goes wrong, teams spend hours assembling the picture from multiple sources when they should be spending that time solving the problem. Coordination is manual, and critical time is lost.

Data should flow across functions and boundaries

KEY INSIGHT

Fragmented data isn't just inefficient, it's also a decision blocker. Teams can't act on information they don't have access to or can't quickly consolidate.

Inventory that is managed on assumptions instead of facts

Inventory exists in multiple places simultaneously: at suppliers, in transit, at contract manufacturers, at distribution centers, and at company sites. Most organizations don't have a unified view of what's where. Safety stock targets and allocation decisions are made based on estimates and historical patterns rather than real-time visibility into what's actually available.

The result is either excess inventory driving up carrying costs and obsolescence risk, or inventory that can't be found when needed, forcing expediting and backorders. Research suggests that 20–30% of inventory is held as excess safety stock due to poor visibility.[2] This ties up capital and creates waste.

44%
of companies increased inventory levels as part of their supply chain resilience strategy, straining working capital.[2]

KEY INSIGHT

Excess inventory that ties up capital and increases obsolescence risk is often just a symptom of poor visibility, a symptom that is entirely preventable with the right tools.

Four gaps, one root cause

Visibility without context. Decisions that lock in too early. Data that stays trapped inside functions. Inventory that's managed on guesswork. Each of these gaps looks like a separate problem, but they share the same root cause: information that isn't connected to the decisions that depend on it. Closing that gap is what turns visibility into supply assurance.

Want to learn more about how leading organizations connect supplier, logistics, and planning data to close these gaps and improve supply assurance? **Download our ebook, Supply and Logistics Collaboration: Turning Visibility into Supply Assurance.**

Explore the **guide**

[1] Gartner; Connect Visibility, Resilience and Agility to Staff to Realize ROI on Risk Management; Suzie Petrusic, Heather Wheatley; March 2025
GARTNER is a trademark of Gartner, Inc. and/or its affiliates.

[2] PwC; Working Capital Study 25/26: Managing in an Uncertain & Unreliable World; 2025

e2open
WISETECH GLOBAL GROUP