# You've Heard About COVID-19's Impact on Your Supply Chain. But Where Are the Actionable Insights?



## Key Takeaways

- TraceLink and IDC conducted a pharma industry survey to gauge what companies are doing to build agility into their supply chains as the COVID-19 pandemic continues.
- Only 10% of pharma supply chain companies are actively pursuing patient-centric transformation strategies.
- The Agile Supply Chain Credo contains insightful operating principles to guide business leaders as they re-architect supply chains following pandemic-related disruptions.

**By Roddy Martin | September 14, 2020**



The war stories just get worse as **the pandemic and its impact on supply chain priorities and performance** continue to evolve. Reading about it is wearing thin because at this stage we have heard most of the different variations, themes, stories, and recommendations!

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Now for the next chapter, sans the political one of a looming election. Expect to start hearing more about the testing and vaccine supply chain, a critical next step for the global human population. The availability of tried, tested and safe vaccines is only one aspect of the looming challenge going forward to hopefully relegate COVID-19 to our rearview mirror. Finding and building vaccines is largely a science and regulatory-driven process.

However, distributing complex tests and vaccines to almost every human being on our planet—from the center of global metropolitan megacities like Paris, London, Rome, Mexico, and New York, to the clinics in the mountains of Rwanda and villages in the Amazon forest— is no trivial undertaking and challenge. It must be done while complying with all special requirements such as cold chain, patient safety, unique serialized tracking and tracing of products from manufacturers to patient, and while ensuring product integrity and safety and avoiding diversion and counterfeiting. Hopefully, we take forward a better understanding of the supply chain gaps we encountered in the pandemic scenario.

We are now approaching the ultimate global supply chain challenge without having the benefit of learning from “history” and just doing it the way we did it “last time."

To add complexity, most companies and their leadership teams are currently in strategic planning cycles to nail down 2021 budget priorities and place their large strategic bets for the next two years. For example, choosing a Digital Network Platform to support a company’s connection to the total end-to-end healthcare system. In this process, their overarching goals are probably to revamp, reenergize, rebuild, and reposition supply chain strategy and end-to-end supply chain capabilities as the fundamental strategy and operating model across the business. But they lack detailed insights!

Wow, what a massive task we are confronted with! Taking a step back and a deep breath, let us ask ourselves whether we are armed with any relevant, insightful, and accurate benchmarks, best practices, risk guidelines to support and validate

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our directions and decisions at all levels. Yes, there are statistics, historical data, and learnings from natural disasters and accidents that disrupted global supply chains, but “not much” to support the scale of what we are still going through as we speak. To Paul McKenzie’s recent point in a TraceLink-sponsored panel: As the COO of CSL Behring, he spoke about the fact that in the management of the pandemic, businesses have had to continuously and globally learn, adapt and flex all their muscles in sync just to stay ahead. The point being that this time around they are not just dealing with a static disruption incident like volcano ash that can be managed and “will just go away” in time.

Given this scenario and the need to support companies as they plan and build their agile supply chains for the future, TraceLink looked through the industry to find accurate and relevant benchmarks, best practices, and learnings that would help companies define and structure their healthcare supply chain strategies and prioritized decisions going forward. Hopefully, armed with the context and insights of what we have all learned from the pandemic.

The reality is that we could not find what we wanted! As a result, we formed a partnership with the IDC Supply Chain Insights Team, TraceLink subject matter experts, and external healthcare industry partners, to design and execute a custom-designed benchmarking survey to uncover important points and priorities that could be valuably used in strategic planning, budgeting, and improvement processes going forward.

The timing was perfect given the completion of the technology and vendor-agnostic Agile Supply Chain Credo blueprint for healthcare transformation that TraceLink initiated, sponsored, and built with industry input. The Agile Supply Chain Credo contains insightful operating principles to guide business and supply chain leaders as they frame up their remaining priorities and agile supply chain plans for at least the next few years. Additionally, we have done several recorded video podcasts with global supply chain thought leaders where we discussed the

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implications of building an agile, digital, end-to-end healthcare supply chain using The Agile Supply Chain Credo as a blueprint.

TraceLink and IDC jointly designed a benchmarking survey off the premise that we needed data, insights, and priorities as to what companies are doing to build the agility that was missing in dealing with the pandemic-related disruptions. We wanted to see how the industry was responding so that we could share with our partners and the industry. From our research, we had already come to the conclusion that the agile combination of people, process, technology and leadership elements is now the critical integrative capability that companies must build to be responsively, reliably, and compliantly capable of managing the impact of planned and unplanned disruptions, and to prevent them from impacting desired patient outcomes and on-time, in-full patient fulfillment. These priorities clearly came out of the survey and will be presented in the webinars and white paper we are producing.

For example; who would have thought that only 10% of companies are actively pursuing patient-centric transformation strategies! But why, and what are they prioritizing instead? Be part of the benchmarking readout, the white paper and the webinar to find out!

**Register for IDC and TraceLink's webinar now.**

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*Return to: The Patient-Driven Supply Network*

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