



5 WAYS FOR SOURCING & PROCUREMENT MANAGERS TO IMPROVE SUPPLY CHAIN VISIBILITY

Here's how organizations can leverage a no-code software platform and increase supply chain resilience while gaining greater visibility into supplier information and performance.

As evidenced both during the early stages of the global pandemic and in the months that followed, some organizations quickly fell behind the curve when business dynamics changed. When organizations needed to be flexible and make changes rapidly, supply chain visibility came to the forefront as a critical must-have.

“In an attempt to keep pace, supply chain leaders either looked to IT to help customize their existing core systems, bought expensive point software solutions, or scrambled to manage workflows in DIY tools like spreadsheets and e-mail,” says Kayla Mackay, Solutions Marketing Manager at Quickbase. “Despite all these efforts, supply chain leaders are still constrained by unresponsive, inflexible systems and a lack of visibility into supplier data.”

These stark realities put extreme pressures on sourcing and procurement managers who are relied upon to ensure that the right goods and materials are in the right place at the right time, budgeted for appropriately, and replenished as needed. As the connective tissue that binds manufacturers, distributors, and retailers to their valued suppliers, procurement is facing a litany of unprecedented challenges right now.

“In light of all of the current disruption, procurement professionals have to react quickly,” says Mackay, who sees disparate, siloed technology systems as one of the biggest obstacles to achieving this goal. “When your data is stuck in core enterprise resource planning (ERP) or legacy software systems, effectively managing supplier relationships is a major challenge.”

This white paper explores the critical nature of supply chain visibility for all organizations in today’s business environment, explains why companies need unified technology tools that help them quickly adjust to unanticipated change, and shows how Quickbase is helping firms increase [supply chain resilience](#) through greater visibility into supplier information and performance.

WHY IS SUPPLY CHAIN VISIBILITY IMPORTANT?

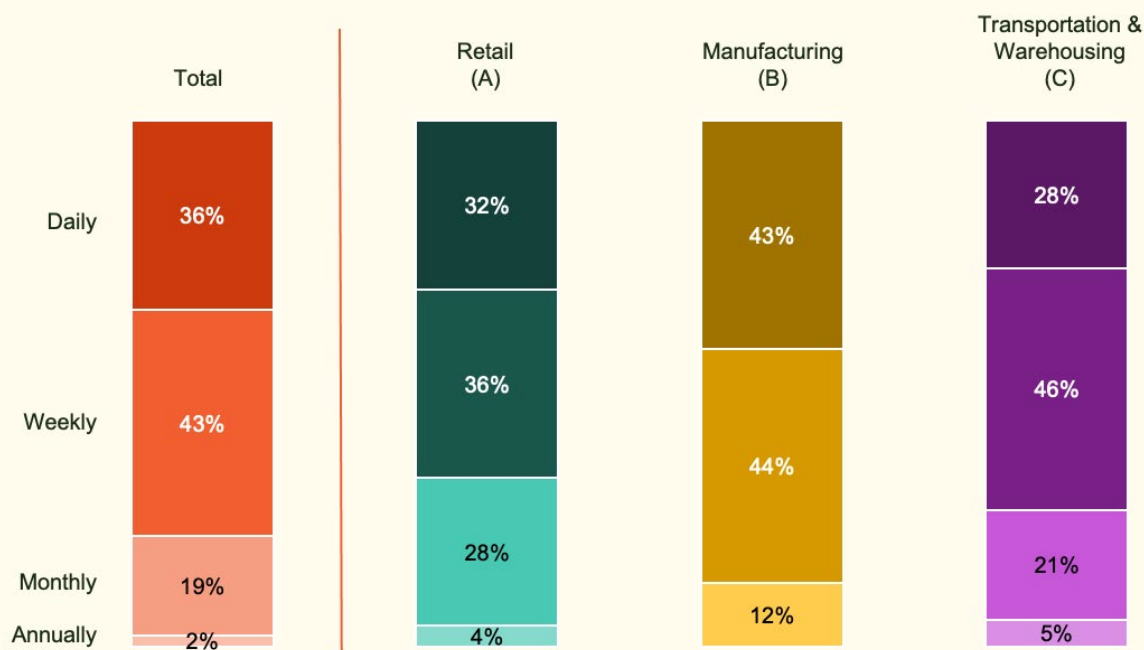
From port congestion to transportation rate hikes to continued supply chain disruptions, navigating the current procurement landscape can be compared to operating in a minefield. Add truck driver shortages, overall labor challenges, and the relentless global pandemic to the equation, and suddenly the “old ways” of managing procurement and attaining high levels of **supply chain visibility** don’t work so well anymore.

This wakeup call has been heard across much of the business world, where McKinsey & Co., says that 93% of procurement and supply chain leaders are carefully examining their supply chains and looking for ways to increase the resilience of those critical networks. In their quest to build higher levels of supply chain visibility for the long-term, companies face steep challenges like:

Adjusting quickly to unanticipated change. According to Quickbase’s recent **Supply Chain Resiliency Survey**, companies are reacting to unexpected changes in the supply chain on a weekly (43%) and daily (36%) basis. Lacking an efficient, flexible approach for managing these constant changes, sourcing and procurement professionals are looking for new ways to help them react faster to unanticipated changes



Frequency Team/Organization has to React to Unanticipated Change Across Company’s Supply Chain
 (% Among All Respondents)



Suppliers that can't deliver a product or material on time.

Supply chain bottlenecks increased in 2020 and continued right into 2021, with no signs of relief in sight. These bottlenecks are causing manufacturing slowdowns and even shutdowns. The global semiconductor chip shortage, for instance, is creating great pains for buyers in the automotive and electronic sectors (among others). Without adequate visibility into their suppliers' activity and performance, procurement teams can't effectively plan for these disruptions or pivot to handle them when they arise.

Suppliers delivering low quality materials or goods.

Anytime an inferior product hits the incoming loading dock at a manufacturer, distributor, or retailer location, it can negatively impact the quality of the final product. The manufacturer that's procuring raw materials to use during production and working with suppliers that provide sub-par materials will see direct, negative impacts to the quality of the finished product.

Inability to take fast, corrective action. Low quality raw materials can also negatively impact customer satisfaction and an organization's bottom line. In the retail industry, for instance, customers expect high quality products that, when made with inferior materials, won't be able to stand out to those expectations. "Tracking the quality of the procured materials and/or goods is critical," says Mackay. "It not only helps quickly identify potential defects, but also allows retailers to take corrective action."

Outside forces that threaten the supply chain. Import tariffs, port strikes, port congestion, and container shortages are just a handful of the external factors that procurement professionals are dealing with right now, and that they will surely be facing in the future. These and other disruptions can have a significant impact on the supply chain and can be difficult to manage in the absence of sufficient supply chain visibility.

WHITE PAPER



“Often times, procurement teams lack visibility into supplier costs, don’t know when they’re spending too much, or don’t know the signs that it’s time to switch suppliers (e.g., when a vendor is severely impacted by port congestion issues),” says Mackay.

The ongoing tariff issues can be especially impactful, she adds, and require high levels of visibility into all of the costs associated with specific suppliers—and the vendors they’re procuring from—for good procurement decision-making. “It’s about gaining visibility into all the costs associated with an order,” she explains, “and being able to pivot quickly in order to lower costs and reduce risk.”

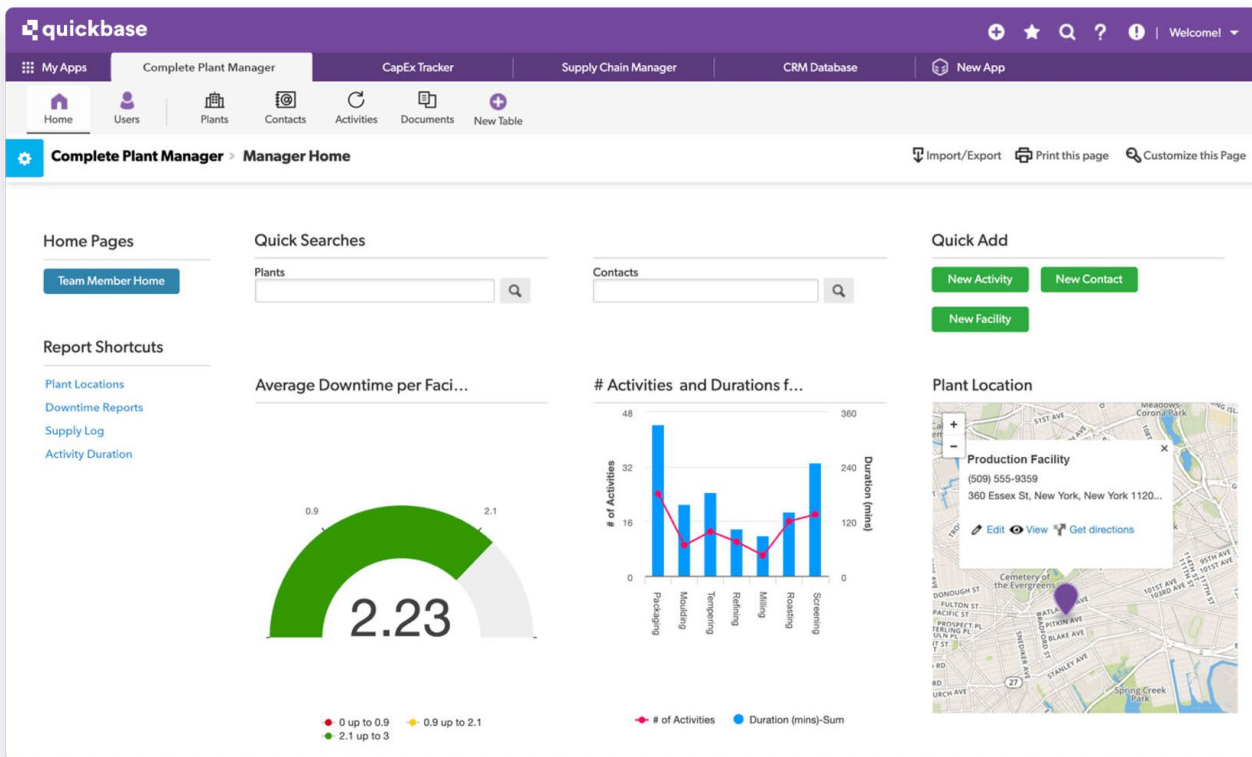
Siloed systems that don’t share data with one another.

Poor understanding of ERP data or workflows managed outside of core systems is a key concern for any company that’s striving for high levels of visibility. Because legacy systems can’t be easily **integrated** with other applications, sourcing managers wind up with a lot of manual data manipulation (e.g., moving data from one system to the other, or shuttling it around on Excel spreadsheets). This is inefficient, error prone, and time consuming—not to mention the direct, negative impact that manual processes have on supply chain visibility. For example, when data is stored in “siloed” locations, analyzing and aggregating that vital information—and then gaining real-time insight into supplier information, performance, and procurement costs—is nearly impossible. And when disruption occurs, manual processes can also get in the way of the procurement team being able to quickly react and reduce risk within the supply chain.

INCREASING RESILIENCY, IMPROVING AGILITY

To address these and other challenges, Quickbase helps organizations increase supply chain resiliency and gain greater visibility into supplier information and performance. Here are five ways sourcing and procurement managers can use the [no-code](#) platform to improve supply chain visibility:

- 1 Customizable dashboards.** The Quickbase platform provides the ability to create customizable dashboards that offer transparency into supplier performance, capacity, compliance, contact information, and more. This helps sourcing teams reduce risk by gaining quick insight into supplier activity. Once in place, Quickbase dashboards help companies identify which suppliers they can quickly pivot to work with in the face of disruption.
- 2 Easy access to supplier data.** By making supplier contact information, contracts, performance metrics, and assessments easily accessible, Quickbase helps minimize supplier risk by tracking multi-tiered supplier information, costs, and disruption. “We give teams greater visibility into supplier data and the materials that are being sourced,” says Mackay, “in order to increase flexibility, reduce risk, and help teams be able to react better and faster to the next disruption.”



5 WAYS FOR SOURCING & PROCUREMENT MANAGERS TO IMPROVE SUPPLY CHAIN VISIBILITY

- 3 A single source of truth.** To provide a single source of truth for managing supplier information, Quickbase eliminates information silos and extracts vendor data out of ERPs and legacy systems. It then allows users to aggregate that data in a single, highly customized application that sourcing and procurement teams can use to assess supplier performance, make informed decisions, collaborate more effectively, and streamline communication with vendors. For example, procurement officers can extract vendor data from their ERPs and use it to collaborate with suppliers. They can also use that data to track various supplier metrics, build custom scorecards to assess performance, track overall quality of material, identify defects, and develop supplier corrective action requests.
- 4 Customizable workflows.** As a no-code application development platform, Quickbase allows companies to easily build out workflows as they want and need them, and then rapidly adjust as change or disruption occurs. For example, if a company operating in a heavily regulated industry like pharmaceuticals is asked to track new compliance data across its supplier base, Quickbase can easily be adjusted to reflect that new requirement. "IT doesn't have to dedicate time or resources for that new process to be [implemented](#) in the platform," says Mackay.
- 5 Short implementation times.** Quickbase also offers extremely short implementation times that, in some cases, can be as short as just a few days. When the global pandemic emerged in March of 2020, for instance, one medical device manufacturer was struggling to gain visibility over all of its supplier information. "It didn't really 'know what it didn't know' because the company was tracking everything in spreadsheets," Mackay explains. "When COVID hit, the manufacturer really wasn't sure which suppliers would or wouldn't be able to deliver," she continues. Using Quickbase, the company built out a customized application that allowed it to track all of its supplier information, contract data, and contact information. With that new visibility, the manufacturer was able to quickly reach out to its suppliers for the most current delivery updates.

The medical device manufacturer also used Quickbase to gain visibility into its procurement budget and better understand how much it was spending across its entire supplier base. "Using Quickbase's supplier scorecards, the manufacturer gained greater visibility into how well Supplier A is delivering versus Supplier B," Mackay adds. "That way, when it comes time to renew a contract, the manufacturer can use that previous performance data to improve its negotiating position."

THE NEXT DISRUPTION: LURKING AROUND THE CORNER

Disruption is inevitable, and that's why improving resiliency, agility, and reaction time has become table stakes for companies across all industries.

With 81% of respondents to Quickbase's recent study citing "additional costs" as a top business impact resulting from an inefficient supply chain, now is the time to reassess current visibility approaches and adopt a modern platform that's specifically designed to overcome this and other challenges.

"Not being able to deliver to your customers translates into lost revenues, but even a few inefficient processes within the supply chain can add up to significant costs," says Mackay. "Organizations that focus now on adapting their technology information and workflows—versus just piling on more individual solutions and manual processes—will gain the **operational agility** they need to react faster and adapt more quickly to their customers' ever-changing needs."

WHITE PAPER





quickbase

ABOUT QUICKBASE

Quickbase provides a cloud-based platform that empowers problem solvers to quickly turn ideas for better ways to work into apps that make their organizations more efficient. For nearly 20 years, people of all technical backgrounds have been using the Quickbase platform to create solutions that streamline processes, capture real-time data, and improve company operations, all while working in concert with existing IT systems.

Based in Cambridge, MA and a former division of Intuit, Quickbase has a 6,000+ customer universe of app-enabled businesses that spans all industries and company sizes and includes half of the Fortune 100.

To learn more, visit: www.quickbase.com
