



The top 5 technology priorities for supply chain efficiency and inventory management

Introduction:

The volatility of modern supply chains

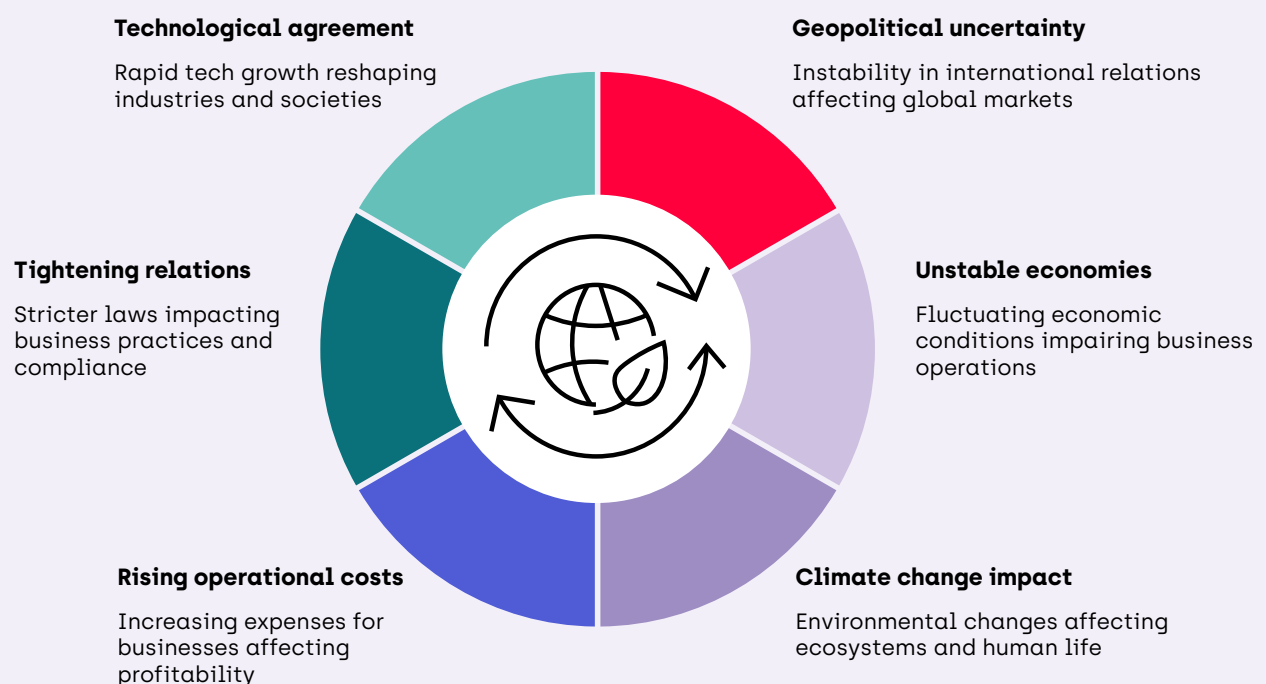
Businesses are no strangers to supply chain volatility, but volatility has become the norm in recent years. Geopolitical uncertainty, unstable economies, and the growing impact of climate change have combined to disrupt the flow of goods and apply extra stress to already strained supply chains.

At the same time, rising operational costs, tightening regulations, and the overwhelming pace of technological advancement have further narrowed the industry's notoriously thin margins.

For leaders, these pressures are compounded by the need to respond faster to customer demands and manage ever-more complex logistics operations – all while continuing to keep costs under control.

It's a perfect storm of challenges, but one that no business has to face alone.

Key challenges



Collaboration and the right technology come into play

Modern digital tools provide end-to-end visibility, real-time data insights, and automated workflows that empower businesses to take control of their supply chains.

Through technology, businesses can transform disruption into opportunity.

Whether it's improving operational efficiency or streamlining processes, modern digital tools provide end-to-end visibility, real-time data insights, and automated workflows that empower companies to take control of their supply chains.

Solutions ranging from AI and automation to integrated Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) platforms can mitigate volatility, allowing businesses to drive efficiency, resilience, and growth.

This guide outlines some of the key priorities many businesses must confront and practical steps for integrating modern digital solutions, including how to:

- Make smarter use of data
- Improve supplier and partner collaboration
- Better manage critical assets

It demonstrates how people and technology working together can create supply chains that are more efficient, more resilient, more adaptable, and primed for long-term success.



Priority 1:

Escaping the trap of legacy technology and outdated processes



Many operations still rely on outdated systems and manual processes that are rife with inefficiencies, create data silos, and delay decision-making. Without real-time visibility, effective inventory management is compromised, logistics cannot be properly optimised, and seamless customer experiences are almost impossible to provide.

To break free from these limitations, businesses must take practical steps toward modernising their operations - not by overhauling everything at once, but by targeting the key areas where inefficiencies impact profitability the most.

Over the next pages are **four key challenges** directly affecting margins and stunting growth.



Challenge 1: Suboptimal inventory and warehouse operations

Poor stock visibility, inefficient picking methods, and manual processes in markets that are increasingly adopting automation lead to wasted time, costly errors and lost revenue. Without real-time oversight, companies risk overstocking, stockouts, and slow fulfilment, impacting both cash flow and customer satisfaction.

The solution:



1. Improve stock visibility

Use automated tracking and real-time inventory insights to prevent stockouts and overstocking.



2. Enhance forecasting

Leverage data analytics to predict demand shifts, ensuring stock levels match actual sales trends.



3. Streamline picking and storage

Optimise warehouse layouts and picking routes with AI-driven guidance and barcode scanning.



4. Reduce manual processes

Automate repetitive tasks such as inventory reconciliation and order fulfilment to minimise errors.

The outcome: A faster, more responsive supply chain with lower costs, fewer errors and improved fulfilment rates.

Ultimately, addressing inventory and supply chain challenges is not solely about technology; it's about creating a culture of continuous improvement.

Challenge 2: Logistical inefficiencies

Logistics can become a cost drain, especially during times of political and economic turmoil. That's even more apparent when route planning, carrier management and order tracking are handled manually or across disconnected systems. When missed deliveries, rising transport costs and inefficient scheduling combine, they can stifle service levels and, ultimately, profitability.

The solution:



1. Optimise routes

Use real-time traffic, cost and demand data to select the most efficient shipping routes as and when challenges arise.



2. Integrate carrier management

Track multiple carriers in a unified system to compare rates, negotiate better contracts and meet SLAs.



3. Automate shipping and delivery coordination

Reduce errors by automating order scheduling, label generation and shipment tracking.

The outcome: Lower transport costs, faster deliveries, more reliable service and better supply chain agility.

More and more businesses are implementing centralised systems

Using a centralised system, all stakeholders, from logistics teams to external carriers, operate from the same platform.

With processes simplified and miscommunication rates slashed, information flows seamlessly across the supply chain, resulting in a more agile operation able to adjust to unforeseen changes rapidly.



Introducing evo-supply



evo-supply

Evo-supply from BCN is an evolutionary, fully integrated, and feature-rich business solution powered by Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central.

Offering enhanced automation, reporting, and optimisation tools, evo-supply is a seamless plug-in, enabling even greater control over stock, demand planning, and replenishment strategies.

To find out how evo-supply can power your business, [click here](#).



Challenge 3:

Disconnected sales, inventory and finance, damage customer experiences

Disjointed systems create gaps between sales, stock availability, factory floor and HR. This can lead to delayed invoicing, slow order processing and a fragmented customer experience.

The solution:



1. Unify customer data

Create a single source of truth where sales, finance and warehouse teams access real-time stock levels, order status and customer history.



2. Accelerate order-to-cash cycles

Automate invoice generation, approvals and payments to improve cash flow.



3. Enhance personalisation

Use customer insights to anticipate needs, recommend products and improve service response times.

The outcome: Faster order fulfilment, improved financial accuracy and stronger customer relationships.



Dynamics 365 Business Central for businesses



With a modern ERP like Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central, companies can integrate all of their critical business functions into a single platform.

By eliminating many of the manual processes involved in wholesale management; you can make significant time and cost savings, and scale operations more easily.

Dynamics 365 Business Central can also be integrated into your current tools, further improving efficiency. Your business can access data from multiple sources (ERP, CRM, supply chain management software) to create real-time dashboards, for detailed performance analysis and reporting, tracking KPI performance and identifying buying trends to maintain suitable stock levels.

To find out more about Dynamics 365 Business Central, [click here](#).





People power progress

Technology can be a powerful tool to help maximise your warehouse operations and reduce inefficiencies. But like any tool, it's only as good as the people who use it.

Automating repetitive processes and embracing data-driven decision-making means companies can empower their people to transform the warehouse into a hub of operational excellence.

Inevitably, this leads to faster order fulfilment, improved customer satisfaction and a leaner, more adaptable supply chain. The right technology partner will work with you to not only identify the right solutions but also empower your people to make the most of them.



Priority 2: Safeguarding operational resilience



Costs start to mount when orders can't be processed, delivered, or even accessed due to a security incident or system failure. While the push for greater efficiency tends to focus on streamlining processes, protecting systems against outages, cyber-attacks and data loss is just as critical.

Cyber-attacks haven't gone away

In 2024, the global average cost of a data breach reached £3.72million, reflecting a 10% increase over the previous year.

Protecting your systems against cyber threats and data loss, both from outside actors and the inadvertent actions of your employees, is critical. The same pressures that squeeze profit margins – rising costs, geopolitical instability and tightening regulations – also create vulnerabilities in technology infrastructure.

Cyber-attacks haven't gone away. Indeed, the scale of the problem is massive. In 2024 organisations across the globe faced more than [600 million cyber-attacks](#) every single day.



Meeting fresh demands from larger suppliers and customers

Businesses are increasingly embedded in global supply chains with enterprise-level customers and large suppliers who enforce strict cyber security compliance alongside stringent disaster recovery standards. Failing to meet these expectations can lead to lost contracts, higher insurance costs and reputational damage.

To stay competitive, you need to:



Prove security credentials

Meeting stringent cyber security and compliance standards strengthens your position in contract negotiations.



Build trust with partners

Secure operations strengthen long-term relationships with high-value customers and suppliers.



Stay ahead of regulations

Proactively addressing security measures reduces the risk of penalties and contract breaches.



Protecting your critical assets

Cyber threats - from ransomware to phishing - are an escalating risk, disrupting everything from inventory management to customer order portals. Supply chain attacks have surged by [2600% since 2018](#), making cyber security a critical priority.

Key steps to protect your business include:



Endpoint protection

Keep devices secure with real-time monitoring and regular software updates.



Network monitoring

Detect and respond to suspicious activity before it spreads.



Access controls

Restrict sensitive data to authorised personnel.



Employee training

Reduce human error with phishing awareness and safe data handling.

A multi-layered security approach should align with your ERP and core business systems, ensuring seamless protection across operations.



Minimising downtime and data loss

Even well-run operations face unexpected disruptions – whether that's from hardware failures or cyber-attacks. A robust disaster recovery (DR) plan ensures fast recovery and business continuity.

Steps your tech partner should implement to avoid disruption include:



Regular backups

Store frequent, verified backups offsite or in the cloud for quick data recovery.



Failover systems

Use redundant IT infrastructure to switch seamlessly if your primary system goes offline.



Business continuity planning

Develop contingency workflows, alternative communication methods and staffing strategies to keep operations running.

Cyber-attack and disaster recovery must be integrated into your overall technology strategy to safeguard your supply chain against threats. Strengthening resilience minimises disruption but it also goes further; it reassures partners and customers who expect high security and compliance standards.

Want to see how secure your systems are? [Book a free Cyber Security Assessment from BCN.](#)



Priority 3:

Transforming trapped data into actionable insights



In an industry awash with data, businesses that are able to turn raw information into actionable insights gain a clear competitive edge.

The data challenge in wholesale

Companies capture data at every stage of the supply chain, yet many struggle to extract real value due to:

Slow reporting

By the time reports are compiled, conditions have changed, rendering most insights obsolete.

Siloed systems

Valuable data is scattered across departments, making it impossible to consolidate and analyse.

Inaccessible or inaccurate information

Legacy processes introduce errors or leave insights buried in spreadsheets.

Without timely, unified data, leadership teams risk making critical decisions - on stock levels, pricing, or forecasting – without a full picture.

Leveraging modern business intelligence tools

Adopting real-time analytics platforms like Microsoft Power BI enables you to:



Get instant insights

Data updates automatically, giving decision-makers live visibility into performance.



Drill deeper into trends

Interactive dashboards break down sales, margins and customer behaviours.



Predict future demand

AI-driven analytics help spot market shifts before they happen.

Cutwel: Using Power BI to get from data to decisions

Cutwel, the UK's largest distributor of cutting tools, struggled with outdated systems that slowed operations and made data inaccessible. Partnering with BCN, the firm implemented Microsoft Power BI, unlocking real-time insights, streamlining operations, and improving customer service.

The transformation led to faster decision-making, increased efficiency, and a more personalised customer experience. With a modernised data strategy, Cutwel is now positioned to ensure long-term scalability by exploring the integration of Large Language Models (LLMs) into the Power BI system for augmented AI capability.

To learn more about Cutwel's story, [click here](#).



...a data-driven approach ensures agility, competitiveness, and fierce resilience against the challenges of the modern age.



Optimised intelligence and forecasting

One of the biggest advantages of data-driven intelligence is more accurate inventory management. Using historical sales, seasonal trends and external factors, you can reduce stockouts and overstocking by adjusting purchasing to actual demand. You can also improve your cash flow by minimising excess inventory and optimising purchasing cycles.

Harnessing the power of your data can help you to build better relationships too. Your suppliers can be kept up to date with real-time insight into inventory and orders. Meanwhile, data can give you new insight into your customers' needs, helping you to understand them better than ever before and even anticipate their decisions. A single source of truth that integrates sales, marketing and customer data can help you to identify purchasing patterns and track profitability, so that you can make informed decisions based on real-time insights.

Building a data-driven culture

The right tools can be transformative. But maximising the impact of data goes beyond technology; it requires a cultural shift. It's about asking the right questions to focus on the insights that matter most and breaking down silos by sharing data across departments.

Ultimately however, unlocking intelligence amounts to more than just better decision-making - it's about future-proofing the whole business. From faster inventory turnover to higher margins, a data-driven approach ensures agility, competitiveness, and fierce resilience against the challenges of the modern age. It also takes the guesswork out of your operations, giving you the insight you need to make decisions with confidence.

Priority 4:

Embracing AI disruption

31% of high-performing businesses now use AI in supply chain management – [Gartner](#)

Artificial intelligence is now an active force that's reshaping industry as we know it, including wholesale, supply and distribution. With features ranging from dynamic pricing and demand forecasting to automated customer service and real-time analytics, AI delivers tangible efficiency gains and stronger margins.

Yet, many businesses remain hesitant, concerned about complexity, cultural resistance, security, job losses and resource constraints. However, with AI becoming more accessible and business-friendly, the real risk lies in delaying adoption while competitors forge ahead.

Where AI delivers immediate value

AI tools like Microsoft Copilot provide a practical starting point, helping companies enhance sales, forecasting, customer service and efficiency without overhauling entire systems.

1. Smarter sales and pricing

- AI-generated proposals and emails free sales teams from admin work.
- Dynamic pricing helps maintain margins while staying competitive.

2. Intelligent inventory management

- Predictive demand analytics prevent stockouts and overstocking.
- Automated stock alerts ensure optimal inventory availability.

3. AI-driven customer engagement

- Instant AI responses reduce customer service bottlenecks.
- Personalised product recommendations drive upsells and repeat business.

4. Streamlined operations

- Document summarisation speeds up contract and compliance reviews.
- AI-powered workflow optimisation eliminates inefficiencies.

BCN's AI specialists: Helping businesses adopt AI with confidence

AI adoption doesn't have to mean complex, large-scale transformations. BCN's AI specialists help companies identify high-impact AI opportunities, like automated forecasting, sales intelligence and customer analytics – then embed them seamlessly into existing operations.

The goal isn't just to introduce AI; it's to create a clear, strategic roadmap that delivers quick wins while building and advancing long-term AI capabilities.

The road ahead: "When" not "If"

The question for businesses isn't whether AI will transform their industry – but how quickly their competitors will adopt it.

Those who act now will develop higher agility, efficiency and responsiveness to market demands. Those who hesitate risk being outpaced. AI is no longer a novelty luxury - it's fast becoming a necessity for maintaining market share.

Accelerate your AI journey with BCN's AI Kickstarters

BCN's AI Kickstarters are short, tailored projects designed to make AI adoption fast, practical and effective.

Key benefits

Rapid deployment – AI integration without long implementation times.

Custom solutions – Address specific business challenges with tailored AI applications.

Expert guidance – Leverage BCN's AI expertise for a seamless transition.

Scalable foundations – Build an AI-ready infrastructure that grows with your business.

Want to explore how AI can transform your operations? [Click here to learn more](#)

Priority 5:

Transform through technology

The wholesale, supply and distribution industry is evolving at pace, and technology is key to staying viable. By leveraging modern digital tools, from ERP platforms and data analytics to cyber security and AI-driven automation, businesses can drive efficiency, resilience, and profitability.

The immediate benefits of digital transformation

1. End-to-end supply chain visibility

Real-time data ensures better forecasting, faster decision-making, and improved operational control.

2. Greater efficiency

AI tools like Microsoft Copilot and data platforms such as Power BI reduce manual workloads and errors, enabling smarter operations.

3. Stronger security

Proactive cyber security and disaster recovery strategies minimise downtime, protect critical systems and meet compliance demands.

4. Future-proofing your business

Investing in scalable, forward-thinking solutions opens doors to new revenue streams and competitive advantages.

Let's power your progress, together

The future belongs to those businesses willing to embrace innovation and strategic partnerships. Overhauling your supply chain doesn't have to be overwhelming – with the right plan and a trusted tech partner, success couldn't be simpler.



Break free from legacy technology

Outdated systems restrict growth, drain resources and expose businesses to security risks. While IT upgrades may seem like a significant investment, remaining locked into legacy tech often costs more in lost productivity, inefficiencies and missed opportunities.

The immediate benefits of digital transformation:



1. Modernising infrastructure reduces waste, lowers operating costs and improves cash flow.



2. Real-time insights drive faster, smarter business decisions.



3. Secure, scalable systems position wholesalers for long-term success.

BCN will help you build a clear business case for IT investment, mapping out the ROI and demonstrating the cost of inaction.

Technology + People = Transformation

Technology alone doesn't drive success, people do. The best digital solutions align with employee workflows, goals and expertise. That's why BCN works alongside our clients, ensuring every solution is tailored to real business needs.

Technology alone isn't the answer. **Progress is powered by people.**

Let's start your transformation

Whether you're looking to modernise your tech stack, implement AI-driven tools, or strengthen cyber security, BCN's industry experts will help you design the right strategy.

Phone: 0345 095 7000

Email: sales@bcn.co.uk

**Transform your supply chain.
Increase efficiency.
Secure your future with BCN.**

Get in touch

bcn.co.uk