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Rewiring The Supply Chain

How Technology is Reshaping Packaging and Manufacturing in 2025

Tim Hartnell

Introduction

Meet your experts

In a world still reeling from the aftershocks of a global pandemic, geopolitical instability, and economic uncertainty, the packaging and manufacturing industries are undergoing a digital transformation. From AI-powered forecasting to digital twins and real-time tracking, supply chains are being reengineered to be smarter, faster, and more resilient.

This in-depth report draws on insights from industry leaders Timi Hyppänen, Tuomo Wall, and Tuomas Mustonen, and is backed by the latest research from McKinsey, Gartner, MIT Sloan, and others.

It explores how technology is not just helping companies survive disruption – but thrive in it.

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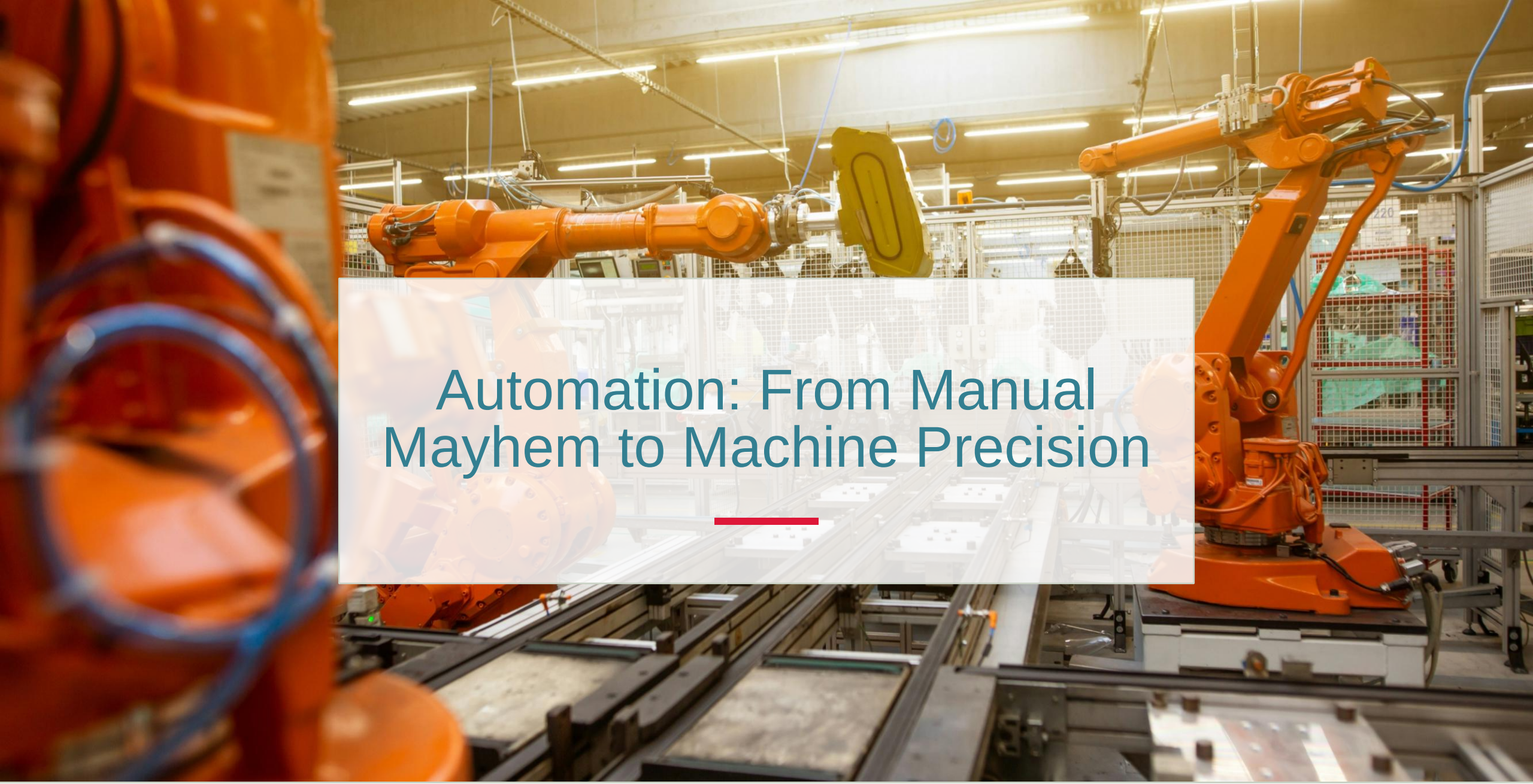


Automation: From Manual Mayhem to Machine Precision

> Urgent and significant decisions are needed – freezing is not an option

TUOMO WALL

Automation

From Manual Mayhem to Machine Precision

Tuomo Wall, a veteran supply chain strategist, describes the past few years as a period of relentless volatility. “The bullwhip effect has been in full force for several years in a row,” he says. “When conditions change dramatically, the situation becomes much more complex for a human brain to handle. Urgent and significant decisions are needed – freezing is not an option.”

Automation has become a cornerstone of resilience. While Wall notes that tools like ERP systems and Excel remain in use, they are now deployed in more dynamic, automated ways. “These tools had to be used in a new way to support automated decision-making,” he explains.

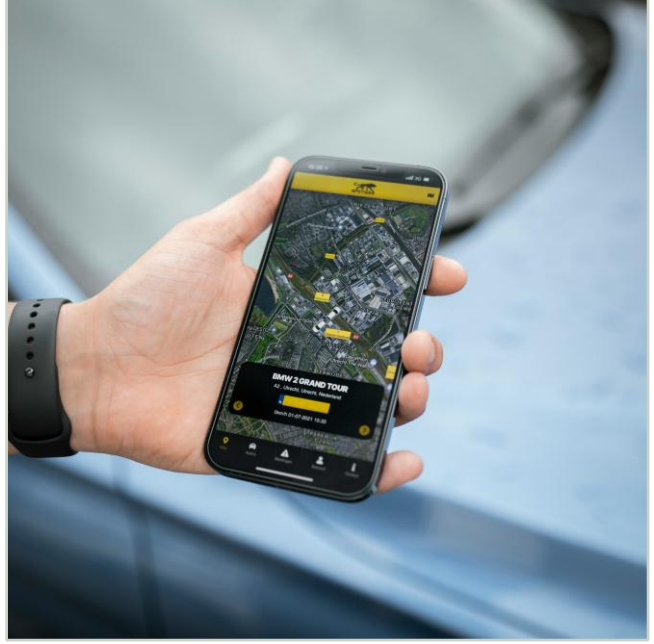
Timi Hyppänen’s organisation has gone further, deploying robotic process automation (RPA) and intelligent automation to streamline operations. “This has led to more efficient and agile operations,” he says. “We’ve automated repetitive tasks, freeing up human capacity for strategic decision-making.”

According to McKinsey, companies that have embraced automation and AI in their supply chains have seen up to 23% greater profitability. These technologies are not just improving efficiency – they’re redefining what’s possible.

Yet, as Tuomas Mustonen of Stora Enso reminds us, the path to automation is not without pitfalls. Drawing from his experience leading logistics and customer service transformation, he shares a cautionary tale:

"In our rush to implement new systems, we focused on capturing tacit information without considering the human or customer experience. The result was fragmented processes, overly complex structures, and ultimately, a decline in customer satisfaction. It's a powerful lesson in how not to let technology lead without purpose."

Seeing the Unseen: Real-Time Tracking and Digital Twins



> Improved track and trace capabilities have enhanced our ability to monitor shipments and inventory in real-time

TIMI HYPPÄNEN

Seeing the Unseen

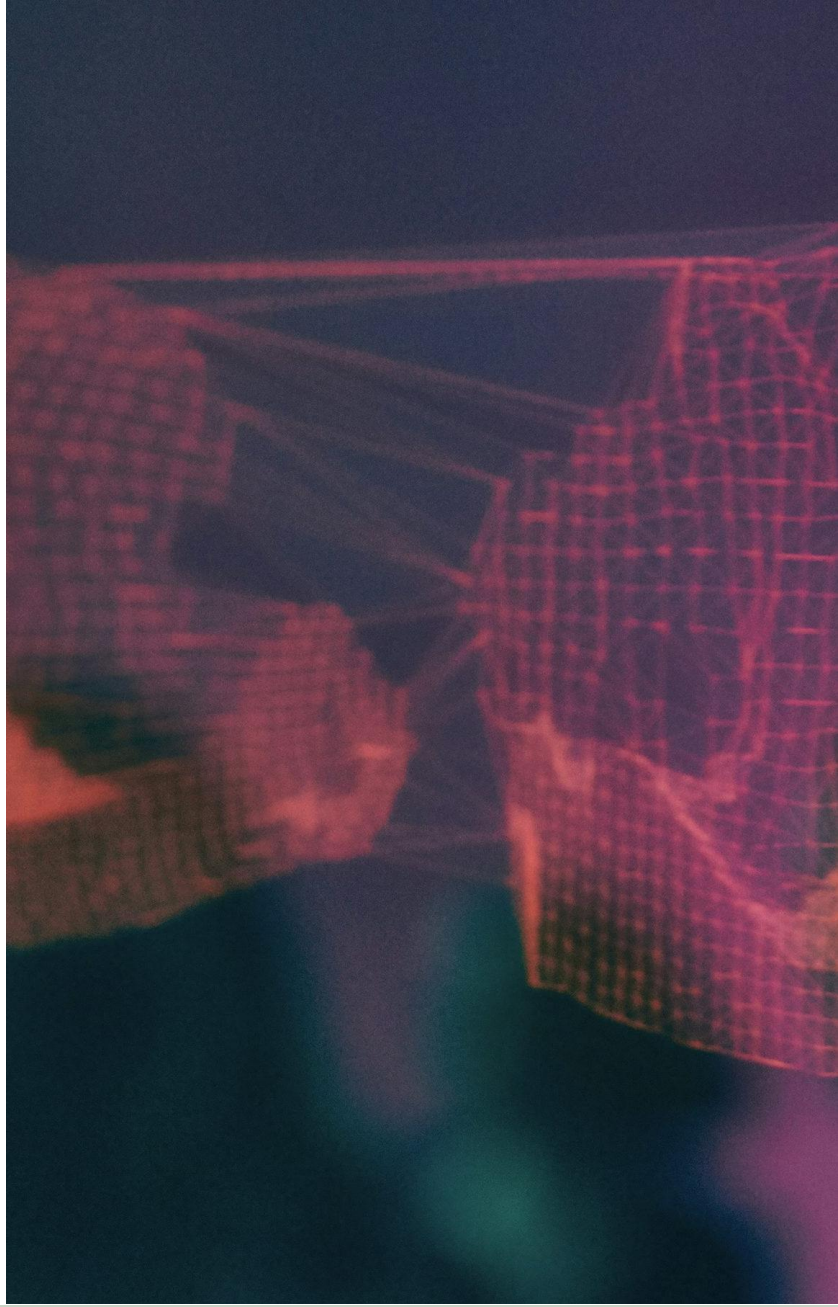
Real-Time Tracking and Digital Twins

Visibility is the new currency of supply chain success. Hyppänen highlights the importance of real-time tracking: “Improved track and trace capabilities have enhanced our ability to monitor shipments and inventory in real-time. This has resulted in better visibility and control.”

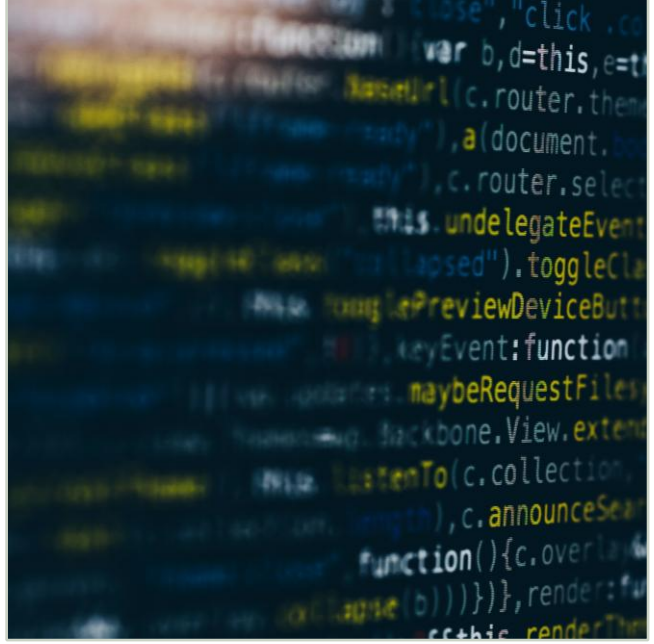
Digital twins – virtual replicas of physical supply chain systems – are also gaining traction. “We can test different strategies in a virtual environment before implementing them in the real world,” Hyppänen explains.

Capgemini reports that digital twins are now being used to simulate entire supply networks, allowing companies to identify risks early and adapt quickly. Gartner adds that when integrated with control towers, digital twins enable continuous intelligence and predictive analytics, transforming reactive supply chains into proactive ecosystems.

Wall, however, offers a grounded perspective. “The tools themselves were still largely the same,” he says, referring to Excel and Power BI. “But they had to be used in a new way to support automated decision-making.”



Forecasting the Future: Data-Driven Decision Making



> The potential types of risks are so different and unpredictable by nature

TUOMO WALL

Forecasting the Future

Data-Driven Decision Making

In an unpredictable world, data is the compass guiding supply chain strategy. Wall points to the Sales and Operations Planning (S&OP) process as a critical tool. “By forecasting demand for the upcoming 18 months, we try to predict future needs,” he says. “It’s a mixture of automated analytics and human input.”

Hyppänen’s team uses statistical forecasting, scenario modelling, and advanced analytics to anticipate disruptions. “We monitor geopolitical events, regulatory changes, and other risk factors,” he says.

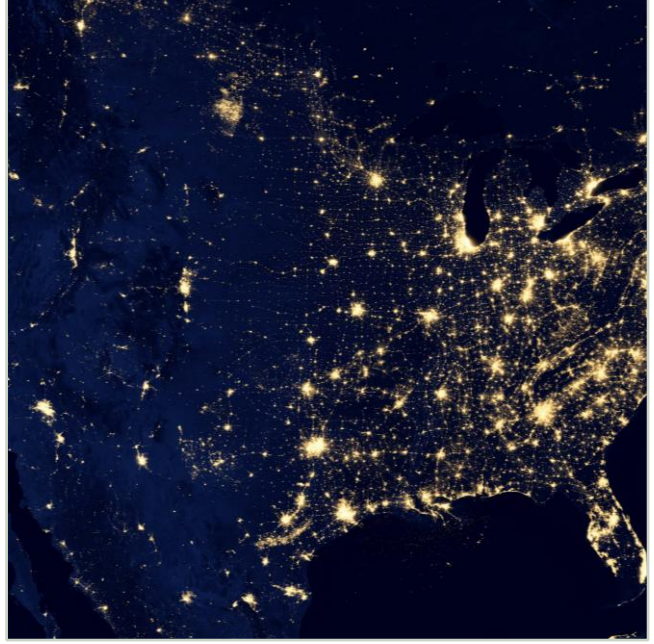
MIT Sloan researchers argue that predictive analytics, when combined with big data and AI, can transform supply chain design and management. However, they caution that many firms still struggle with the cost and complexity of implementation.

Wall remains sceptical about risk detection tools. “The potential types of risks are so different and unpredictable by nature,” he says, citing events like the COVID-19 pandemic, the Suez Canal blockage, and the war in Ukraine. “Frankly speaking, I find it quite difficult to believe such tools could even exist.”

Building on this, Mustonen highlights how data can unlock new levels of operational insight and responsiveness. His team’s experience shows how even basic customer interaction data can be transformed into strategic intelligence:

"With new systems, we began capturing data that had previously existed only in the minds of our customer service teams. By categorizing and timestamping customer interactions, we gained insights into contact preferences, response times, and satisfaction trends. This enabled leadership to steer performance more effectively and respond to customer needs with greater agility."

Trade Turbulence: Navigating the Tariff Maze



We've optimised logistics using AI – route optimisation, load planning, and real-time tracking have helped us minimise costs.

TIMI HYPPÄNEN

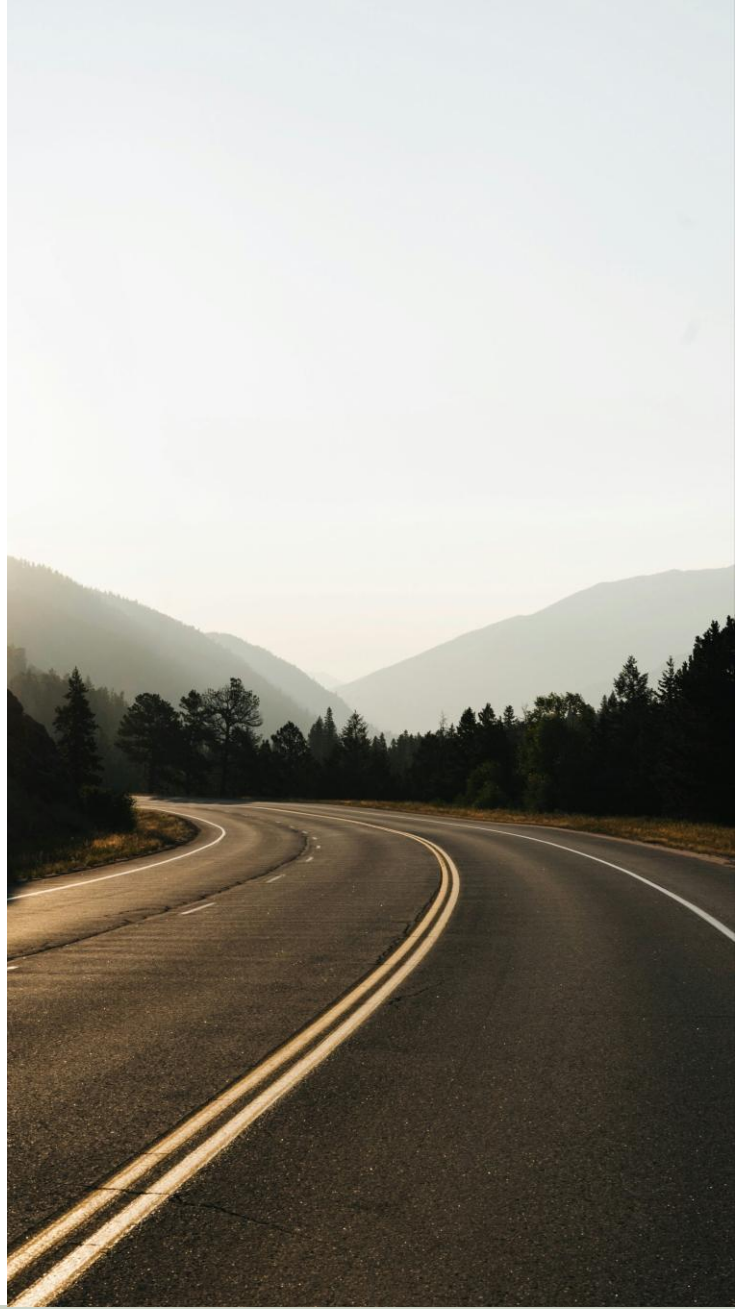
Trade Turbulence

Navigating the Tariff Maze

The resurgence of U.S. tariffs on materials and goods has added another layer of complexity. While Wall has not been directly involved during this period, he acknowledges the challenges. “Finding new raw material suppliers or moving production to less impacted countries is difficult, especially in a short time frame.”

Hyppänen’s organisation has responded with agility. “Our technology platforms enable us to quickly identify and evaluate alternate suppliers,” he says. “We’ve also optimised logistics using AI – route optimisation, load planning, and real-time tracking have helped us minimise costs.”

According to Reuters, the 2024 – 2025 tariff hikes have disrupted global supply chains, particularly in the packaging and consumer goods sectors. The Wall Street Journal reports that companies are increasingly turning to regionalisation and nearshoring to reduce exposure to trade volatility.



The Human Factor: Leadership and Talent in the Digital Age

> Even a few extra clicks, repeated daily, can become a major barrier to adoption

TUOMAS MUSTONEN

The Human Factor

Leadership and Talent in the Digital Age

As technology reshapes operations, it also demands a new kind of leadership. “There is a growing need for leaders who are fluent in digital technologies,” says Hyppänen. “We’re addressing this through targeted training and development programs.”

Wall adds, “There are two distinct types of supply chain environments – one focused on automation development, and another just trying to keep the wheels turning. Depending on your environment, the leadership skills you need will differ.”

Both leaders stress the importance of cross-functional collaboration, change management, and upskilling. Wall also introduces the concept of “management by master data” – ensuring that business data is clean and structured enough to support high-level automation. “Many individual processes have been automated,” he says, “but automating complete business processes is still in its infancy.”

According to Accenture, 43% of working hours in supply chain roles can be transformed by generative AI, creating a massive opportunity for talent to shift toward more strategic, value-adding roles. The World Economic Forum adds that digital transformation and workforce reskilling are now top priorities for industry leaders navigating global disruption.

Mustonen adds a practical lens to this leadership evolution, emphasizing the need for both digital literacy and user-centric system design. His perspective reflects the growing demand for leaders who can bridge the gap between data, technology, and human behaviour:

"Today’s supply chain leaders must be data-literate and either use analytics tools themselves or work closely with skilled teams. While AI may not yet surpass human analysis, it excels at handling repetitive tasks and surfacing insights. To succeed, we must design intuitive systems and nurture talent excited by technology—because even a few extra clicks, repeated daily, can become a major barrier to adoption."

Culture Shift: From Siloed Thinking to Integrated Strategy

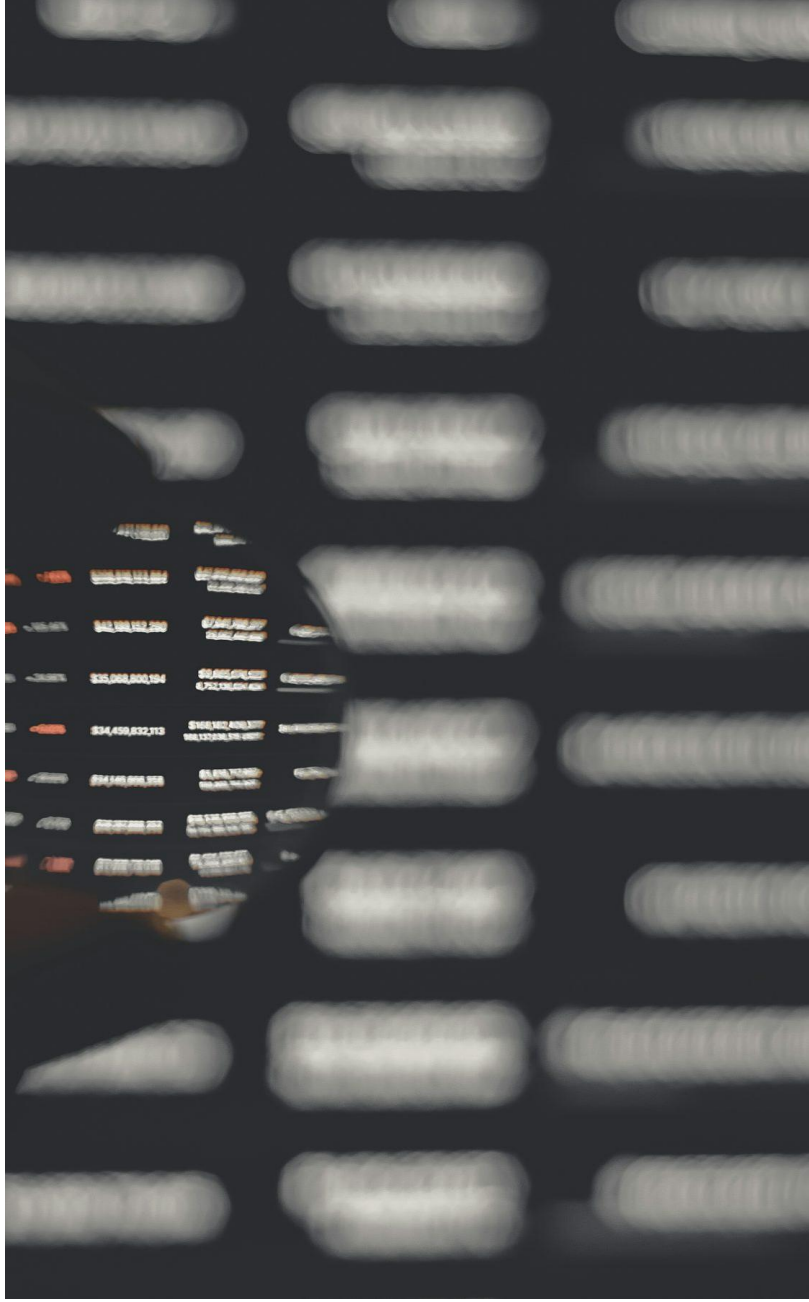
Culture Shift

From Siloed Thinking to Integrated Strategy

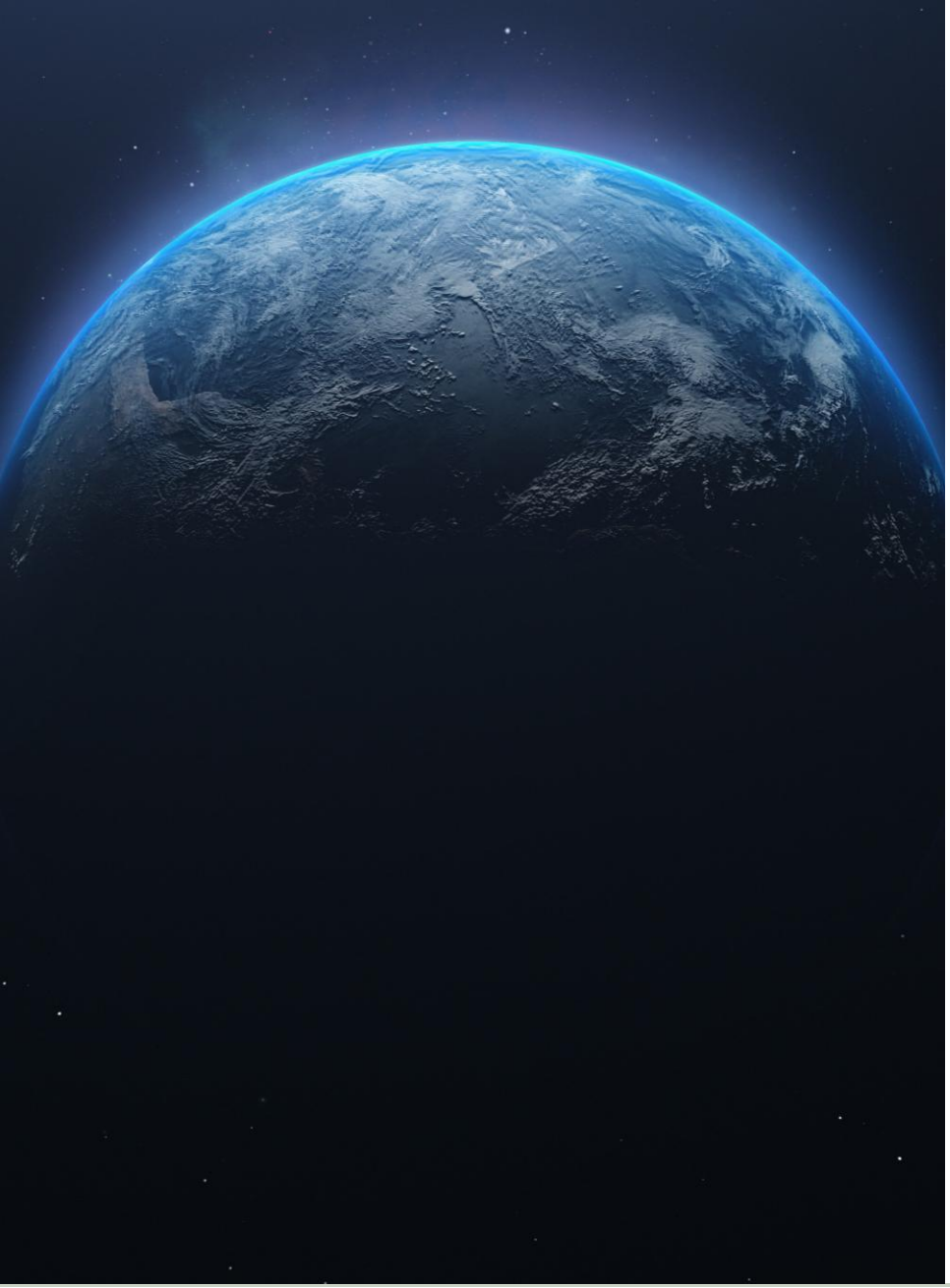
One of the most profound changes in supply chain transformation is cultural. “Effective implementation of new technologies requires strong collaboration across different functions,” says Hyppänen. “We are fostering a culture of cross-functional teamwork and communication to ensure seamless integration of new tools.”

Wall agrees, noting that leadership must evolve to support this shift. “You need leaders who understand not just operations, but also data, systems, and the strategic implications of technology,” he says.

This cultural evolution is echoed in a recent McKinsey report, which found that companies with digitally fluent leadership teams are 2.5 times more likely to outperform their peers in supply chain resilience and innovation.



Conclusion: Building the Supply Chain of Tomorrow



Conclusion

The packaging and manufacturing sectors are at a pivotal moment. As global challenges persist, the ability to adapt quickly and intelligently has become a competitive advantage.

Technology is not a silver bullet – but when combined with strategic leadership and a culture of continuous learning, it offers a powerful path forward.

As Hyppänen puts it, “We’re not just reacting to change – we’re building the capability to thrive in it.”

To find out more about how we can help assist you with finding a leader to put sustainable packaging high on your priority list, please reach out to Tim.Hartnell@BerwickPartners.co.uk

Thank you for reading.