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Call to arms: Coronavirus presents an opportunity to get supply chain risk management right

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There is not a media outlet in the world that isn't carrying a story about the new coronavirus and its effects on peoples' daily lives. A primary focus of a number of reports and articles is the effect the coronavirus is having on economic conditions^[1] and, more specifically, supply chain management. The effects are indeed dramatic. Supply chains, from electronics to toys to automobiles to pharmaceuticals, are experiencing dramatic decreases in supply and demand^[2] as factories go offline and consumers pare back purchases.

The outlook is bleak for business owners with extensive supply chains weaving through China. Most reports predict a turndown of the global economy that may lead to a global recession, while governments and societies grapple with how to best tackle what has become a global pandemic.

If we consider the World Health Organization report^[3] released following its trip to China, however, then there is light at the end of the tunnel. Through severe measures that most countries wouldn't be able to impose, China was able to stem the expansion of the outbreak and gather a large and useful data set. According to the report, the infection rates, symptoms and death rates are all manageable and do not represent an existential threat to human society. Instead, the coronavirus and its spread present an opportunity to learn, prepare and be ready to weather unexpected and unpredictable crises that arise in the future.

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