

# Real-Time Data & Visibility

The Hidden Drivers of Competitive Advantage in Modern Logistics

By Sam Rouse, Director at MachShip

## The Strategic Role of Real-time Data in Logistics

### Real-Time Data and Visibility: The Competitive Edge That's Often Overlooked

Every organisation knows data and visibility improve decision-making. However, in logistics and supply chain, real-time data often ends up in the 'important, but not urgent' basket. Overlooking it can mean missed opportunities for efficiency, profitability and competitive advantage.

In 2025, having instant, accurate insights into your operations doesn't just optimise freight, it impacts profitability, market share and even talent retention.

As global supply chains tighten, customer expectations are rising. Organisations that don't make visibility a priority risk falling behind on cost efficiency, operational resilience and service excellence. This shift has already led to increased technology investment, with 85% of operations and supply chain leaders saying they've either increased their tech budget in the past year or plan to do so over the next (year).

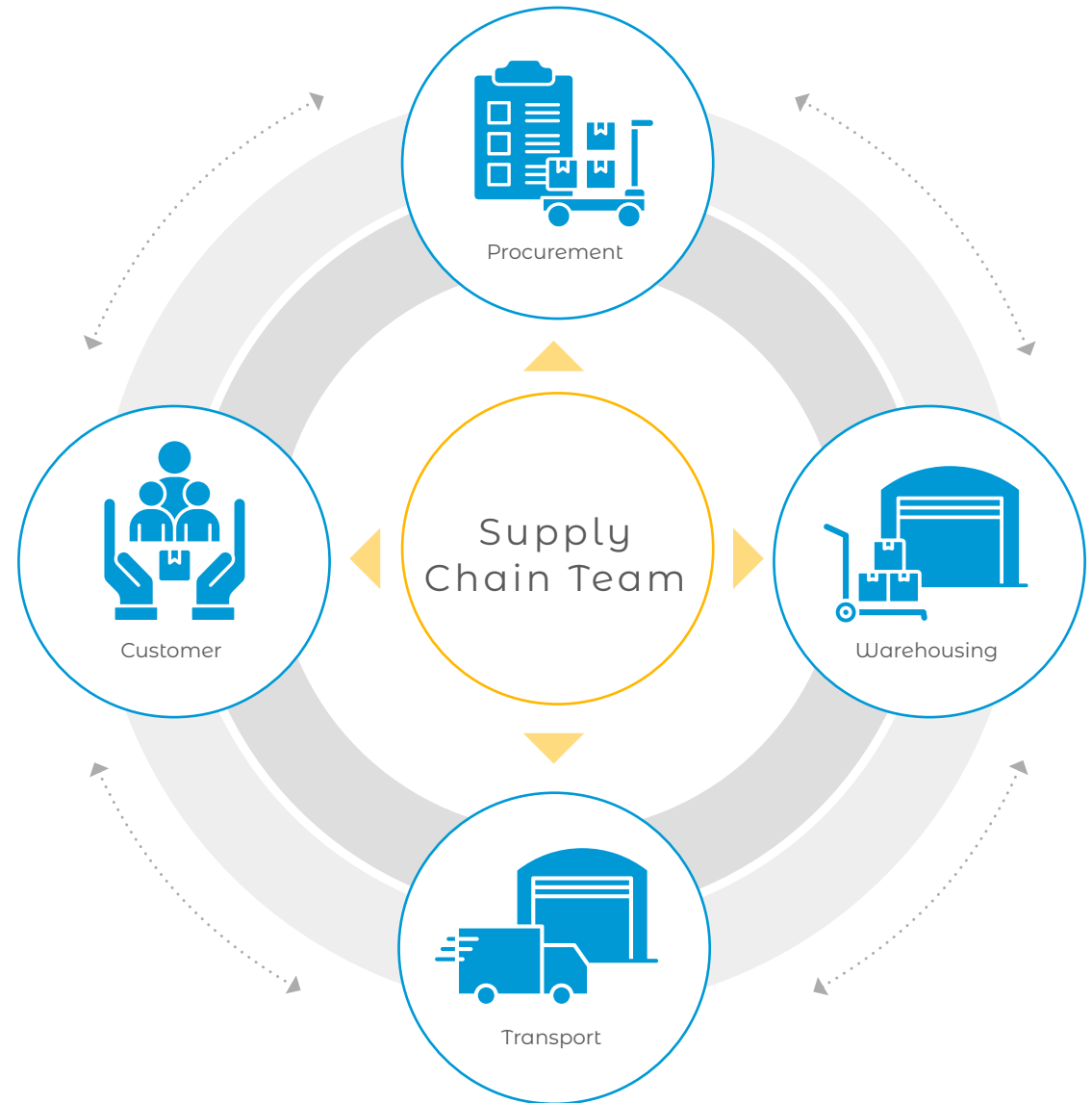


# The Supply Chain's Seat at the Table

Supply chain teams are no longer just a back-office function; they're key drivers of business performance. With visibility across procurement, warehousing, transport and delivery, they have the ability to shape decisions that impact efficiency, profitability and customer experience.

Despite this, supply chain engagement at the senior level isn't always consistent. During periods of severe disruption, such as pandemic-driven shortages and shipping crises, supply chain leaders had a direct voice in boardroom discussions. But as those immediate crises have eased, there's a risk that supply chain strategy becomes less of a management priority.

The reality is that supply chain risks and opportunities never disappear, they evolve. Businesses that keep logistics and supply chain front and centre in strategic planning will be better positioned to navigate ongoing challenges, capitalise on efficiencies and drive sustained competitive advantage.



# Industry Perspective



To run a successful supply chain function, you have to get on the front lines. Visibility isn't just about tracking freight, it's about understanding the reality on the ground. The best decisions come from seeing and hearing what's happening firsthand.

— Darren Wedding,  
Chief Supply Chain Officer, Myer

Darren reinforces that true visibility goes beyond dashboards and data points, it requires direct engagement with warehouse teams, frontline staff and customers. Real-time insights mean nothing if they don't translate into informed, practical action.

“Good businesses know how to be strategic and tactical at the same time.”

This ability to balance big-picture planning with real-world execution is what sets industry leaders apart. Businesses that embed real-time visibility into both frontline operations and boardroom strategy will be the ones driving efficiency, profitability and long-term resilience.

# Bridging The Gap

To ensure supply chain remains a strategic priority at the board and senior management level, visibility must be framed as a business enabler, not just an operational function.

Best practice for maintaining influence in decision-making includes:



1

**Providing regular board updates**  
on major supply chain risks, evolving market conditions and the financial impact of disruptions.



2

**Embedding risk analysis into sales and operations planning (S&OP)**  
to align supply chain performance with commercial and financial goals.



3

**Delivering clear, data-driven reports**  
that quantify supply chain performance, highlight opportunities for cost reduction and provide actionable insights for senior leaders.

Supply chain leaders who link real-time visibility insights to profitability, cost reduction, revenue growth and risk mitigation ensure that the value of logistics intelligence is fully recognised at the highest levels of the business. The more visibility is seen as a driver of financial and operational success, the more it becomes a permanent part of strategic decision-making.

# Why Visibility Matters

## Enhancing Resilience and Efficiency

As organisations increase spending on supply chain resilience, visibility becomes the connective tissue ensuring every dollar spent generates a tangible return. Companies can be vulnerable to disruptions because they don't have the right data at the right time. A robust visibility framework delivers:







# Understanding The Visibility Gap

Modern supply chains are intricate and involve multiple stakeholders: suppliers, transport providers, warehouses and more. But many businesses rely on fragmented or legacy systems that prevent them from getting the full picture. Data silos, human error and outdated technologies create 'blind spots' that slow decision-making and add complexity.



## Fragmented Systems

Disconnected software and spreadsheets scatter critical data, making it difficult to get a single source of truth.



## Inefficient Communication and Human Error

Delayed or inaccurate information sharing leads to operational gaps. Even a small mistake, such as a shipping label entered incorrectly, can cause major issues downstream.



## Legacy Technologies

Outdated systems often don't have the capability to deliver real-time insights, limiting agility in a fast-moving environment.

Addressing these gaps starts by identifying exactly what insights you need and working backward from there. Simply collecting every possible piece of information, known as creating 'data lakes', won't solve the problem unless you have clearly defined goals, robust data governance and a solid plan for ensuring data quality and usability.

By focusing on what you want to achieve first, you can build a more targeted, effective approach to supply chain visibility.

# 1. The Power of Real-Time Data in Logistics

## Bridging the Gap Between Visibility and Actionable Insights

Real-time logistics data provides more control, precision and agility than ever. But it's not just about gathering information; it's about turning those insights into fast, informed decisions that reduce costs, elevate customer experiences and safeguard profitability.

The most proactive supply chain managers don't just track freight movements; they combine real-time intelligence with AI and predictive analytics to streamline operations, anticipate potential disruptions and fine-tune performance on the go.

This transforms logistics from a reactive function to a proactive strategy driver.



### Get Ahead of Data Complexity

It's easy to be overwhelmed by the sheer volume and variety of data in a modern supply chain. The key is to prioritise outcomes first.

Do you want to improve delivery reliability, whether measured by Delivered In-Full, On-Time (DIFOT)? Or reduce freight costs?

Start there. Then, figure out which data sets support these goals. Aim for well-organised and accessible data that can feed advanced tools, like demand forecasting AI or cloud-based supply chain management systems.



### Technology Integration

Many organisations still rely on spreadsheets and disconnected legacy systems, making it difficult to get a complete, real-time view of their supply chains.

Advanced Transportation Management Systems (TMS) and Warehouse Management Systems (WMS) are changing that, feeding data into a centralised ERP to create a single source of truth. By eliminating silos, these technologies improve efficiency, reduce manual errors and enable real-time decision-making.

With increasing customer expectations and complex global logistics networks, businesses need solutions that unify inventory, orders and transportation into a single, intelligent ecosystem.

By leveraging AI, automation and real-time supply chain visibility, organisations can balance cost efficiency with responsiveness, ensuring they move commerce forward without disruption.

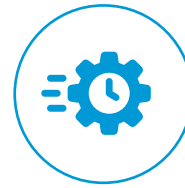
# Case Study: Adventure Operations' Integration Success

Adventure Operations, a leading Australian camping equipment company, faced challenges managing freight costs and carrier visibility across multiple distribution centres. By integrating MachShip's freight management platform with their NetSuite ERP system, they achieved:



#### **Enhanced Data Access:**

Gained critical insights into freight metrics, rate tables and surcharges, enabling informed carrier selection.



#### **Improved Efficiency:**

Streamlined operations by integrating constraints into MachShip, ensuring optimal carrier selection for diverse and complex product shipments.



#### **Significant Time Savings:**

Saved at least 5 minutes per customer order, totalling over 10 hours weekly, by reducing manual processes and errors.

**This integration empowered Adventure Operations to control logistics costs effectively and improve overall operational efficiency.**

## Balancing Cost-Cutting and Business Growth

Many supply chain leaders face the challenge of reducing operational costs while simultaneously scaling their market reach and enhancing customer experiences.

The right technology investments can bridge these sometimes-conflicting objectives. Industry insights show that significant benefits can be achieved from:

#### **AI for demand forecasting:**

More accurate trend prediction, optimised inventory levels and faster market response.

#### **Cloud-based solutions:**

Real-time tracking, automated processes and better internal collaboration.

#### **Predictive analytics:**

Reduced excess stock, minimised shortages and improved financial outcomes.

# Key Questions for Supply Chain Leaders

- 1 ▶ How is your organisation currently using data to make logistics decisions?
- 2 ▶ Where are the blind spots in your supply chain visibility?
- 3 ▶ What would change if you had instant access to critical logistics insights?

## Why The Power of Real-Time Data in Logistics Matters.



### **Proactive decision-making:**

Pre-empt delays or disruptions and course-correct in real time.



### **Better customer outcomes:**

Reduced freight delays and accurate delivery estimates boost satisfaction.



### **Cost control and efficiency:**

Target inefficiencies and reduce waste through centralised visibility.

## 2. Enhancing Visibility Across the Supply Chain

### From Siloed Operations to Seamless Collaboration

Supply chain operations are inherently interconnected, yet many businesses still rely on fragmented tools, outdated spreadsheets and disconnected reporting. This lack of visibility slows decision-making, increases inefficiencies and makes it harder to respond to disruptions in time.

While real-time visibility is crucial, it's only part of the equation. To truly enhance decision-making, organisations need a consolidated environment, a 'single source of truth.' This means centralising all data so that logistics, warehousing, sales and finance teams access the same up-to-date information.

When everyone works from a unified data set, it eliminates discrepancies caused by multiple data sources and ensures decisions are based on consistent facts. Without this centralisation, even the best real-time data can be fragmented and less effective.

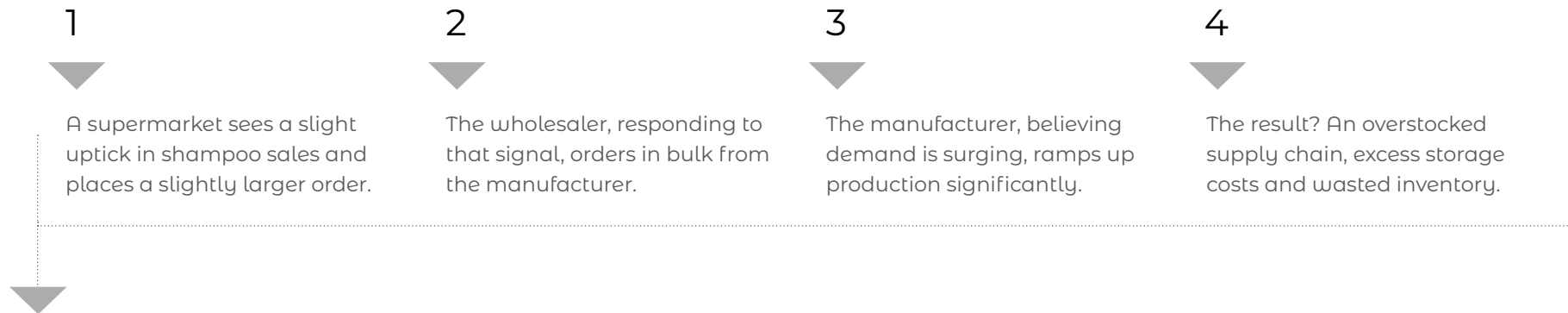
By adopting a single source of truth, businesses can move from siloed operations to seamless collaboration. Teams can make informed decisions faster, optimise freight movements and improve service reliability.

It's not just about operational efficiency; it's about ensuring every function has the right information at the right time to drive smarter, more strategic outcomes.



# Case in Point: The Bullwhip Effect

A small change in customer demand can have ripple effects up the entire supply chain. For example:



**This misalignment happens every day, not just with physical goods, but in freight operations, labour planning and resource allocation.**




## How COVID Panic Buying Triggered the Bullwhip Effect.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, consumer behavior shifted dramatically, leading to widespread panic buying of essential items like toilet paper. This sudden surge in retail demand prompted retailers to place larger orders with distributors, who, in turn, amplified these orders to manufacturers to avoid potential shortages. Manufacturers, interpreting this spike as a sustained increase

in demand, ramped up production accordingly. However, once consumers had stockpiled sufficient supplies, demand plummeted, leaving retailers and suppliers with excess inventory. This sequence of overreactions at each stage of the supply chain exemplifies the bullwhip effect, where minor fluctuations in consumer purchasing lead to progressively larger distortions upstream.

# Solution: Sales & Operations Planning (S&OP) & Real-Time Visibility

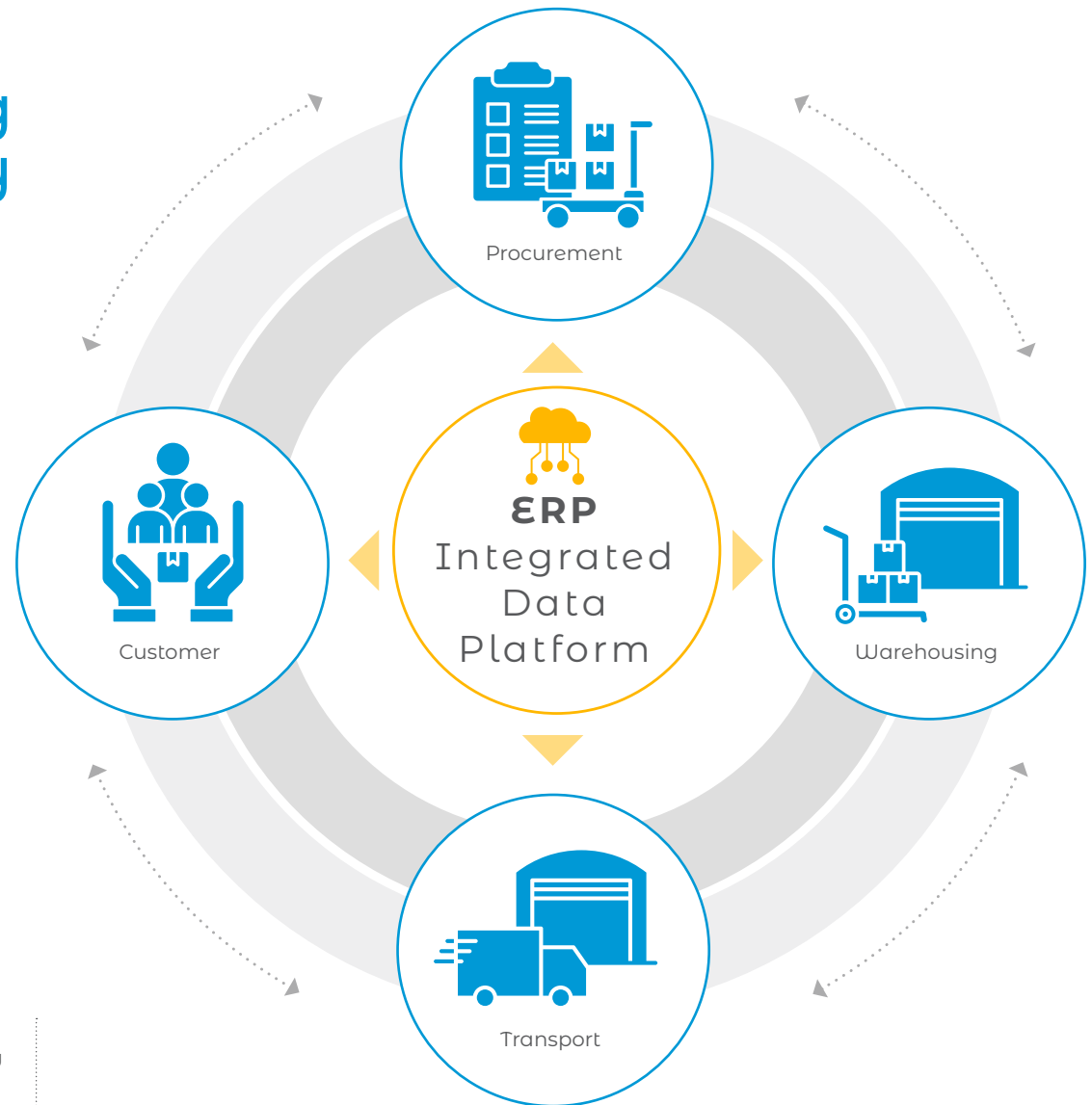
Businesses that integrate sales, finance and supply chain data can mitigate demand fluctuations and improve forecasting accuracy. Key benefits include:

-  **Better demand prediction:**  
Real-time updates from sales and marketing.
-  **Operational efficiency:**  
Fewer inventory headaches, smoother warehouse planning, and optimised freight.
-  **Cross-functional collaboration:**  
Everyone follows the same data narrative, cutting back on miscommunication.

Integrating sales, finance and supply chain data through a mature S&OP process can significantly boost business performance. Companies that achieve high S&OP maturity levels often see:



These benefits highlight the value of refining S&OP processes to achieve operational excellence.



Businesses no longer need to navigate multiple systems separately—everything runs as one seamless, connected network.

# 3. The Future of Data-Driven Logistics Operations

## Three Critical Forces Shaping the Future



### 1. Sustainability and Supply Chain Compliance

With Scope 3 emissions reporting on the horizon, supply chains face serious scrutiny.

Anywhere between 65-95% of an organisation's carbon footprint often comes from its supply chain.

Centralised real-time data is necessary to measure and manage these emissions, and to comply with future regulations.



### 2. AI and Automation in Logistics

AI is evolving from simple prediction to automated decision-making.

Machine learning can select carriers, plan routes and allocate warehouse labour in real time.

AI in supply planning can process structured and unstructured data simultaneously, such as supplier financials, weather forecasts, social media chatter, to pre-empt disruptions before they occur.



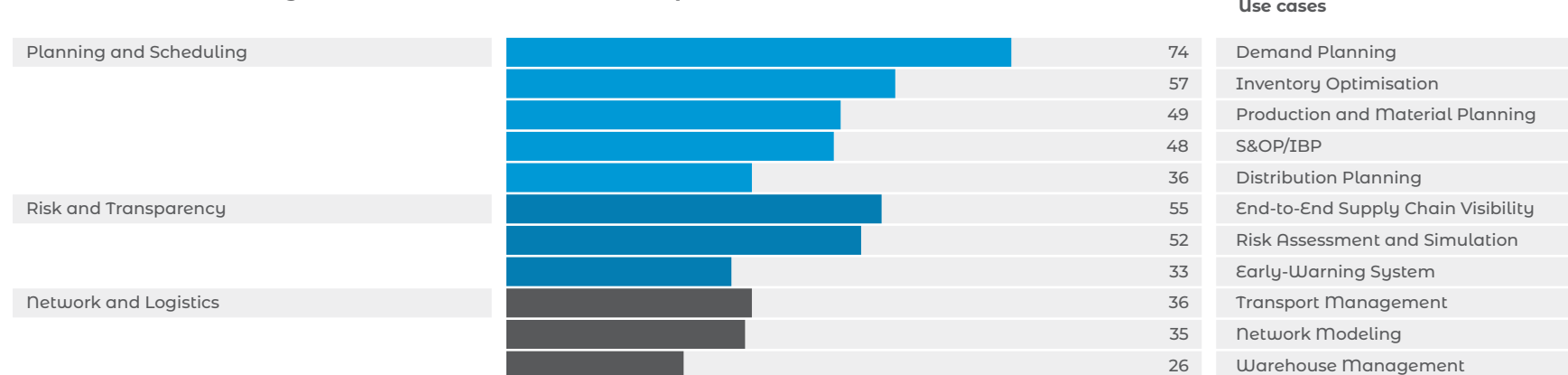
### 3. Geopolitical Risks and Supply Chain Resilience

Global tensions, extreme weather and changing trade policies mean disruptions are here to stay.

Organisations with robust real-time visibility adapt faster, reconfiguring routes or supplier bases with fewer hiccups and lower costs.

## Interest is rising in AI-based supply chain tools, especially for demand planning.

Interest in Advanced Digital and AI-Based Tools, % of Respondents



Source: McKinsey Global Supply Chain Leader Survey, April 26-June 10, 2024

# The Business Case for Real-Time Visibility in 2025

Real-time data is more than a logistics optimiser, it's a catalyst for transformation. By 2025, leaders who tightly integrate visibility into their core decision-making will outpace competitors on cost efficiency, customer satisfaction and resilience.

Organisations don't suffer from a lack of information; they suffer from competing priorities.

In a world where we must balance cost, efficiency and service, visibility cuts through the noise. It pinpoints the exact friction points and reveals what's financially viable to tackle.

Ultimately, the fast-paced world of logistics won't slow down. But organisations that harness real-time visibility to bring structure and predictability to the chaos will emerge stronger, leaner and more competitive.

## Takeaways

Real-time data isn't just about operations; it's about strategic business impact.

Supply chain visibility integrated into management decision-making leads to better cost control, enhanced customer experiences and stronger risk management.

Pressures from sustainability, AI and global volatility are putting visibility under the microscope. Act now to stay ahead.

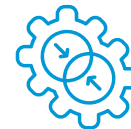


## Next Steps for Businesses



### Audit your real-time data access:

Where are the most pressing gaps?



### Integrate your insights:

Align logistics data with finance, sales and customer service.



### Build your 2025 roadmap:

Decide how visibility ranks among your strategic priorities.

# MachShip

MachShip is a cloud-based freight management platform that simplifies and automates logistics operations for businesses of all sizes. With over 500 carrier integrations and advanced tools for real-time visibility, billing automation and freight invoice reconciliation, MachShip helps logistics teams streamline processes, improve efficiency and reduce costs.

Whether you're a 4PL, wholesaler or e-commerce business, MachShip's platform is built to enhance decision-making, support scalability and improve overall logistics performance. To learn more, visit [MachShip](#).



## About Sam Rowse

Sam Rowse is a Director and Chief Revenue Officer of MachShip, working with the co-founders to expand MachShip's reach and market presence in the logistics industry. With a focus on driving growth and delivering value, Sam leads initiatives that help MachShip's clients optimise their freight

management processes, empowering them to stay competitive in a rapidly evolving market.

With a passion for innovation and customer service, Sam continues to advance MachShip's market leadership, ensuring it remains at the forefront of the logistics industry. His efforts help clients enhance their freight management processes and stay competitive in an ever-evolving market. [Connect with Sam](#).

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