

3 Ways to Navigate Global Trade Complexity

Shifting trade dynamics require new thinking
from operations, finance, and HR leaders.
Here's where to start.



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Almost all companies are grappling with the rapidly shifting dynamics of global trade, requiring them to rethink how they manage their supply chains, model different market scenarios, and even how they plan and develop their workforces.

The main benefits of global trade are well understood: Businesses and consumers gain access to a wider variety of goods at lower prices, stimulating economic growth while fostering competition and innovation. However, this interconnectedness also means that disruptions in one part of the world can impact a company's entire supply chain—and, by extension, its financial stability.

The following analysis explores three main ways that operations, finance, and HR leaders, supported by the latest technologies, can help their companies navigate the increasing complexity and risks of global trade.



1 Global Trade Management: Can We See the Big Picture?

Corporate supply chains are at the center of global trade, serving as the backbone for the movement of raw materials, components, and finished goods across borders.

Today, however, a dizzying array of disruptive forces has put those supply chains—and the company decision-makers who rely on them—under intense strain. New and expanded tariffs can make once-profitable trade routes unsustainable. Geopolitical tensions can restrict access to key suppliers and markets. Labor strikes and shortages can disrupt or even shut down manufacturing and distribution. Changing trade regulations can add new layers to the existing complexity.

Keeping on top of and responding to the rapid shifts in global trade can overwhelm even the largest organizations. No wonder business leaders are scrambling to make their supply chains more automated, adaptable, and aligned with the latest data.

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One of the most vital tools for corporate supply chain and operations professionals is a centralized global trade management application. Such applications, especially those that update regularly, can help automate paperwork required to address compliance with trade regulations. They can also suggest cost-cutting measures—even amid rising tariffs—and help avoid pricey delays and unnecessary risk exposure.

Additionally, global trade management systems can help:

- Centralize regulatory compliance to keep up with changing rules and simplify reporting, documentation, and audits to help reduce the risk of penalties. For example, to simplify compliance checks, suppliers can upload product

catalogs and classification data for their shipments, while brokers can download, update, or view product-related regulations for prompt and accurate customs filings.

- Provide updated information on different countries' tariffs and export controls. Note that these ever-changing measures don't just apply to manufactured goods such as autos, steel, chemicals, and oil. Increasingly, they also apply to the cross-border trade of online banking, telecommunications, streaming, and other digital services.
- Identify tariff exemptions, duty deferrals, and subsidies within bilateral and multilateral trade agreements and other trade incentive programs. For example, programs such as [duty drawback](#), inward processing, bonded warehouses, and free trade zones can reduce or eliminate customs duties on imported materials or exported products under certain conditions. National governments sometimes offer tax breaks and subsidies to companies in specific industries to locate their manufacturing and other operations in their countries.
- Manage payments, obtain letters of credit, and document trade deal financing.
- Provide customers with more accurate estimates of lead times and landed costs—i.e., the total cost of a product from the factory floor to the end consumer. For example, with simulation environments in transportation



and global trade management systems, users can compare landed costs of equivalent goods from two different countries. These comparisons can help the user select the lowest cost and/or fastest option, and they can provide more accurate lead time estimates based on country of origin.

- Classify products and describe the contents of shipments to minimize delays and protect priority cargo. For example, companies can use a unified transportation and global trade management system to monitor the movements of high-value shipped goods such as heavy machinery, luxury handbags, and works of art. Businesses can receive security alerts via sensors on these shipments to help prevent theft.

Deeper analyses of global trade management data, augmented by AI and rendered in configurable dashboards, can also help operations leaders identify key trends; review metrics such as on-time shipments, customs clearance times, and documentation accuracy against business targets; and figure out ways to improve the efficiency of their companies' trade processes.



2 Scenario Modeling: What Are Our Different Options?

The dynamics of global trade are not only complex, but they're also hard to predict. Forecasting approaches based solely on historical data analyses are no longer viable.

Enter scenario modeling, a robust software tool that helps finance and operations teams model multiple “what if?” scenarios. Such tools are particularly useful in modeling different trade and tariff impacts and how organizations should prepare for each one.

Scenario modeling is typically based on Monte Carlo simulations, which model the probability of numerous outcomes occurring given multiple variables. Such modeling “can be hugely valuable when there is a high degree of uncertainty in assumptions,” says Marc Seewald, Oracle vice president of EPM product management.

Monte Carlo simulations are particularly important in the context of global trade, given that regulations, tariffs, labor availability, economic conditions, political regimes, and myriad other factors are constantly changing. These simulations can help procurement teams determine whether—and to what extent—they need to change up their suppliers, shift where they source raw materials and components, and model alternate means of transportation. Such analyses could even indicate a need to relocate manufacturing and other operations (more on that below).

The first steps in scenario modeling involve defining the scope, issues, and time horizon, then defining the most important drivers for your organization, Seewald says. In a global



trade context, these include risk mitigation, cost control, supply chain stability, and timely product delivery. Organizations need to collect and analyze lots of data from internal and external sources, now with the help of AI, to support their key assumptions.

Then it's time to develop different global trade scenarios. Try to keep it relatively simple. For example, Accenture and Oxford Economics recently developed a global trade model that goes to market extremes, mapping out one scenario in which markets are wide open and one in which tariffs and other protectionist measures rule the day, assuming other variables are relatively stable. "The number of scenarios you model will depend upon your organization's data and patterns, but it's important to identify which ones are most important to you," Oracle's Seewald says.

Organizations need to test their global trade scenarios, identifying how they will affect sales, cash flow, costs, capital expenditures, production, inventory levels—and ultimately, profitability. They should also continue to monitor and adjust the plan regularly in response to actual events.



3 Strategic Workforce Planning: Do We Have the Right People?

When modeling global trade scenarios, companies have to consider whether they already employ or will be able to attract a sufficiently skilled workforce to support any proposed operational changes. This is the main goal of strategic workforce planning, a process that corporate finance and operations teams can manage via sophisticated enterprise performance management (EPM) and human capital management (HCM) applications, augmented by AI.

For example, many government-led programs in various countries focus on strategic domestic industries, such as advanced manufacturing, clean energy, and semiconductors. These initiatives often involve government incentives to manufacture locally and to develop local workforces. A key requirement for companies that apply is to commit resources to building and maintaining a skilled workforce through recruiting, onboarding, training, upskilling, and retention.

To participate in these programs, organizations must assess workforce needs and recruit and train the right experts in areas such as engineering, lean manufacturing, construction, coding, robotics, and quality control. This planning must also account for associated salaries and wages, benefits, local labor laws, and union collective bargaining agreements. Finance and operations teams can use EPM-based workforce planning tools to translate long-term corporate strategies into actionable execution plans, supported by the right skills and headcount, to deliver a sufficient return on investment. For example, a company considering whether to build new or use an existing factory in another country can chart personnel costs by job code and education.

Finance and operations teams can use EPM-based workforce planning tools to translate long-term corporate strategies into actionable execution plans, supported by the right skills and headcount, that can deliver a sufficient return on investment. For example, a company considering whether to build or use an existing factory in another country can chart out

personnel costs by job code and education levels, assessing those and other variables against local demographics. It can also analyze the full range of employee costs, going beyond salary to factor in benefits, taxes, and other considerations.

Such EPM tools complement the HCM applications that HR organizations use on the front lines to recruit, onboard, develop, and retain key employees.

In fact, workforce planning tools can help finance and HR teams collaborate more closely. For example, skills data managed within HCM systems can help companies understand the competencies they already have versus those they need in order to identify the gaps. Armed with this insight, teams can connect within planning cycles to determine the best path forward.

And when finance, operations, and HR teams work from one data model that underlies their applications—enhanced by AI-powered insights and recommendations—they can make key decisions with confidence, at the pace the business demands. For example, these tools may reveal a strong correlation between a decline in on-time shipments and the prevalence of unplanned shift changes, prompting a recommended action to readjust schedules to improve performance.



Oracle Fusion Cloud

The following applications can help companies manage their global trade processes and initiatives more efficiently, while improving their decision-making.



Supply Chain

[Oracle Global Trade Management](#), part of the Oracle Fusion Cloud Supply Chain & Manufacturing suite of applications, helps companies take advantage of provisions in trade agreements and trade incentive programs, as well address compliance with trade regulations and exclusionary policies. In addition, Oracle Global Trade Management can help companies accurately estimate total landed costs, giving them greater visibility into their extended supply chain expenditures, including transportation, handling fees, insurance, duties, and taxes.

Finance

[Oracle Scenario Modeling](#), part of the Oracle Fusion Cloud Enterprise Performance Management (EPM) suite of applications, helps finance and operations teams rapidly model multiple business scenarios to inform and reinforce their decisions. Oracle Scenario Modeling also helps finance and operations teams understand how strategic decisions being considered can impact cash flow and the bottom line.

[Oracle Strategic Workforce Planning](#), also part of Oracle Cloud EPM, helps companies align their HR needs with major new initiatives and other strategic business objectives. It can also help determine the skills and headcount required, as well as the costs and risks involved.

Human Resources

[Oracle Workforce Labor Optimization](#), part of the Oracle Fusion Cloud Human Capital Management (HCM) suite of applications, helps companies forecast labor demand and generate optimal shift schedules for a given initiative, project, location, department, date, day, or skill. It also helps facilitate compliance with labor laws and union regulations.

How Oracle can help

It's easy to get started with Oracle Fusion Cloud Applications. Explore how a unified cloud with built-in AI can help your organization manage its global trade operations, or request a demo today.

Learn more

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