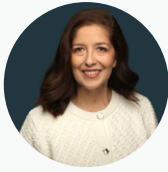


THE 'SPEED GAP' DIAGNOSTIC FOR SUPPLY CHAIN LEADERS

How Many Scenarios Did Your Team Not Run Last Cycle—and What Did Those Decisions Cost?





Introduction from Maria Villablanca

Over the past 18 months, I've had hundreds of conversations with supply chain leaders across Europe and beyond, and the underlying story is almost always the same.

They're being asked to make bigger decisions, more frequently, in an environment that's increasingly difficult to predict. Tariffs shift overnight, suppliers fail without warning, demand breaks from historical patterns. And yet the process most organisations use to answer their most important supply chain questions hasn't fundamentally changed in years.

Most organisations are drowning in data. The gap is between companies that can turn that data into a confident decision quickly, and those that can't.

I've started calling this the Speed Gap. Most organisations have one — the question is whether they know it.

This guide, developed with Gavin Schwarzenbach, who spent 34 years running some of the world's most complex global supply chains before joining Optilogic, is designed to help you find out.

— Maria Villablanca, CEO, TFEST

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01 What's the Speed Gap?

The Speed Gap is not simply about how fast decisions get made.

As Gavin described it:



“It's the time from when a problem is raised to making a decision — but it's not just about speed. It is about making a good decision based on evaluating multiple scenarios and sensitivity.”

— GAVIN SCHWARZENBACH

A supply chain leader who makes fast decisions based on a single scenario and outdated assumptions has just moved faster toward the wrong answer — what Gavin calls being ‘precisely wrong.’ Spending enormous effort building a detailed model, only to have the world move on before the answer lands.

The Speed Gap is the distance between the quality and speed of decisions your organisation makes today and what's now achievable. That distance is widening, because the tools available have fundamentally changed in the last 12 to 18 months.

3 Months

OLD TIME TO SET UP SCENARIOS

1 Day

DECISIONS WITH AGENTIC AI

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

These four diagnostic questions will help you identify where your organisation sits.

For each one, compare how your organisation answers today with what's now possible — then put the diagnostic question to your own team.

Q1 When a major supply chain question lands, how long before your team has options on the table?

CURRENT METHOD

- Days to weeks. One option, built under pressure.
- Leadership challenges it in the room.
- The scenario hasn't been modelled.

WHAT'S POSSIBLE

- Hours to days. Multiple scenario-backed options.
- Sensitivity already tested across key variables.
- Answers ready before the room asks.

THE DIAGNOSTIC QUESTION

When a disruption hit us in the last six months, how many options did we bring to the table — and how long did it take?

Gavin frames the deeper version:



“How have you tested that this is still a good decision, even if costs change plus or minus 5, 10, 15%? Is it still a good decision if demand changes? How much evidence is behind the recommendation when it's brought to the table?”

— GAVIN SCHWARZENBACH

If your answer is one scenario, validated against one set of assumptions, built under time pressure, your Speed Gap is open.

Q2 How does your team prepare for IBP meetings — and how much happens in Excel?

CURRENT METHOD

- Cycle spent aggregating data and building consensus.
- Demand shock scenarios handled on the fly with simple Excel models.
- Questions deferred or answered by gut feel.

WHAT'S POSSIBLE

- Team walks in with hundreds of demand, production, and inventory scenarios already modelled.
- Leadership's what-ifs are already answered.

Gavin spent decades on both sides of this table:



“I used to sit through IBP meetings every month. I never had anything that would have given me the ammo that I could have now — a sensitivity chart showing that even if we only increase sales by 5%, we run into service failures. Even if the factory runs better than it has for the last three months, it's still not good enough. That sort of messaging really gets people on board to make a different decision.”

— GAVIN SCHWARZENBACH

THE DIAGNOSTIC QUESTION

In our last IBP cycle, what scenarios had we already run before the meeting — and how many questions did leadership ask that we couldn't answer until after?

Q3

How many scenarios does your team run per cycle, and how many questions never get modelled?

CURRENT METHOD

- 3–5 scenarios because time runs out.
- Disruption questions answered via Excel — or not answered at all.

WHAT'S POSSIBLE

- AI builds a model, runs hundreds of scenarios, and analyses results in minutes.
- Pinpoints which lines, customers, and products are exposed.

Most organisations don't track this. They know how many models they build. They don't know how many questions they couldn't answer because building the model would have taken too long. The gap between questions asked and questions modelled is a direct measure of the Speed Gap's cost.

Gavin shared this from a live customer example in the consumer goods industry:



“If I run 70 scenarios across 800 products, 30 countries, I can ask an AI agent to analyse the results, identify the key differences between the scenarios, and highlight which production lines, customers, and products are driving the differences. And when you see what comes back, it's highlighted things you simply can't get from a manual Excel sheet. The quality of decision when you do it this way is fundamentally higher.”

— GAVIN SCHWARZENBACH

THE DIAGNOSTIC QUESTION

In the last planning cycle, how many supply chain questions came up that we didn't model because we didn't have time — and what decisions did we make anyway?

Q4 When your team finds an answer, how quickly does it reach the people who need to act on it?

CURRENT METHOD

- Insights sit with the modelling team.
- Every follow-up creates a new queue.
- The modeller is the bottleneck.

WHAT'S POSSIBLE

- Decision-ready outputs reach planners, ops, finance, and executives directly.
- Business users run scenarios themselves using natural language prompts.

The Speed Gap has two ends: the time from question to answer, and the time from answer to action — how quickly a recommendation moves from the modelling team to the planner, the operations manager, the executive, or the finance partner who needs to act on it.

In many organisations, valuable analysis sits with the modeller who built it. Every follow-up question, every scenario variation, every ‘what if we tried it this way’ creates a new queue. The modeller becomes the bottleneck because the old system requires everything to flow through them.

Gavin puts it plainly:



“We’re enabling a partnership between a modeling expert and executives and planners, because then the two of them together can build a much better solution. A small central team can deliver so much more when the business owns the results.”

— GAVIN SCHWARZENBACH

THE DIAGNOSTIC QUESTION

When we produce a supply chain analysis, how does it reach the people who need to act on it — and how many of those people can access it without going back through the modelling team?

02 What to Do with Your Answers

By now you have a picture of where your Speed Gap is open and how wide it is. Most organisations find it in multiple places at once:

- Decisions take too long
- Scenarios are too few
- Sensitivity testing is qualitative rather than systematic
- Insights stay with the modelling team

The starting point, Gavin notes, matters less than the direction:



“I don’t think the capabilities of companies pulling ahead are very different at the start. What they have is a drive and a desire to do this quicker — they roll up their sleeves and say, we’ve got the data, we can go much faster now. Let’s clear away the things that are slowing us down.”

— GAVIN SCHWARZENBACH

Today’s agentic AI technology compresses months of modeling and analysis work into days and hours.

WHAT’S NOW ACHIEVABLE

1 Day

Raw data into a working model in a single day.

<2 Hours

Dozens of scenarios across demand, supply, and inventory.

Minutes

Output analysis across 70 scenarios and millions of data points — with a precise read on which products, lines, and customers are most exposed, and why.

03 Three Places to Start

1. Lift the lid on your last recommendation

Think back to the last significant supply chain recommendation your team made. How many scenarios were evaluated? How was sensitivity tested? How long did it take? The answers will locate your Speed Gap more precisely than any benchmarking exercise.

2. Map the questions that didn't get modelled

In your next IBP cycle, ask your planning team to track every supply chain question that came up, and note which were modelled and which were answered another way. The unmodelled questions are a direct measure of the Speed Gap's cost.

3. Find one use case and go faster

Gavin's consistent advice: don't try to transform everything at once. Start with one focused use case — a planning scenario that currently takes weeks and should take hours — and prove the new speed there first.

Gavin's field notes on sequencing:



“A lot of the companies I work with start in logistics, strategic, and then it becomes logistics tactical and cost to serve, and then moves into planning scenarios, and then into upstream and sourcing. It's done step-by-step.”

— GAVIN SCHWARZENBACH

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Maria Villablanca is CEO of TFEST and host of Transform Talks, a podcast for senior supply chain leaders.



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Ready to close your Speed Gap?

See how Optilogic helps supply chain design and planning teams close the Speed Gap.

[Watch the 5-Minute Demo](#)