

SA supply chains rethink strategy to tackle global disruption

Amid geopolitical shifts, rising risks, and ongoing disruptions, South African businesses are rethinking supply chains as strategic tools for resilience and growth.



Source: Pxabay via [Pexels](#)

At the 47th annual Sapics Conference in Cape Town, more than 700 supply chain professionals heard from Andries Retief, DHL Supply Chain's chief commercial officer for EMEA, about how companies can turn disruption into opportunity.

"In calm times, logistics is the quiet engine of growth. But in disruption, it becomes something more: a strategic lever," Retief told attendees, highlighting the challenges and opportunities facing modern supply chains.

Disruption challenges and opportunities

Global volatility—from trade conflicts to technological shifts and sustainability pressures—is reshaping supply chains. The Covid-19 pandemic served as a stress test, and its aftershocks are still being felt across industries, from e-commerce to life sciences.



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Statistics cited during the conference were stark: 92% of organisations struggle to mitigate risk due to limited visibility and collaboration, while 68% are constantly responding to high-impact disruptions.

"Leaders who see disruption as a headwind will fall behind. Those who harness it as a tailwind and align strategy to global shifts will accelerate toward sustainable growth," Retief said.

Leveraging geography and strategic trends

Retief highlighted Africa's geographic advantages, including proximity to key resources and markets, access to transport networks, and trade agreements.

Aligning operations with trends in e-commerce, global fulfilment, life sciences, and sustainability can help businesses optimise speed to market.

Diversification as resilience

Diversification is central to mitigating risk. Retief recommended multi-shoring and omni-sourcing—spreading suppliers and production across countries or continents—to reduce dependency on any single location.

He also emphasised distributed warehousing and multi-modal transport, combining air, sea, rail, road, and even last-mile solutions like bicycles, to ensure flexibility across the supply chain.

Supply chain orchestration

Coordinated management of people, processes, technology, and data—what Retief calls supply chain orchestration—is key to ensuring operations run smoothly across complex networks.



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"The supply chain must be reimagined not as a cost centre, but as a competitive advantage: agile, diversified and ready for whatever comes next," he concluded.

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