



HOW TO THRIVE IN A SUPPLY **CRISIS:**

5 signs you're in one,
and what to do next

THE WORST WAY TO WAKE UP

When Tom first gets to his office each morning, he dreads what he's going to find.

As he pulls into the parking lot, he's already thinking about it. The little red light on the corner of his desk phone. The little red dot on the screen of his cellphone. The chirpy tone of his computer reporting new message after new message. He parks, grabs his jacket, picks up his bag, and gets out into the cold dawn.

Inside the building, he picks up coffee in the breakroom. Soon, he's in his chair, staring at his screen. The little red light on the desk phone is flashing indeed, and his computer is cheerily beeping as each email loads. But Tom's dread persists. As he listens to the voicemails and checks through the emails, his dread begins to grow worse.

"Morning, Tom, this is Javier. I'm sorry to say I'm still having trouble..."

"Hi, Tom, I'm just returning your most recent call. Unfortunately..."

"Mr. Munoz, my name is Cheryl Spencer, and my supervisor asked me to reach out..."

Because Tom's sense of impending doom wasn't alerted by the messages themselves: it was set off by what he knew would be in them.

Nothing.

Tom's dread each morning — the fear that grips him as a purchasing agent for one of America's manufacturing firms — is that *nothing* is all he's going to find. No important raw materials, no necessary supplies, no urgently-needed inputs. And if *nothing* is all Tom finds, he knows his company can't survive long.



A PURCHASING AGENT'S JOB IS NEVER DONE

The fact is, purchasing agents for manufacturing operations face an enormous challenge. They are tasked with finding and acquiring all the most important materials and inputs their company needs. The weight of their operation's success falls squarely on their shoulders. If a purchasing agent is unable to successfully navigate a web of complex relationships, stick to rigorous timetables, and satisfy tight budgetary and policy requirements, their company will struggle.

Layered into the overall challenge of keeping companies supplied, purchasing agents must take on a variety of roles. When working with suppliers and vendors in a global economy, agents must be both clear communicators and dedicated advocates for their company. As they deal with sourcing issues and supply chain snags, agents have to be problem solvers and creative thinkers. Whether at the bargaining table, at the boardroom table, or in front of divisional leaders, purchasing agents are tasked with playing these roles in front of multiple demanding audiences.

But in the end, it all comes back to the one challenge: can you find the right product at the right price on the right timetable?

Unfortunately, as Tom's story shows, it's not always simple to answer that question with a resounding, "Yes!" Almost all manufacturing companies find it challenging, at one time or another, to easily find their most urgently-needed raw materials. Beyond that, virtually every manufacturer knows the struggles with rising costs — especially now — and supply chain snafus that can threaten their profitability or even existence.

So, as a purchasing agent, what can you do? How can you avoid Tom's fate of dread-filled mornings?

How can you more successfully conquer the biggest challenge facing your business, and maybe the biggest challenge facing the American economy: how can you stay supplied?

ARE YOU IN A SUPPLY CRISIS?

What does it look like when it's a struggle to keep a manufacturing company fully supplied? Many of you may have read Tom's story and thought it all seemed pretty normal. "What's the big deal," you might ask, "that's how my office looks every morning. And every afternoon. And pretty much every other minute of the day, too."

It's true that manufacturing and its related industries can be tough and competitive. People in these organizations work long hours doing hard jobs, and that includes everyone from the assembly line to the head office. So shouldn't the job of finding and acquiring supplies, staying under budget, and keeping everything on time be, you know, a *little* difficult?

There are tell-tale signs, however, that you (and your organization) may be in a supply crisis. Go through the following checklist and use it to think about your position with a new lens. Can you identify yourself within this list?

1. **Running a never-ending race** — Let's start where it starts: your company, and the manufacturing divisions within it, need inputs and supplies. In order to be useful to your company's goals, those supplies have to be in-hand according to a very strict schedule. Fulfilling customer demand is what keeps your business in business, and the first step in that process is getting the stuff you need to make the things they want — and doing it all in a timely fashion. But a supply crisis develops when the imperative to watch the clock becomes a race to keep up with it. If you're constantly running into problems because supplies aren't where they're supposed to be at the right time, you have a crisis brewing. To get out ahead of scheduling problems, try expanding your search beyond your regular list of vendors. Venturing into the unknown can be unsettling, but establishing new sources and relationships is key to future success.



2. **Playing connect-the-dots** — *The world is a big place that's somehow also getting smaller every day, and yet remains very large and complicated, but really it's growing closer together... Well, we're not sure how big the world is, but we do know it's more possible to reach more parts of it than ever before. That's great for expanding manufacturers' ability to find the materials they require. Unfortunately, it's not necessarily so great for acquiring those materials easily. The global supply chain is inordinately complex, and it's not uncommon to find yourself forced to use multiple vendors just to complete one order. Unsurprisingly, that adds costs, increases shipping times, and introduces new opportunities for errors. None of which you can afford. Avoiding this globalized version of connect-the dots may be avoided by preparing and using a set of qualifying questions for every online vendor. Use them to make sure your vendor can actually satisfy your timetable, and whether their methods are appropriate for your needs.*

3. **Settling for inferior products** — *Quality is your company's foundation. It's built into your name, your reputation, and your operations. Most importantly, it's (literally) built into your product. Without that ring of quality to what you offer, customers would leave you hollow and empty. But quality must be actively maintained, and that means more to you as a manufacturing purchasing agent than it does to many other executives and business leaders. So, when you find yourself potentially forced to choose an inferior substitute for a regular input, it hurts in many ways. In these times, however, it has become more of a struggle to maintain the quality of supplies. When you face the agonizing decision between sticking to budget and timeline or satisfying quality standards, you're in the heart of a supply crisis. One way to solve the problem is to keep a stable of backup vendors available. When you need options the most, make sure you have them!*

4. **Straining against inflexible systems** — *As we said, the challenge facing America's manufacturing purchasing agents goes beyond their own industry. It lies at the heart of the American economy. But as lofty (and true) as that may be, the day-to-day work of a purchasing agent often feels a lot more mundane. Not only are there endless phone calls, emails, and texts to answer from vendor after vendor, but you may also face significant boundaries and constraints in how you get things done. Every organization needs a way to track and quantify its relationships with vendors. What that effectively means for you is a whole lot of paperwork. As necessary as it is, you're still left with a simple truth: you may not have the resources, personally or as a team, to take care of all the standards and protocols while still actually keeping your company supplied. If you're up against this resource limit, try outsourcing your purchasing needs to Gilmer Solutions. We take care of the burden of paperwork, simplify vendor relations, and free you to use your resources in smarter ways to help your organization.*



5. **Feeling the burn** — Vendor relationships that are complex and demanding. Divisional leaders on a schedule and a budget. Corporate oversight with extra time and itchy typing fingers. That's a lot to manage in a day, especially considering none of it is actually your job title: purchasing agent. You do a lot to keep your company running, and it's not surprising if you feel a bit under-appreciated for all that you accomplish. Burnout is a real thing, and it affects workers, executives, and leadership alike. With so many roles (negotiator, diplomat, advocate) in one job, in addition to several mountains of paperwork, purchasing agents face an uphill battle to keep from burning out completely. The good news is that taking the stress out of your job can be as easy as working with a partner that adapts to your needs. Whether that partner is a new team member with your company, or a trusted purchasing expert like Gilmer Solutions, they can help you avoid burnout by lifting some (or all) of the responsibilities from your shoulders.

YOU (AND YOUR ORGANIZATION) CAN'T AFFORD A SUPPLY CRISIS

The manufacturing industry is complex, competitive, and fast-paced. Companies in that industry are often complex structures, are usually made up of competitive people, and operate and evolve at a fast pace. So, it's true that being a purchasing agent for a manufacturing company is difficult, and is a job full of challenges.

It's one thing to survive challenges, though. It's completely different when you find yourself:

- ✘ *Constantly running an unwinnable race against time*
- ✘ *Frantically working with multiple vendors just to complete a single order*
- ✘ *Fruitlessly hunting for quality materials and supplies*
- ✘ *Continuously butting your head against inflexible constraints and delays*
- ✘ *Dangerously close to burning out in your job*

Then you — and, by extension, your entire organization — are in a full-blown supply crisis.

Under these unsustainable conditions, neither you nor your company can thrive.





GILMER SOLUTIONS HELPS YOU SOLVE SUPPLY PROBLEMS

You can take the uncertainty, stress, tedium, and struggle out of your job as a purchasing agent. You can keep your company full of the vital materials and inputs it needs, all while meeting your budget and timeline. You can make yourself, your team, and your entire purchasing operation the stars of a healthy, successful manufacturing company.

Gilmer Solutions makes it easier to find, buy, and acquire everything your manufacturing operation needs. We don't just go to the ends of the earth to find the exact product you're looking for. We do more than simply negotiate the right price and handle the vendor relationship. We go a step beyond just taking care of the paperwork for you.

At Gilmer Solutions, we make life easier for purchasing agents.

It's as simple as this:

1. Call us and tell us what you need, how much you want to pay, and when you need it.
2. We'll find it, acquire it, and even arrange for needed modifications.
3. Your company gets it on time, and you get more time to focus on other priorities.

Instead of a supply crisis, you will:

- ✓ *Get everything where it's needed, when it's needed*
- ✓ *Know that vendor relationships are managed properly*
- ✓ *Always have access to the best quality products*
- ✓ *Take back your time for key tasks*
- ✓ *Enjoy more freedom and success in your job*

To make an appointment with our experts today, just visit [[this URL](#)]. Leave the constant dread of finding *nothing* behind forever. Instead, let Gilmer Solutions help make it easier to get *everything* done so that you and your manufacturing company can thrive.

