

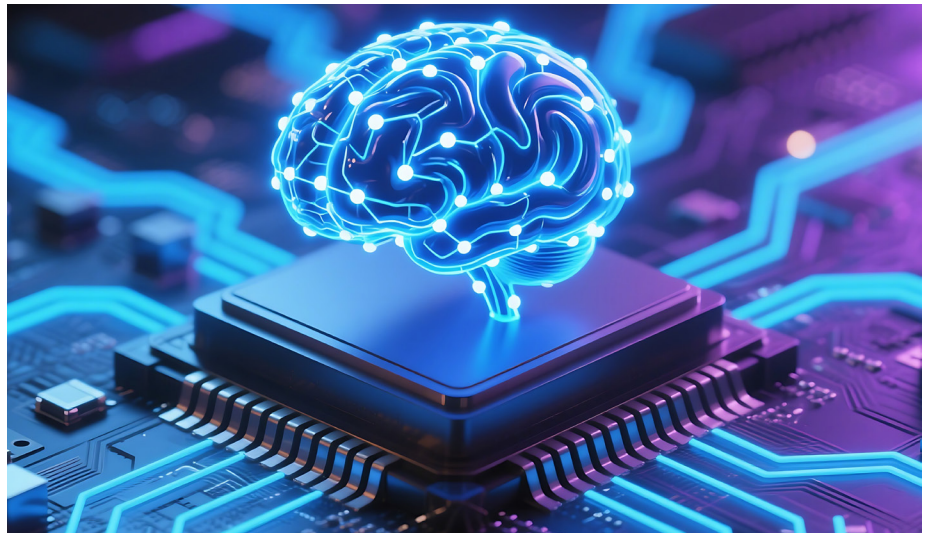
Embracing data-driven supply chain networks in 2026



Business backdrop

2025 was a year when companies realized the importance of digitizing their supply chain operations to fuel their go-forward data platform and AI strategies. Companies that could digitize 100% of their internal and external information flows would be able to take advantage of the growing interest in AI-based technologies. According to a [recent survey](#) by PwC, during 2025, more than **half of supply chain leaders (53%) reported that artificial intelligence is already being used—at least in some areas—to anticipate and mitigate supply chain disruptions**, highlighting how AI has moved beyond experimentation into operational use within global supply networks. This level of adoption underscores the growing role of AI in real-time decision support, predictive analytics, and operational resilience and lays the foundation for the agentic AI-driven, autonomous supply chain operations we expect to emerge during 2026.

AI has come a long way since it was originally introduced in the late 1950s. In fact, AI- and EDI-based technologies have become the longest-serving technologies still in use across today's business operations. EDI has had to constantly evolve over the years to fend off new technologies such as XML, APIs, and even blockchain. EDI is in the DNA of most global supply chain operations today and the data held within the EDI transactions can provide a rich source of information to ingest into an AI platform. So, it is quite fitting that two of the oldest pieces of technology still in use today are now joining forces and bringing a new set of insights for business leaders around the world.



The important role of data in tomorrow's supply chain operations

While everyone is jumping aboard the data 'bus,' many companies do not have a clear direction or end goal of what they actually want to achieve with AI. Companies are spinning up pilot projects but struggle to obtain a clear ROI. This could be down to a lack of internal AI skills, using the wrong AI technology, or simply not having a well-defined use case to pursue.

Irrespective of which innovative technologies a company may choose to implement, if there is no data strategy in place, companies will struggle to deploy an end-to-end AI strategy across their business.

2024 saw generative AI go mainstream and in 2025 agentic AI became the go-to AI technology for global CIOs to invest in, but where will the focus be in 2026? Many AI projects have likely failed over the past two years due to having poor quality data to work from, so OpenText certainly believes that 2026 will see a renewed focus on data platform infrastructures.

Why supply chain data is the most strategic asset of 2026

Data feeds the beating heart of global supply chains and companies that can embrace and leverage data to derive actionable, AI-driven insights will be the ones that grow and become more competitive in the market. In fact, supply chain data could be seen as the most strategic asset that a company owns—but how will companies be leveraging this data in 2026?

Let's now discuss the five key areas that companies must embrace in order to maximize the return on their supply chain data.



1. Serialized data becomes the backbone of supply chain protection

In 2026, serialized data—most commonly captured and shared through QR codes—will be fundamental to protecting brand reputation and maintaining trust across global supply chains. As networks grow more fragmented and products change hands more frequently, traditional batch-level visibility is no longer sufficient. Organizations must be able to identify, verify, and trace individual products in real time, from origin to end customer.

Serialized QR codes enable each item to carry a unique digital identity. When scanned at any point in the supply chain, that identity can be validated against trusted data sources to confirm authenticity, provenance, and compliance. This capability is becoming critical as counterfeit goods continue to infiltrate legitimate channels, eroding consumer confidence and exposing brands to financial, legal, and reputational risk. With serialization, suspicious products can be detected immediately, isolated before distribution, and traced back to the source of compromise. Beyond counterfeit prevention, serialized data strengthens brand protection by enabling faster, more precise responses to quality issues and recalls. Instead of broad, costly product withdrawals, organizations can pinpoint affected items, limit exposure, and demonstrate accountability to regulators, partners, and consumers, transforming supply chain risk management from reactive damage control into proactive protection.

The European Union's Digital Product Passport (DPP) is a clear example of serialized QR codes moving from concept to operational reality. By requiring products to carry a digital record accessible via a QR code, the EU is setting a new standard for transparency, sustainability, and traceability. Manufacturers must now provide verifiable data on product origin, materials, and lifecycle—data that can only be managed at scale through serialization.

In 2026, serialized QR code data will no longer be a compliance checkbox or pilot initiative. It will be the backbone of trusted supply chain operations, enabling brands to prove authenticity, protect consumers, and operate with confidence in an increasingly high-risk global environment.

Industry research from 2025 shows that **66.1% of companies reported increasing interest in or plans to adopt serialized QR code solutions as part of connected packaging initiatives**, reflecting strong momentum toward item level digital identifiers that support traceability, authentication, and supply chain transparency. This widespread interest signals that organizations are beginning to prioritize the very capabilities—real-time item tracking, provenance verification, and standardized product data—that will make serialized data the backbone of secure and trustworthy supply chains in 2026.

2. Agentic AI turns supply chain data into autonomous action

Supply chain data will no longer serve primarily as an input for dashboards and retrospective analysis. Instead, it will become the operational fuel for agentic AI—intelligent systems capable of taking autonomous action across increasingly complex, multi-partner supply networks. The organizations that lead in this shift will be those that can capture, contextualize, and continuously share trusted data at scale.

Two data sources will be especially critical. First, the rich operational signals embedded within EDI transactions—purchase orders, advanced shipping notices, invoices, and inventory updates—provide a real-time digital heartbeat of supply chain execution. Second, IoT sensor data from assets, shipments, and facilities adds physical-world context, such as location, temperature, condition, and dwell time. When combined, these data streams create a near-real-time, end-to-end view of what is happening across the network.

Agentic AI builds on this foundation by moving beyond insight to execution. Rather than simply flagging delays or risks, AI agents can autonomously re-sequence orders, reroute shipments, adjust inventory targets, or trigger partner communications based on live conditions. For example, when IoT sensors detect temperature excursions in transit, an AI agent can immediately validate the event against EDI shipment data, notify downstream partners, initiate replacement orders, and update compliance records—without human intervention.

This shift fundamentally changes how supply chains operate. Decision-making becomes continuous rather than episodic, and exception management becomes automated rather than manual. However, this autonomy is only possible when AI agents are powered by high-quality, standardized, and trusted data flowing across organizational boundaries.

In 2026, competitive advantage will increasingly belong to companies that treat supply chain data as a shared, strategic asset. Those that integrate EDI, IoT, and contextual business data into a unified data fabric will enable agentic AI to coordinate partners, resolve disruptions, and optimize performance in real time, turning supply chains from reactive systems into self-orchestrating networks.

[Accenture's research shows that, while today's supply chains are only about 21 % autonomous on average, 66% of companies are planning to increase autonomy—a clear indicator that agentic AI and autonomous decision-making are becoming central to supply chain transformation. These organizations anticipate that greater autonomy could reduce reaction times to disruptions by up to 62% and speed recovery by 60%, underscoring how agentic AI's capacity to act on real-time data will be a critical competitive differentiator during 2026.](#)

3. Compliance-ready data emerges as a strategic supply chain advantage

Compliance will no longer be a periodic reporting exercise managed at the edges of the supply chain. Instead, it will be embedded directly into how supply chain data is captured, shared, and governed. As regulatory requirements expand across regions and industries, organizations that invest in compliance-ready data architectures will gain a decisive operational and competitive advantage.

One of the clearest signals of this shift is the rapid global adoption of electronic invoicing mandates. Governments across Europe, Latin America, and parts of Asia are requiring structured, real-time invoice data to support tax reporting, fraud prevention, and fiscal transparency. For supply chains, this means financial and transactional data—often exchanged via EDI or APIs—must be accurate, standardized, auditable, and delivered within strict timeframes. Companies that lack compliant data pipelines will face delays, penalties, and increased friction with trading partners.

At the same time, data sovereignty is becoming a central concern. Regulations increasingly dictate not just how data is used, but where it can be stored, processed, and shared. In response, regions are establishing sector-specific data ecosystems that prioritize local control and trusted collaboration. Europe's Catena-X initiative for the automotive industry and Decade-X for aerospace are early examples of regional data clouds designed to enable secure, compliant data exchange across complex, multi-tier supply networks.

These initiatives signal a broader shift toward federated data models, where participants retain ownership of their data while enforcing shared governance, lineage, and access controls. In this environment, compliance-ready data is no longer a cost of doing business—it becomes an enabler of participation in regulated markets and high-value ecosystems.

In 2026, leading organizations will treat compliance as a design principle rather than an afterthought. Those that build jurisdiction-aware, auditable, and interoperable data foundations will move faster, onboard partners more easily, and operate with confidence across borders, turning regulatory complexity into a strategic supply chain advantage.

According to [PwC's Global Compliance Survey 2025](#), 63% of executives say that the complexity and fragmented nature of data across their organization makes compliance more difficult, highlighting the growing challenge of managing high-quality, consistent data for regulatory reporting and risk management. This drives the need for compliance-ready data architectures that embed governance, lineage, and quality controls—turning compliance from a burden into a competitive advantage in global supply chains.

4. Securing the continuous flow of supply chain data becomes mission-critical

Supply chains will operate as always-on, data-driven networks, where real-time information flows between ERP systems, logistics platforms, suppliers, and partners continuously. In this environment, securing individual systems is no longer enough. The true risk lies in how data is accessed, shared, and acted upon across organizational boundaries—and recent waves of cyber and ransomware attacks have exposed just how vulnerable these interconnected supply chains have become.

Attackers increasingly gain entry through enterprise systems such as ERP, exploiting weak credentials, over-privileged access, or compromised partner accounts. Once inside, they can disrupt planning, halt production, manipulate orders, or lock critical systems at scale. The operational impact is often immediate: delayed shipments, factory stoppages, regulatory exposure, and long-term damage to customer trust.

As a result, leading organizations are shifting toward a digital identity-first security model. Every user, system, and application—internal or external—must be assigned a verifiable digital identity governed by a robust identity and access management (IAM) framework. This approach enforces least-privilege access, continuous authentication, and real-time policy enforcement across the supply chain ecosystem. Access is granted based not just on who the user is, but on context such as role, location, device, and transaction risk.

Crucially, digital identity must extend beyond the enterprise perimeter. Suppliers, logistics providers, and service partners all interact with core supply chain data and applications. Without consistent identity controls across these relationships, companies create blind spots that attackers can exploit.

In 2026, operational resilience will depend on securing the continuous flow of supply chain data—not just protecting endpoints. Organizations that embed identity, access controls, and data integrity into every transaction will reduce the risk of disruption and respond faster when incidents occur. Those that fail to do so will remain exposed to cyberthreats capable of bringing entire supply chains to a halt.

[**Accenture's latest State of Cybersecurity Resilience 2025 report**](#) found that just **10% of organizations worldwide are prepared to protect against modern AI-driven cyberattacks**, underscoring a broader security readiness gap that extends into supply chain ecosystems. This highlights the critical need for strong digital identity and access management strategies to safeguard interconnected ERP, logistics, and partner systems as data flows become continuous and real-time.

5. Low-code data applications accelerate data-driven supply chain execution

The center of gravity for supply chain innovation will shift from packaged software to internal data platforms. As organizations consolidate operational, transactional, and partner data into unified data environments, a new opportunity emerges: empowering business users to build their own applications directly on top of trusted supply chain data using low-code and no-code tools.

These platforms dramatically reduce the dependency on traditional software development cycles. Supply chain planners, logistics managers, and operations teams can create purpose-built applications—such as exception management dashboards, supplier scorecards, or dynamic allocation tools—without writing code. Instead of waiting months for SaaS vendors or IT backlogs, teams can prototype, test, and deploy solutions in days, adapting rapidly as conditions change.

This shift has the potential to reshape the SaaS market. Rather than relying solely on standardized, one-size-fits-all applications, companies will increasingly assemble lightweight, composable apps tailored to their specific business processes, partners, and industry requirements. Core SaaS platforms will still play a role, but differentiation will move toward how effectively organizations use their own data to create competitive workflows on top of these systems.

Low-code data applications also close the gap between insight and action. When users can directly operationalize data—triggering alerts, initiating workflows, or orchestrating partner responses—analytics becomes execution. For example, a custom-built app can monitor live shipment, inventory, and demand signals, then automatically escalate risks or recommend corrective actions aligned to company-specific rules and constraints.

In 2026, leading supply chains will treat their data platforms as innovation engines, not just repositories. By enabling governed, low-code access to high-quality supply chain data, organizations can unlock faster execution, greater agility, and applications that reflect the realities of their operations, turning data ownership into a lasting strategic advantage.

[A recent KPMG study shows that 78% of organizations are already developing or planning AI-enabled low-code applications, and more than a quarter \(28%\) are using low-code to build complex enterprise systems—signaling that low-code/no-code platforms have moved well beyond experimentation into mainstream enterprise digital strategy.](#)

Why OpenText

OpenText has been a leading provider of secure information management solutions for more than thirty years and operates one of the world's largest business networks, connecting over 1 million trading partners who collectively exchange more than 31 billion transactions—the equivalent of 11 trillion in global network commerce. Digitizing information is in OpenText's DNA and this DNA fuels the digital backbone that underpins many of the world's largest supply chain operations. Whether you are looking to implement a simple QR code-based traceability solution, interrogate data through GenAI, obtain actionable insights through a command center, track IoT-enabled devices, or want to conceptualize what a future supply chain operation could look like, OpenText Business Network can help.

OpenText helps companies rein in their digital chaos. Connect once to our network and reach anything across your digital ecosystem, whether partners, systems, or data.

[Learn how OpenText can help you digitize your business operations >](#)