



## Supply Chain Obstacles: How Cables Unlimited Overcomes Them

Industry, Trends / By Cables Unlimited

Like you, we're hearing a steady drumbeat of pessimism about the global supply chain, and for good reason. We're also witnessing it firsthand in our own manufacturing operations. Many of these problems are due to worldwide disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic and, unfortunately, the follow-on variants.

These problems are, of course, exacerbated by the impact of just-in-time deliveries and the overall minimization of on-hand inventory. When the supply chain is running smoothly, lean manufacturing can work superbly to provide low-cost products in a timely manner. However, during disruptions, they can create as many problems as they solve.

Here we examine the sources of supply chain obstacles and how we're working to overcome them in our operations.



### Supply Chain Obstacles

We're seeing five main obstacles, each with its own causes and challenges.

- 1. Materials Challenges.** Consumer demand jumped as people went into lockdown mode at home. Online ordering increased at the same time that labor shortages led to manufacturing shutdowns across a wide range of industries. All this led to wide-scale shortages, long lead-times, and the concomitant rising commodities prices.
- 2. Transportation Difficulties.** Here in the U.S.A. delivery drivers and long-haul truck drivers made all the difference in getting the stuff we needed, or better said wanted, to our homes. That didn't happen on a worldwide level as not only were there material shortages but also shortages of the shipping containers.
- 3. Entry Port Congestion.** Then if you could find the materials, followed by the shipping containers along with a ship to move them, you ran into congestion at the entry ports. This has been caused by labor shortages at the ports along with shortages of trucks to move the containers after the ships have made it into port and unloaded.
- 4. Increasing Freight Prices.** All this moves into a perfect storm around prilling for freight. On the one hand you're feeling pretty good about pulling all the pieces together to get your parts and materials delivered. On the other hand, you're astounded at the pricing increases. Given the items noted above, the pricing escalation makes sense, but it's difficult to handle.
- 5. Demand Forecasting Difficulties.** With everything turned on its head over the past two years, it's almost impossible to apply age-old forecasting data to the new circumstances. That data can only build up over time and experience. However, nearly every month brings a different set of challenges that make it nearly impossible to forecast demand over the medium to long term.



### How Cables Unlimited Overcomes These Obstacles

We've found that overcoming these supply chain obstacles requires a wide range of approaches. This chiefly includes building resilience and developing flexibility that in turn allows lightning-quick responses to changes in the supply chain landscape. Here's our key list.

- Pre-Buy Critical Materials and Parts.** We pre-buy copper and fiber. Does that optimize our inventory levels? Not really. But it does optimize our ability to respond quickly to customer needs. We also have thousands of parts on hand at all times ready to build custom cable assemblies as soon as we have the order.
- Buy Local. Buy American.** We have production facilities in multiple locations across the U.S.A. This allows us to work with suppliers who are nearby, which minimizes the shipping time and costs. We also buy American parts whenever we can to further avoid shipping delays. For additional insight see our article [Wire Harnesses — The Benefits of Manufacturing in the USA](#).
- Supplier Relationships.** We do everything we can to build strong partnerships with all our suppliers. Finding the lowest cost option isn't always the best and those low-cost options are almost never there when you really need them. We also make a special point of paying our vendors fast in order to get the quickest service and to build a solid business relationship.
- Increased Visibility.** To keep on top of every level of the supply chain and the manufacturing process, we use state-of-the-art data systems that help keep everything on target. Or, if on-target deliveries are not quite possible, we get plenty of notice of problems as they arise so that we can respond quickly with alternatives.
- Open Communication.** We are also driven to communicate openly and honestly with our suppliers and our customers to involve them in every stage of our efforts to deliver cables and assemblies on time and to their exacting specifications.



### We Can Help

If you are in the design stages of your cabling solution, we can provide engineering assistance and prototyping. If your requirements are already specified and ready for a quote, we are uniquely positioned to meet your deadlines and pricing targets, due to our extensive in-house services and advanced manufacturing capabilities.

But we offer much more than state-of-the-art manufacturing – our dedicated team is also known for going to great lengths to meet the needs of our customers, including working round-the-clock to meet tight turnaround time requirements.

Our sales representatives are standing by to assist you with product questions and quotes Monday – Friday, 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Eastern. You can also send us an email or [complete our contact form](#) and we'll get right back to you.

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