

AISCR THOUGHT LEADERSHIP SERIES

Executive Insights on Supply Chain Innovation, Resilience, and Global Impact

► What role do you see the board of directors of AISCR play in shaping supply chain over the next decade?

Featuring Prof. George Zsidisin



Retired Professor of Supply Chain, Board Member at the Advanced Institute for Supply Chain Research

► **Would you kindly introduce yourself?**

Oh, absolutely. Well, first, thank you very much for the opportunity. My name is George Zsidisin, I am a recently retired Professor of Supply Chain Management. I have taught at various universities throughout my career, including Michigan State University, Bowling Green State University, I created a master program at Virginia Commonwealth University in Supply Chain Management, and most recently, I finished my career at the University of Missouri, St. Louis.

Throughout my career, I have been very fortunate to work in a truly collaborative international environment. This, of course, includes the Advanced Institute for Supply Chain Research. Other positions I've had throughout my career have included being one of the founding members of the International Supply Chain Risk Management Network, as well as serving as the co-editor for the Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management from 2010 through 2015.

And then only a couple of years ago, I served on the Executive Board for the International Purchasing Supply Education Research Association. Although I am retired, I still enjoy doing a little bit of work here and there as well, of course, including my current role here at the Advanced Institute for Supply Chain Research.

I would argue supply chain innovation is an absolute necessity. Without innovating, organizations die. This of course includes supply chains, where we have so many advances that continually occur with the technology.

And of course, through global supply chain management processes, innovation is something that's always going to be a critical facet for improving supply chains to become more effective and efficient in meeting societal needs and requirements.

I believe Advanced Institute for Supply Chain Research (AISCR) can serve a critical role in shaping supply chain knowledge by leveraging its established networks throughout Africa, the United States, and Europe, where we could actually really hone in and work with public policy professionals, as well as corporations, for better understanding what are the needs that supply chain professionals have for continually improving performance. And to me, innovation is that process that facilitates this, to be able to allow those firms to be able to succeed. If you cannot provide those products and services efficiently and effectively to your customers, nor if you can successfully source products on a continual continuous cost-effective basis, it is very difficult to compete in today's, in some ways, hyper competitive marketplaces today.

So I see our organization really serving that key role, to be able to help organizations, both public as well as private, to be able to provide better those needs to their constituents and improve their supply chains. I believe we have the research capabilities to be able to help and provide those insights to corporations, so we can continually continue to innovate and improve our supply chains moving forward

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“The Stakeholder Voice is dedicated to amplifying the perspectives of AISCR Global’s high-profile partners and leaders. We bring you candid interviews and thought-provoking insights that reflect the priorities, values, and vision of those steering global impact in Supply chain”

How does the AISCR Intend to balance academic research with practical industry application ?

Oh, absolutely. To me as being a scholar for almost 30 years, I've come to realize that it has to start with industry, understanding what are the challenges that industry faces itself, and then eventually for us as scholars and academics to provide insights to these organizations, to address their challenges or opportunities. So to me it really starts with the research problem that comes from industry itself, and the key part with AISCR is having the repository of scholars and the contacts and the networks of scholars who have the methodological expertise to be able to conduct valid and reliable research, that provides those insights to those industry challenges, problems, as well as opportunities within the supply chain.

So I see it as really many ways of positive feedback loop. We see industry issues, problems that exist, then we work as a research community working in conjunction with those practitioners to be able to provide insights. From the research that we do, we bring it back into industry and practice, so it helps form mechanisms for those firms to better run and manage those supply chains. So to me, I see it starts initially with understanding what the industry issues, problems, and opportunities are, and then utilizing the skill sets of the academics and the researchers to be able to conduct those studies that provides insight to those problems, as well as opportunities



What lessons did the COVID 19 pandemic teach us about resilience and adaptability?

COVID was an absolute wake-up call for the entire world. I think it really highlighted how truly interconnected we are, not just within a respective country, not just within our communities, but how truly interconnected that we are globally, and how much dependent we are upon each other globally to be able to provide those needs.

We actually wrote a book focusing on COVID-19 and how it affected supply chains, and I even wrote a couple of journal articles associated with exactly what you're asking about, how do organizations survive through COVID-19. And it really was the relationships that were formed ahead of time with other organizations. I'm a firm believer that supply chains do not operate in isolation, but they occur among organizations who usually have a prolonged experience and time working together.

And it was those relationships that actually helped many organizations get through the challenges that they were facing during COVID-19. It was the relationships they had with their distribution channel partners downstream, the distributors, the wholesalers, the customers, and of course, relationships with suppliers as well, given the constraints that were existing. We found in our research that it was very difficult for organizations to be able to just easily switch from one supply source to another supply source when shortages were occurring, because most organizations were experiencing those same shortages and challenges. But it was, I think, those organizations that had well-established relationships and network partners that were able to be able to get through the pandemic a little better than those organizations that may not have had such robust relationships established ahead of time.

► *How do you see sustainability influencing supply chain designs*

That's a very interesting question. This is something I always think back starting from 1970 when we had our very first Earth Day. Reflecting back I was only a very small child back in the 1970s. Sustainability has been known within organizations and probably more in the last 25 years or thereabouts.

One of my very first published articles focused on sustainability. And that was a huge subject for academic scholarship in the late 1990s through the early 2000s, and even today.

But at the same time, I think our progress in this area has still been somewhat limited. And I would say it's due to the incentives that are, or disincentives that can occur from this. So for me, from my understanding is until organizations are going to be required or more motivated to focus on sustainability, at least I could say from a North American perspective, it's difficult for some firms to fully embrace it if they have significantly higher cost structures that amass from this.

So I always think of for-profit companies, they're always thinking, you know, what's the profitability? To me, the question becomes is, how do you integrate sustainability and address climate change while also ensuring that your company will be viable in the future and particularly financially viable. It also becomes very difficult for firms who have traditionally worked with types of chemicals, worked with hazardous types of materials, where they have not yet been able to innovate to take out some of those hazardous materials yet. And hence, when the first question you asked about supply chain innovation, why you mentioned it as such a key facet, because without that innovation, it becomes difficult to really engage in sustainability measures that really have a true impact on reducing the harm to nature. Although it's a little challenging for me to say, but in some ways, I think this is where governments do need to become somewhat involved in helping provide some of those pathways for organizations to be able to better focus on sustainability.

Climate change, most people have agreed that it is occurring at a detrimental rate and more quickly. It's just trying to make that linkage of really convincing and working with companies that they can actually focus on these sustainability initiatives while also ensuring that they can stay financially viable. So to me, that's going to be the key part of it.

It's going to be part of the agenda. But right now, I think the agenda is driven a little bit more of what governments are saying themselves. And many companies, on their own volition, may not be quite as motivated to take those extra steps going above and beyond what they can do for climate change.

So it's continuing to be a sticky, challenging issue. But, in the end, we only have one Earth, and we do need to take care of it. It's just, I think, this is a problem that has been identified for quite a period of time, but we haven't really been able to fully address it yet, I think, at least address it well, because you always have to take the financial part in conjunction with the sustainability part.

► *what role does data analytics play in mitigating supply chain risks?*

I love this question. Because I think back to Walter Shewhart, who was the one who created statistical process control over a century ago, and something that still many organizations utilize today to see where quality failures occur, where they're more likely to occur, and try to discern from assignable causes of variation compared to common causes of variation.

To me, those become failures. Quality problems are a failure itself. So to me, data analytics has been around for quite some time, with statistical process control, economic order quantity models and others that have been in existence.

To me, the huge shift that has occurred is not just the data analytics, but it's integration with other activities and processes. And especially, I would argue, under the umbrella of industry 4.0, where you start having other technologies, such as integrating sensors to monitor processes, be able to identify where potential failures can occur in the supply chain much more quickly. So it goes, I would say, beyond just the data analytics, but it's also all these other technologies that are able to sense and to start looking at where these potential issues and failures can occur in the supply chain.

So data analytics, I would argue, is one element of industry 4.0, which I do believe is really changing the way that supply chains are able to operate much more efficiently, much more effectively.

Utilizing these technologies, to identify where those potential failures are or where a failure does occur to be able to work toward rectifying it very quickly because that information is available much quicker than it was before.

When I think about data analytics I always think about it as well in other business disciplines such as marketing. It's not supply chain management, but very, very closely related. Data analytics has worked phenomenally well and be able to better understand what customer needs are, what the customer requirements are.

Firms need to take that information and be able to cascade that back upstream into the supply chain to improve performance. So the data analytics is great, but if you're not sharing that information and if you're not working collaboratively with other companies that participate in your supply chains, I believe the benefits will be somewhat limited. So to me, data analytics is absolutely critical, but it's just part of a overall larger picture of Industry 4.0 itself and the connections that we have really through electronic mechanisms today.

▶ *How do you approach cyber security risks in improving digital supply chain?*

I've done a couple of very small studies in the past and what I've observed with regard to cyber security is that very often it's the weakest link. So very often you'll see those threats will come in from the consumer side or sometimes some small to medium enterprises with workers that might not be, for example, maybe not as well trained with regard to security measures themselves. Cyber security is going to be a constant threat as long as we have electronic data mechanisms themselves.

It's just to me in some ways a cat and mouse game where the cat's trying to find the mouse and the mouse running away, where the mouse is trying to get the "cheese" or the information from the systems themselves. But this area I would argue is one that is definitely a challenge and will only become more of a challenge. So in many ways we need to work in conjunction and research this area.

So to me this is still a somewhat understudied area itself even though there has been greater focus or a need for it. But exactly how that mechanism is I don't have the perfect answer of how organizations can solve their cyber security challenges. But I know that is not going away and I think it is a good area to better understand for trying to create a greater robustness and security within our information systems.

► *How can supply chain influence public policy and global trade agreements*

I think it starts with us starting to understand what those public policy challenges are by first communicating and knowing what governments, the politicians, the companies are going through first. And then from there by listening, asking good questions, we can actually engage in those research projects themselves that starts to answer some of those questions or to at least provide some insights to those questions themselves.

So with regard to public policy and global trade I think we can have a positive impact because we could be those neutral third-party brokers who do the research in an objective way to provide those insights itself. So as long as we have a good research process and we have and it's considered acceptable, they will listen to our and especially as we become better known as an organization, as a research institute, we'll become perceived as a area of expertise for public policy professionals. So to me it gets to be having that key one or first one or two large-scale research projects that we engage in and that we show those to the supporters of those projects.

So for me it's just being able to if we do good work, good results will occur and those people who can actually make changes in the supply chain will actually listen and now they'll consider our perspectives because they know that we're coming from a neutral research-based focus.



► *In five years, what's the breakthrough that you hope would happen in the supply chain landscape?*

For the institute, I would hope that we already would have within five years two large-scale research projects that are either complete or nearly complete where we start presenting those findings to higher level executives in government and industry. In conjunction, the other part I think would be important is to bring in more companies as members for the institute as well. As for the companies, they will eventually hopefully provide the financial resources so we can actually do good research, but also education opportunities as well for supply chain professionals.

At a prior university I worked at, we calculated that some of the research project we worked on resulted in a 5-10 times returns from the investments they made in the research project to how it translated into their profitability. To me it is being able to in five years, make more companies start seeing the value that we provide and more companies wanting to invest in us as well so we can continue to grow and focus on innovations, focus on improving supply chains from a global perspective.

To me that's where I see AISCR being a critical element. It really has developed or has embedded in its structure an international presence and to me this is absolute critical. Supply chains are global and as we continue in the next five years I look forward to working on a couple of research projects and working with various companies to truly grow AISCR

As we round off, what do you have to say to our global audience?

I have been working in supply chain management since early 1990s and during those 35 years i have seen this field advance so much and we still have a long way to go. I don't think our journey will end until we get to a point where an individual consumer can actually think of a need or requirement and the next second that solution is provided instantaneously at a very low price. We are very far, a long way from that but also when I envisage supply chain management it has over a broader/ many ways humanitarian goals as well.

For the many years I taught, I always found it a pleasure, actually a privilege to be a supply chain professional because I thought about all the other business functions and believe supply chain management is the only one that makes a difference in people living and dying on a daily bases. I think about that with regards to food distribution, medicine distribution, for example health care services. To me, supply chain management has a direct impact on all of those, things that directly help society . It incorporates other facets of business; accounting, information system, marketing, finance down the line but what we do in the end has a huge difference in the way that we are able to take care of mankind. With the institute, I see a lot of positive things moving forward but by doing the research and better understanding what the processes are is the way to eventually improve those supply chain processes to better meet societal needs moving forward in the future.

AISCR MEMBERSHIP



AISCR MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

Individual Membership	Institutional Membership
✓ Student Membership	✓ Academic/University Membership
✓ Faculty Membership	✓ Corporate Membership
✓ Practitioner/Professional Membership	✓ Government Partners Membership
✓ Fellow Membership	✓ Strategic Partner Membership

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INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP

- **Student:** AISCR's Student Membership is designed for full-time students pursuing degrees in supply chain management, procurement, logistics, operations, or related disciplines.
- **Faculty:** Faculty Membership is open to educators, lecturers, professors, and researchers actively engaged in teaching, supervision, or scholarship in supply chain management, procurement, logistics, and related disciplines. Members play a central role in advancing AISCR's mission through research collaboration, mentorship, and thought leadership.
- **Practitioner:** AISCR's Practitioner Membership connects professionals, consultants, policymakers, and executives to applied research and innovation. Members gain access to evidence-based resources and networks that translate academic insights into measurable organizational impact.
- **Fellow:** Fellow Membership is AISCR's highest distinction, reserved for senior academics, researchers, and practitioners who have made exceptional contributions to supply chain research, education, or policy reform in Africa or internationally. Fellow status is awarded through nomination and peer review. To qualify, nominees must have 20 years of distinguished experience, proven leadership and impact in advancing supply chain systems, and uphold AISCR's values of excellence and integrity.

Profile: Professor George Zsidisin

INSTITUTIONAL MEMBERSHIP

- **Academic:** Universities, business schools, and research institutes. The aim is to strengthen academic collaboration, faculty development, and applied research impact.
- **Corporate:** Private companies, logistics firms, manufacturers, and consulting organizations to leverage AISCR insights, intelligence, and networks to enhance competitiveness and sustainability.
- **Government Partners:** Ministries, public procurement agencies, regulators, SOEs, and development institutions. The purpose is to collaborate on public procurement reform, policy research, and institutional capacity-building.
- **Strategic Partners:** Governments, multilateral development agencies, and multinational corporations demonstrating leadership and long-term commitment to supply chain excellence. The goal is to co-lead AISCR flagship programs, research networks, and continental initiatives.

George A. Zsidisin, PhD, CPSM, is one of the world's leading scholars in supply chain risk management and resilience.

Dr. Zsidisin's research has fundamentally shaped how scholars and practitioners conceptualize and manage supply chain risk. His work spans supply risk assessment, resilience, foreign exchange risk, commodity price volatility, sustainability, and supply chain integration, grounded in strong theoretical foundations including transaction cost economics, agency theory, resource-based view, and institutional theory.

He has published extensively in top-tier journals, including the Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management, Journal of Business Logistics, Journal of Operations Management, International Journal of Production Research, and Journal of Supply Chain Management. His scholarly impact includes 11,622+ Google Scholar citations and an h-index of 40, reflecting sustained influence across academia and practice.

Dr. Zsidisin has held significant editorial leadership roles, most notably serving as Co-Editor of the Journal of Purchasing and Supply Management (2010–2015), during which the journal achieved its first Impact Factor and rose substantially in global rankings. He currently serves on multiple editorial and scholarly boards.

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