

Case Study – Scientific Laboratory Supplies

Introduction

To identify areas of supply chain disruption after the recent pandemic to mitigate the impact of unprecedented global supply chain bottlenecks and pinpoint the lessons learned to enable the resilient supply of key items such as PPE in future global supply chain and manufacturing disruptions.

As the Covid pandemic wreaked havoc across the world, many businesses were exposed to supply chain disruption. In this case study we hope to be able to inform the reader of the obstacles that businesses can undergo within the global supply chain, focusing specifically on how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the fluidity of the supply chain. This case study aims to identify the bottlenecks, focusing on specifically on how a pharmaceutical companies supply chain was affected; and how the company was able to resume the resilient supply of key items such as Personal protective Equipment (PPE).

Problem

During the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic there have been many publicised shortages in Personal Protective Equipment for frontline health care workers and businesses, from masks and gowns to gloves and shoe covers. Many companies took their supply chain for granted prior to the crisis, especially where there had been longstanding contracts with logistic partners.

In 2021 a major pharmaceutical group who are an established global conglomerate of more than 130 years, encountered unprecedented bottlenecks in the global supply chain for their PPE requirements. Their incumbent supplier had a reassuring mission statement indicating they adapt and respond quickly to changes in and around the world so they can deliver better solutions. However, this Pharmaceutical Group encountered continuous issues with their supplier in obtaining consistent supply, communication and stockholding of critical PPE to enable their operation to continue.



The Pharma group pointed out the following products were critical to their business and as their incumbent global supply partner had failed them, they urgently required assistance to source urgent supplies so that their operators could continue working safely

- Beard snoods
- Earplugs
- IIR and FFP3 masks
- Long Sleeve apron
- Mob caps
- Nitrile blue gloves
- Nitrile red gloves
- Oversleeves
- Shoe covers
- White and blue coveralls

Solution

There has been extensive learning through the COVID-19 pandemic. Lessons included the importance of planning, collaboration, relationship building as well as reliable, flexible and fast suppliers. The PPE supply chain is complex, with a lot of PPE goods being manufactured overseas. Resultingly, manufacturers are likely to be slow to respond to any unexpected changes in demand. Therefore, the Pharma group needed a different type of supplier who could give a more tailored service and coordinate supplies across regions, moving stock quickly to where it is was needed.

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Scientific Laboratory Supplies (SLS) are the largest independent laboratory supplier in the UK. SLS has the capacity, portfolio and flexibility to react quickly to such customer demands. SLS has three times the level of personal customer care than their global competitors and as such reacted quickly to the Pharma companies needs by pulling together a working group of experts dedicated to helping the customer with their PPE supply needs.

SLS provided a dedicated email address for faster communication with the client, regular project meetings to identify weekly requirements of each product line and the specifications and standards the products needed to meet. With one of SLS' Safety and Cleanroom Specialist's expertise and product knowledge, as well as their extensive supplier contacts from multiple safety and PPE manufacturers, SLS were able to identify PPE that was available to support the usage requirements of the client so they could resume operations quickly. A sampling process was conducted quickly so that SLS could bulk purchase the items in the quantities necessary to keep the client supplied with the business-critical urgent products.

The SLS warehouse and logistics facility in Nottingham mobilised to increase warehouse capacity by 35% and allocated capacity to store at least 3 months' worth of customer specific stock, which would then be called-off by the local warehouse that made weekly deliveries to the customer. The client received a dedicated driver who was quickly trained in on-site procedures and how to access the site. Deliveries were scheduled for a specific time slot and a dedicated delivery day to suit the customer's schedule. As soon as SLS began supplying the Pharma Group, the company's drivers delivered, unpacked, and stored the stocks in the warehouse as required each week. SLS were experienced enough proud to understand the customers situation, anticipate the issues and ensure the customer was not exposed to production downtime from that point forward.



Current Situation

SLS proudly remains the incumbent PPE supplier to this customer, with their dedicated support team meeting twice weekly to discuss continued site requirements, process weekly orders, organise and facilitate replenishment stock, whilst continuing to manage three months' worth of inventory exclusively for this customer. This greatly reduces the amount of planning and any dual sourcing required by our customer, meaning they can continue their operations without using additional resources to manage their ever-demanding supply chain.

The relationship built between the customer and SLS is very strong, due to the trust that has been developed based on the professional, reliable, flexible and fast service provided by SLS. Other sites of the Pharma Group now purchase their PPE and laboratory supplies from SLS, with a growing portfolio of products supplied to the group on a weekly basis, as well as on a monthly standing order, and for their large one-off summer shutdown requirements. By building the relationship with SLS, the Pharma Group can support new projects and source new products as and when needed.

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Customer Comments about SLS

Whilst supplying this customer, SLS has received much appreciation from around the Pharma Group. Here are some positive comments and feedback:

"I just want to thank you and your team for the most positive, professional experience we are having with SLS."

"We are so happy with the service from ordering right through to delivery."

"Thanks for that and I appreciate all you are doing for us."

"You are a life saver, Thanks a million." (In response to an out of stock situation where same day delivery was required).

"Thank you to everyone in SLS who made today's delivery such a success".

"Thanks so much for all your help and support in 2021, it has been a pleasure working with you all".

SLS Safety Products & Catalogue

In addition to their extensive portfolio, SLS recently launched a new SLS Safety Catalogue for 2022 as well as a dedicated Safety Subsite. Find your PPE needs on their [website](#).

You can view the new Safety Catalogue at this [link](#), which covers everything from personal protective equipment to workplace safety.

SLS has introduced twenty new suppliers to their already established portfolio, which means that they have a range of products to cater for all business types and budgets. These brands include Globus, Unigloves, Portwest, Pal, Diversey, Rockfall, JSP, Alpha Solway and Himalayan to name but a few. The full listing for PPE and safety products can be found [here](#).

Have you experienced Personal Protective Equipment supply issues? Don't hesitate to get in touch with SLS with any enquiries you have regarding PPE/Safety or laboratory products, and any support you might require.

Get in touch today!
www.scientificlabs.co.uk/contactus

