

GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN OPERATIONS

International Import Operations Control

End-to-end ownership of the import cycle, from purchase order release through customs clearance, receipt, supplier payment and financial close.

SERVICE LINE

**Global Supply Chain
Operations**

ENVIRONMENT

**Industrial manufacturer
and importer**

SUPPLY BASE

**5 suppliers: China,
Malaysia, Turkey**

OPERATING PERIOD

2019 to 2026

What this proves. Direct accountability for the complete import cycle across procurement, freight, customs, receiving and finance, with a defined control gate and a required piece of evidence at every hand-off between them.

OUTCOMES

What the control delivered

Pre-signing

Clearing instruction errors stopped before signature, including an incorrect country of origin, incorrect tariff headings and incomplete supplier details.

3+ a year

Shipments managed through the local year-end closure window each year, with storage and release arranged before closing.

2 roles

Scope assessed by the client's director as two separate positions: a supply chain planner and buyer, and an imports, exports and logistics coordinator. The director proposed retaining the founder as an outsourced provider for both.

"She has an intimate and intricate understanding of all systems, products, suppliers and customer needs."

DIRECTOR, CLIENT ORGANISATION

THE OPERATING CHALLENGE

Where import operations lose time and money

Purchase order to warehouse lead times ran at **3 to 6 months**. Around **20 to 25 shipments a year** moved by sea, air and express through two clearing and forwarding partners, each partner assigned to specific suppliers. Customs declarations, bank payments and stock valuation all depended on the same shipping documents arriving complete and on time.

In most importers these steps sit with different people and cost leaks at the hand-offs. Here one operator was accountable for the whole cycle and ran it against the control gates below.

THE CONTROL FRAMEWORK

Eight gates from order to close

STAGE	CONTROL GATE	COMPLETION EVIDENCE
1. Order release	Written director approval before any order reaches a supplier. No value threshold and no exceptions.	Approved PO on file
2. Supplier confirmation	Confirmation checked line by line against the PO. Dual sign-off before production is authorised.	Signed confirmation. Amendments filed beside the original, never over it.
3. Shipping documents	Same-day check against the signed confirmation, then same-day release to the correct clearing partner.	Complete document pack filed and forwarded
4. In transit	Port and inland ETAs revised from each partner status report. Every delay logged with its reason.	Current tracking line per order
5. Customs clearance	Clearing instruction verified field by field before signature, signed as an authorised import controller.	Signed instruction and full customs declaration set
6. Receipt	Physical count and serial check, then a match of the goods received voucher against supplier documents and the PO before any stock is booked.	Goods received voucher and system receipt
7. Supplier payment	Payment released only with receipt confirmed and the complete document pack assembled.	Payment pack submitted for authorisation
8. Financial close	Landed cost calculated on actual cost inputs. Order line closed.	Completed order line

OPERATOR JUDGEMENT

Decisions the procedures do not show

- **Knowing which mismatches matter.** A vessel name that differs from the bill of lading is normal for transhipped cargo; an invoice value that differs from the supplier invoice is not. Genuine errors were stopped without holding clean shipments.
- **Designing around partner behaviour.** The two clearing partners supplied customs documents at different stages. The control required the complete set at payment, rather than forcing either partner to change.
- **Year-end shutdown exposure.** Each December, shipments due during the company closure were identified and storage and letters of authority arranged before closing, with release on the first working day back.
- **Turning exceptions into planning data.** Inspection holds, port congestion, year-end storage, tariff surcharges and deferred shipments were logged per order and used in future lead time planning.

ALSO WITHIN SCOPE: EXPORTS

The same role covered outbound trade: CIF airfreight quotations, export clearing instructions, commercial invoices and SADC certificates of origin.

EXHIBIT 01 | ILLUSTRATIVE OUTPUT, INVENTED DATA

Import tracking board

ILLUSTRATIVE · INVENTED DATA

One line per open order, updated at every milestone. Board as at week 41.

6 ORDERS ON BOARD		2 EXCEPTIONS LOGGED		1 HELD AT A GATE		1 CLOSED THIS WEEK	
ORDER	SUPPLIER	MODE	STAGE	GATES 1 TO 8	ETA PORT	ETA SITE	EXCEPTION LOG
PO-2141	Supplier A	Sea	In production	● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Wk 46	Wk 48	None
PO-2138	Supplier C	Sea	In transit	● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○	Wk 42	Wk 44	! Port congestion, ETA +6 days
PO-2135	Supplier B	Air	Clearance	● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○	Arrived	Wk 41	None
PO-2129	Supplier D	Sea	Clearance	● ● ● ● ! ○ ○ ○	Arrived	On hold	! Tariff heading query, held
PO-2126	Supplier A	Sea	Received	● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○	Arrived	Delivered	None
PO-2119	Supplier E	Express	Closed	● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●	Arrived	Delivered	✓ Landed cost closed
■ In production ■ In transit ■ Clearance ■ Received ■ Closed ● Gate passed ○ Gate open ● Held at gate							

What each gate checks, and the evidence it requires, is part of the SL Global method and is not shown.

About this case summary. Work performed by Sheena Sawyer, Founder and Principal Consultant of SL Global, in an operating role held from 2019 to 2026 with a South African industrial manufacturer and importer. The organisation and its confidential information are not disclosed. Scope figures come from source records, outcomes are as confirmed by the founder, and quotations are from written correspondence, attributed by role. Exhibits are illustrative and use invented data unless stated.