Ahead of the Curve: Turning Analysis Into Executable Decisions

Learn how to use practical analytics to make better pricing and selling decisions, resulting in improved revenue outcomes, even when market data is limited, noisy, or constantly changing.

LUNCH AND LEARN

Thursday, June 4, 2026 | 12pm ET

Thank you for attending!

Featuring

Chris Gaffney

Upcoming Course Calendar
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Supply Chain and Logistics Institute

A Pattern That Keeps Surfacing

Conversations with senior leaders across strong, technically capable supply chain organizations

> **The analytical capability is improving — but the decision-making discipline around it is not keeping pace.**
>
> *— Recurring theme across senior supply chain leader conversations*

Move fast to the model

Analysts compress or skip problem definition. The harder work — defining the business decision — comes second.

Assumptions aren't surfaced

Demand, cost, and capacity inputs are treated as facts. Nobody owns the list of what must be true for the plan to work.

Output evaluated mathematically

The model is checked for internal consistency, not operational plausibility. The translation layer is missing.

Recommendations not grounded

Leadership receives a number, not an operational consequence. The decision is made on the analysis, not the reality.

This is not a tools problem, a data problem, or a talent problem. It is a discipline problem. And it is fixable.

What the Experience Taught Us

Three situations that shaped how to think about analysis and decisions

Growing Brand

What happened:

Model was technically correct. Demand forecast taken at face value. Brand team assumptions — competitive dynamics, channel realism, pricing — were never interrogated.

Result:

Idle capacity. Uninstalled production lines. Write-offs.

FAILURE: Problem Framing

The breakdown was upstream of the model. Going forward, brand and supply chain both required to sign off on business cases.

Plant Closure

What happened:

Model showed remaining system had capacity to absorb plant closure volume — based on rated line speeds. Dock/storage capacity at peak and shift startup constraints were invisible.

Result:

Sub-optimal sourcing from other plants that directly undermined the business case.

FAILURE: Operational Validation

Mathematical accuracy is not operational validity. The translation layer was missing.

New Package

What happened:

Cross-functional alignment, scenario-based thinking, clear demand understanding across channels and routes to market built into the process from the start.

Result:

Right outcome. Same tools, same organization.

WHAT CHANGED: Decision Discipline

Not a more sophisticated model — a stronger discipline around the model. The questions were asked before the analysis ran.

"Most of the work is outside the model." — With today's data and ML advances, that proportion may be 75 percent.

Where the Breakdown Happens

Two failure points — and the four moments where discipline shows up or doesn't

BEFORE THE MODEL

The hardest step — defining the business decision — gets compressed or skipped.

1. *What decision are we actually trying to make?*
2. *What scenarios matter, and why?*
3. *What does success look like operationally, not mathematically?*
4. *What constraints are real versus assumed?*

These require conversations with people who understand the constraints, not just the data. That's part of why they get skipped.

AFTER THE MODEL

This is where more serious errors occur. Mistaking mathematical accuracy for business validity.

1. *Does this result make sense in how the business actually operates?*
2. *What changes on a Tuesday night shift at Plant B when demand spikes 12%?*
3. *What assumption would flip this recommendation?*
4. *Have we planned for how this will be received, and by whom?*

Model issues can be fixed with more time. Misinterpretation of output leads to bad decisions that are much harder to unwind.

The first two situations were both failures at these moments — not failures of the models themselves.

A Five-Question Diagnostic

Before an analysis moves forward — if any cannot be answered, the analysis is not ready

1

What business decision are we actually trying to make?

Not what are we analyzing. What is the actual choice, and who has authority to make it?

Would have caught: Growing Brand

2

What assumption would flip this recommendation?

List the top assumptions. Rank them by likelihood of being wrong and consequence if wrong.

Would have caught: Growing Brand

3

Does this output make sense in how the business actually operates?

Translate to operational reality. What changes, for whom, at what cost, under what conditions?

Would have caught: Plant Closure

4

Has change management started yet?

If question 4 cannot be answered, the change management work has not started. That is already late.

Would have caught: Both

5

Are the people who will execute this plan in the room?

Constraints that are real but invisible in the model are visible to operators. Have they reviewed the output?

Would have caught: Plant Closure

Use this before the recommendation reaches leadership.

If any question cannot be answered with a specific, grounded response — the analysis is not ready.

Regardless of how strong the model is.

Try this on your next recommendation before it hits the room.

The diagnostic is not a checklist — it is the front end of Business Case Development.

Closing the Gap: A Decision Engineering Approach

The diagnostic is the front end of a full decision process — not a standalone checklist

BCD

Business Case Development

"What should we decide?"

- Define the decision and scope precisely
- Surface and document all assumptions
- Develop ≥3 genuine alternatives
- Quantify cost / service / risk trade-offs
- Run the 5-question diagnostic here

BCV

Business Case Validation

"Can we actually execute this?"

- Validate operational feasibility — not just capacity math
- Stress-test ±10–20% swings on key assumptions
- Identify top risks with mitigation and owner
- Test what the model cannot see (dock, shift, supplier)
- Update business case with operational reality

BCI

Business Case Implementation

"Did we deliver the value we promised?"

- Name owners before approval, not after
- Build timeline from operational constraints up
- Start change management at BCD — not at go-live
- Track actuals vs. business case assumptions
- Document the learning for the next decision

A Business Case Is Not a Document. It Is a Decision Process.

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5-Question Diagnostic lives here →

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The 4 C's: A Decision-Focused Framework

CRITICAL THINKING

Decision test:

Were the assumptions that drive this recommendation made visible and testable?

Case example:

Little Rock — the right question about what the model wasn't capturing was never asked

COLLABORATION

Decision test:

Did supply chain and commercial both interrogate each other's assumptions?

Case example:

Powerade — supply chain did not sufficiently interrogate the brand team's demand assumptions

COMMUNICATION

Decision test:

Does leadership understand what changes, for whom, and under what conditions the answer flips?

Case example:

Plant Closure — leadership saw capacity math, but not the dock, storage, and shift-start realities that changed execution.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Decision test:

Have the people affected by this decision been prepared before it is announced?

Case example:

Both— affected operators and stakeholders were not engaged early enough to challenge assumptions before approval.

BCD → BCV → BCI is the process; the 4 C's are the behaviors that make the process work.

Notice what the 4 C's do not include: model accuracy, data quality, or visualization quality. Those are inputs.

What 'Good' Looks Like

And whether your team has the skills and structure to operate ahead of the curve

Critical Thinking

The five questions are answered before the model is built — not after the recommendation is written. The business decision is defined before the analytical work begins.

Business Case Rigor

BCD, BCV, and BCI are distinct phases with distinct owners and outputs. They are not one document written the night before the presentation.

Decision Adoption

Change management starts at BCD, not at implementation kickoff. The people who will be affected are part of building the solution, not recipients of it.

The tools are not the problem.

AI-assisted analytics, optimization models, and advanced forecasting are real assets.

But tools amplify the thinking behind them.

Weak decision discipline and better tools is a faster path to the wrong answer.

The organizations that build decision discipline now will compound that advantage as analytical tools continue to accelerate.

SCL is building workshops and courseware on decision-focused critical thinking — including a 3-day practitioner program.

From Insight to Action: A 3-Day Practitioner Program

Georgia Tech
Supply Chain &
Logistics Institute

WHO IT'S FOR: Analysts to Directors on supply chain, operations, finance, and commercial teams working on mid- and long-term infrastructure decisions — capacity, network design, sourcing strategy, technology investment, and IBP.

DAY 1

Think Before You Model

Critical Thinking for Supply Chain Decisions

The Blind Spot
Why analytical capability is outpacing decision discipline — and where the breakdown happens before and after the model

Decision Framing by Time Horizon
Strategic vs. tactical decisions: the questions, the trade-offs, and the assumptions that matter most at each horizon

The 5-Question Diagnostic
A structured pre-model discipline applied to a real supply chain infrastructure scenario

Workshop: Frame the Decision
Teams practice problem definition, scenario development, and assumption mapping on a live case before any model is built

DAY 2

Build a Credible Business Case

BCD → BCV: Development and Validation

Business Case Development (BCD)
Define scope, develop ≥3 alternatives, quantify cost/service/risk trade-offs, and document every assumption that drives the recommendation

Business Case Validation (BCV)
Operational feasibility testing across manufacturing, logistics, procurement, and finance — the constraints the model cannot see

Cross-Functional Alignment
RACI, escalation paths, and governance design: who owns the decision, who validates it, and who can change it

Workshop: Build and Stress-Test
Teams develop a full BCD/BCV package for the carrying case, including sensitivity analysis and risk mitigation plans

DAY 3

Execute and Deliver Value

BCI + Decision Storytelling

Business Case Implementation (BCI)
Governance, phased timelines, and tracking vs. the original case — how to run implementation without losing the value promised at approval

Change Management from Day 1
The 4 C's and ADKAR applied to supply chain decisions: why adoption starts at BCD, not at rollout

Decision Storytelling
Translating analytical output into executive recommendation: structure, narrative, and the four-question leadership test

Workshop: Present to Leadership
Teams deliver final recommendations from the carrying case to a simulated leadership panel — with structured peer and facilitator debrief

FORMAT: 3 days | In-person or virtual | Customizable for your team

CONTACT: course@scl.gatech.edu

LEARN MORE: scl.gatech.edu/professional-education

Three Things to Take Into Monday

What to apply from this session before your next major recommendation

1

Run the five-question diagnostic on your next recommendation

Before it reaches leadership. If any question cannot be answered with a specific, grounded response — the analysis is not ready. Identify the gap. Close it.

2

Name the assumption that would flip your recommendation

In every current business case or major analysis your team is running: surface the single assumption that, if wrong, changes the answer. Make it visible. Track it.

3

Start change management at the analysis stage — not at go-live

Identify who is affected by the next mid- or long-term decision your team will make. Bring them into BCD. The Growing Brand and Plant Closure failures both started with people not in the room.

Upcoming Courses

Machine Learning Applications for Supply Chain Planning

Sept 14-17, 2026 | Virtual (Instructor-led)

Generative AI Application for Supply Chain Professionals

October 19-21, 2026 | Georgia Tech Savannah Campus

Supply Chain Optimization and Prescriptive Analytics

Nov 2-5, 2026 | Georgia Tech Savannah Campus

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All Georgia residents can receive 50% off our Professional Education courses
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✓ GA residency verification required
✓ Use code *SCL-GAAIM* at checkout
✓ Cannot be combined with other discounts

Upcoming SCL Lunch and Learn Opportunities

Why Do So Many Automation Projects Fail?

w/ Russ Meller, Matthew Hobson-Rohrer, Juergen Baumbach and Chris Gaffney

Thursday, July 2nd | 12-1pm ET | Zoom Registration Link

scl.gatech.edu/jul26-lnl

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