Tariffs, Trade, and Uncertainty: What You Can Do Now

As political tensions and economic uncertainty continue to affect global trade policy, ripple effects are being felt across the commercial furniture ecosystem from dealers to designers, end users, and anyone involved in specifying and delivering workplace furniture.

Rising costs, longer lead times, and sourcing volatility are reshaping project timelines, budgets, and decision-making. These disruptions often arrive before the policies behind them are finalized.

For leaders across the industry, this moment is less about reacting to headlines and more about strengthening readiness for whatever comes next.

Six Practical Moves You Can Make Now

1. Know Where Your Products Come From

Even if you source exclusively from local manufacturers, the materials and components used in those products may come from other countries and may be subject to tariffs.

Ask your manufacturers:

- Are any of your key product lines affected by current tariffs?
- Have raw material or component costs increased due to trade policy?
- Are any lead times or availability issues tied to international sourcing?

Understanding these factors helps you anticipate pricing or delivery changes and communicate them clearly to clients.

2. Monitor Manufacturer Responses

Even when a product is assembled locally, there’s a good chance some of its components or materials are sourced internationally and may be affected by tariffs or supply chain shifts. Some manufacturers are already taking steps to reduce exposure. Your role is to stay ahead of those adjustments so you can align your messaging and set accurate expectations.

- Shifting production to tariff-neutral countries
- Increasing domestic assembly or sourcing

- Adjusting product lines to use tariff-free materials
- Offering substitute SKUs with lower exposure

3. Build Pricing Flexibility into Client Proposals

With the cost of goods subject to change, your pricing strategy should anticipate movement.

- Include validity dates on all quotes
- Consider escalation or tariff adjustment clauses in contracts
- Offer good/better/best options so clients can flex with their budget

4. Keep an Eye on Lead Times

Tariffs and trade policy often create delays, even before price increases hit. That can show up as:

- Longer fulfillment timelines
- Backorders on high-demand SKUs
- Limited availability on finishes or imported materials

5. Offer Domestic and Tariff-Neutral Alternatives

As uncertainty grows around international sourcing, more clients and project teams are prioritizing low-risk, domestic solutions.

Support that shift by:

- Highlighting products with domestic production or assembly
- Promoting North American options where lead times are more reliable
- Recommending quick-ship or stock programs that avoid risk zones

This approach reduces exposure and positions you as a trusted guide.

6. Strengthen Communication Across Stakeholders

Whether you're working with clients, design teams, or internal sales staff, clear communication is your best risk management tool.

Be proactive:

- Include brief, client-friendly explanations when pricing shifts
- Use side-by-side product comparisons to support decision-making when applicable
- Be transparent about how your partners are working to reduce disruption

Clear communication helps avoid frustration and builds lasting trust.

Market Shifts Are Inevitable. Resilient Companies Lead Through Change.

Market shifts are a reality of business, and readiness is critical. By staying close to your suppliers, educating your team and clients, and building flexibility into your proposals, you can not only withstand uncertainty, but you can also build a reputation as a trusted advisor in the process.

The global market isn't getting simpler. But your response to it can be smarter.

Resources to Support You

- As you navigate these market shifts, having a thought partner can make all the difference. Solomon Coyle offers tools and expertise to help you lead with clarity and confidence:
- Consulting to assist with developing strategy or improving operational performance.
- Executive Coaching to support leadership presence in high-pressure moments.
- Financial Benchmarking with SCi³ Toolkit includes a Budget Scenario Planning tool to help model financial outcomes, plan proactively, and assess margin performance under varying business conditions
- ITR Economics Forecasts to provide macroeconomic insights and long-term context for more strategic planning
- At Solomon Coyle, we equip the commercial furniture industry with the tools, guidance, and data needed to navigate complexity, build stronger businesses, and lead with confidence. Have questions or want to connect? Reach out to support@solomoncoyle.com.