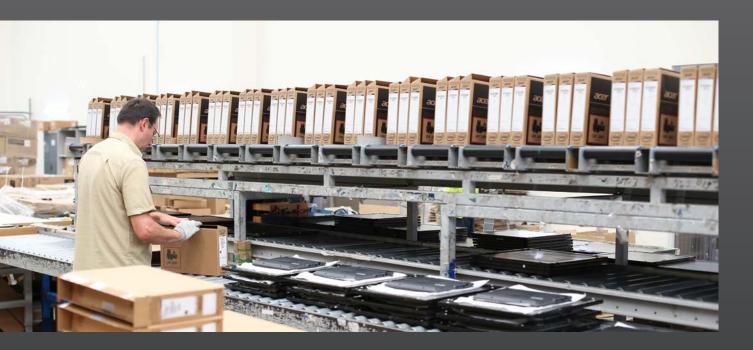# WEATHERING THE STORM: OVERCOMING TECHNOLOGY SUPPLY CHAIN RISK

With increasing customer uncertainty, many industries have faced a significant drop in consumer demand: but not so for information technology. Demand increased dramatically as the pandemic — and the associated societal shutdown — took hold and sent many of us home to work from our home office. Organisations that have required their workers to take their work home found it necessary to ramp up their supply of mobile computing technology — both to enable their staff to work at home, and also to ensure the organisations' applications were fully accessible and usage policies are adhered to.

While the availability of software would never be an issue, and the communications infrastructure in Australia has proven itself sufficiently reliable to enable remote working, the supply of the necessary computing hardware is a different matter. Like many other industries in Australia, the IT industry is heavily dependent on overseas supply chains for the supply of hardware such as desktop PCs, servers and laptops. And with so many countries closing their borders, and internationals flights grounded, the result has been freight costs that have doubled or even quadrupled, as well as long delays in delivery times.
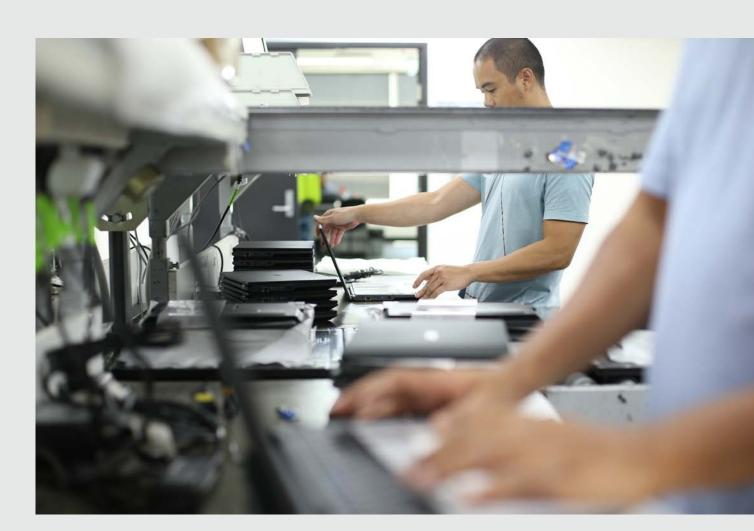
In a report published in April, Gartner said that "worldwide PC shipments declined 12.3% in the first quarter of 2020", and directly attributed this to the coronavirus pandemic.1 For Australia, which has no appreciable local technology manufacturing, this has been a problem. But for those few organisations that can provide a local supply chain, there has been a significant increase in turnover.

Even if the components are sourced from overseas, local PC and laptop assembly from well-established component stock has provided a buffer to enable companies such as Acer to rise to the challenge of supporting the computing needs of Australian organisations.

We mustn't forget, however that the pandemic is not the only problem creating headlines in recent times. The growing attention being given to Australia's relationship with its 'largest trading partner' and growing concerns over cybersecurity risk and cyber-infiltration have raised many questions about the technology we use: questions about relying on, not only technology sourced from international suppliers — especially for those organisations that may be potential targets for cyber-espionage — but also the greater risk of computing hardware being taken out of the office in larger numbers.

When your staff take your organisation's computing assets home with them, they are no longer in the (hopefully) safe and secure environment of the workplace. The application of a well-designed and implemented standard operation environment (SOE) on those devices has never been more important. Not only does it enable your organisation to have greater control over the security of the device, but also enables easier technical support when your users experience problems.

The rapid deployment of a standardised hardware platform, running an approved SOE — and for a larger than ever mobile workforce — places an excessive demand on IT staff when they need to be focused on ensuring that the backend systems and networks in the data centre can manage reliably with the increased remote access demands.

Outsourcing deployment to a local supplier that can not only provide local assembly but also customisation and SOE deployment at scale, can reduce the headaches and overheads in safely and rapidly deploying technology for a mobile workforce.

And when it comes to rotation and upgrade, as well as disposal, of those same assets, a local accredited supplier can also help make sure the old assets are disposed of and recycled safely and securely.

They say that 2020 will be a year Australia will never forget: but what it has shown us is that we can rise to any challenge presented to us. Decreasing our demand on overseas suppliers and growing our local manufacturing and supply base will see us weather not only the storm of 2020, but put us in a good place for growth when it is all over.

Rod Bassi
Oceanic Sales Director
Acer
Rod.Bassi@acer.com

Rod Bassi

Reference

1. Gartner 2020, Gartner Says Worldwide PC Shipments Declined 12.3% in the First Quarter of 2020 Due to Coronavirus Pandemic, gartner.com.