

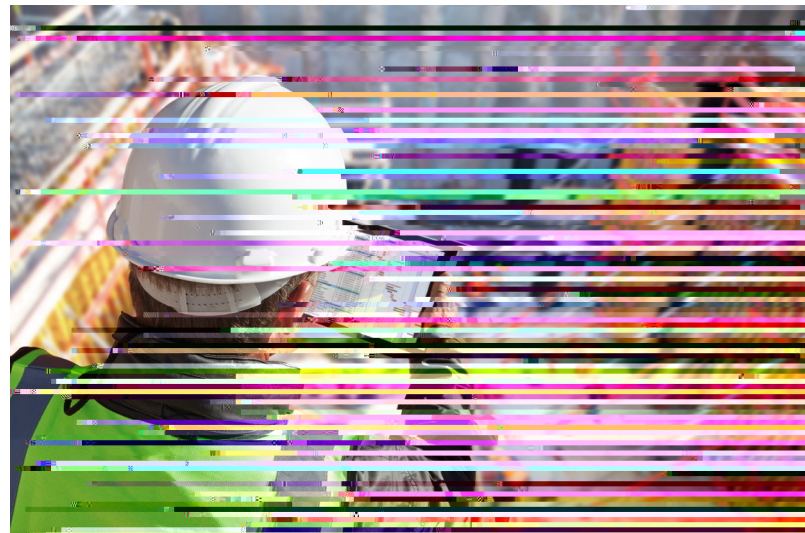
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Abraham Wald, a mathematician at Columbia University during World War II, might have been onto something. While Wald may not be a household name, the British pilots in World War II were probably thankful for his insight. As described in Kevin Drum's article "The Counterintuitive World," the Royal Air Force observed that planes returning from missions were riddled with bullet holes. Consequently, there was a movement to bolster the aircraft's armor where the bullet holes were observed. It was Wald who made an ingenious deduction — why reinforce the aircraft in places where the holes were made? In fact, the aircraft in question ultimately returned from their sorties so it must be the undamaged locations that were the weakest areas. Ultimately, it was his revision to the designs that enhanced the aircraft and made the planes safer to fly.

As the world begins to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic, there are noticeable changes in supply and demand. There is more to it than just the litany of shortages and price fluctuations impacting the construction world — workforce demand and market and end-user shifts are also taking center stage.

Contractors are migrating to the hot areas like a moth to a flame. However, it's important to first ask whether these are the right strategic moves. Recalling a famous quote by ice hockey great Wayne Gretzky, "Skate to where the puck is going to be, not where it has been," provides critical insight into how strategic leaders must recondition their long-term thinking.



Remember that Wald decided not to add armor to a plane that was doing its job because he saw the problem in an entirely different light.

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Amazon may not have needed marketing help prior to the pandemic but it certainly received an enormous boost during it. It continues to reshape the landscape of retail and commerce daily. Whether it is building large distribution centers, headquarters or simply those "last mile" shipping centers, contractors are flocking to the e-commerce behemoth. The flood of contractors becoming "distribution specialists" has the resemblance of a group of children playing soccer.

Rather than seeing the ball brought skillfully down field,

there is simply a group of children chasing a ball to and fro. Of course, there are plenty of capable contractors building for Amazon and making profits. However, this same phenomenon is happening in the bio, medical, and pharmaceutical sectors.

Previously, during the green movement, there were contractors scrambling to become Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified professionals. The expression that comes to mind is: "Unless you are the lead dog, the view is always the same."

Rather than seek to become the next green contractor, would not it be more practical to be the first blue contractor (if that was a thing)?

This is not to say e-commerce will go away any time soon. For that matter, it is a safe bet to also estimate that we will get, not a P or G, for the duration. However, real strategic success comes from examining those trends that are simply



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