

Designed to Manage  
Lean Principles

An Epicor White Paper

**EPICOR®**

# Abstract

Lean manufacturing has been an evolving practice in manufacturing for over 20 years. As a result, consumers have enjoyed lower prices, higher quality and more involvement in the overall supply process.

Today, with increased global competition and the advent of the Internet, customers have more influence than ever before. Customers are demanding greater product flexibility, smaller, more frequent deliveries and higher product quality—all, of course, at a lower price with the same service level expected from a mass-produced, off-the-shelf product.

Manufacturers are continuing to become more customer-centric in their approach to the market. This philosophy and lean manufacturing go hand in hand. In order to meet customer demands, manufacturers not only have to concentrate on taking out non-value added processes internally, they also need to ensure they know exactly what their customer wants and when they want it.

To this end, manufacturers are widening the scope and focus of lean manufacturing to encompass all processes that contribute to the bottom line. Lean thinking is now increasingly being applied to all areas within the organization – from sales and marketing to engineering and production through to finance and post sale service. The true benefits of lean thinking will only be fully realized when the entire enterprise adopts lean ideology.

Epicor enables enterprises to attain this goal.

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# Quick Summary of Lean Manufacturing

Lean manufacturing is an adaptation of the highly successful and significantly copied Toyota Production System (TPS), detailed in the national best seller, "The Machine that Changed the World," an MIT study of worldwide production methods. In practice, lean principles strive to identify the "value" of processes and eliminate the "waste" or invaluable processes that the customer would not perceive as something for which they would be willing to pay for. In this customer-centric business climate, manufacturers worldwide have started to ask, "Would my customer perceive this activity as adding value?" In doing so they have started to identify waste within their organizations and have removed these wasteful processes, improving their lead times, opening up new capacity, as well as maximizing the bottom line of their organizations. In addition, there is no magic switch that companies flip when migrating to lean techniques. Rather, the process is one of continuous improvement as each value stream is defined and reworked for optimum efficiency and performance.

The following outlines the key principles of lean manufacturing:

- **Value** – specify value as defined by the customer
- **Value stream** – processes required to bring a product or service to the customer
- **Flow** – smooth progression of products or services
- **Pull** – each step produces a product or service when ordered by the next in-line customer
- **Continuous improvement** – a process by which activities create value and waste is eliminated

It is worth noting that lean manufacturing techniques are applicable not only within the enterprise but across its suppliers and business partners. Customer demand is driving products to be produced at an ever increasing pace with squeezed lead times and lowered costs. The only way for them to get ahead of all the pressures is through speed; but in order to do this, everyone in the supply chain needs to react quickly and efficiently. As a result, manufacturers who traditionally have declined to implement lean principles may feel pressure in coming months from customers or suppliers to migrate to lean practices as a way to streamline overall operations for end products.

Take an automobile for example. According to *The Machine That Changed the World* by James P. Womack, "Assembling the major components into a complete vehicle, the task of the final assembly plant, accounts for only 15% or so of the total manufacturing process. The bulk of the process involves the engineering and fabricating more than 10,000 discrete parts and assembling these into perhaps 100 components, engines, transmissions, steering gears, suspensions, and so forth." Spread this production across a supply chain of suppliers and component manufacturers. It becomes clear very quickly that in pursuit of lean, manufacturers must implement lean processes not only in their plants, but also in the plants of their suppliers and their suppliers' suppliers.

# Epicor Supporting Lean Manufacturing

## Key Epicor Solutions for Lean Manufacturing

Epicor Manufacturing is designed to meet the needs of the discrete mixed-mode manufacturing companies and is delivered 'out of the box' with lean in mind. Epicor Manufacturing is designed from the "ground up" to operate in real time to optimize supply and demand for the enterprise, plant, work center or cell. All without the need to run batch-oriented material requirements planning (MRP) processes (although Epicor will support companies that have product lines that lend themselves to control via an MRP II philosophy).

Epicor provides support for lean manufacturers in a number of ways, including:

- Core Epicor methodologies that support lean
- Measure and respond
- Customer relationship management (CRM)
- Supplier relationship management (SRM)
- Product lifecycle management (PLM)
- Work-orderless manufacturing (Kanban flow)
- Automated material flow
- Enterprise-wide shipping management
- Quality management
- Electronic collaboration with partners
- Support for hybrid approaches to lean
- Emerging technologies in support of lean

Each of these will be explored in more detail in the following sections.

## Core Methodologies That Support Lean

### **Enterprise Infrastructure**

Providing an enterprise infrastructure that integrates and manages operational data is pivotal to sustainable lean implementations. Epicor offers an embedded solution that integrates all departments and companies within an enterprise—enabling real-time sharing and usage of information. This reduces data redundancy and inaccuracy ensuring that key strategic and tactical decisions are made from accurate and up-to-date information that everyone understands—whether you are an engineer updating a drawing, a machine operator starting a job or an executive managing cash flow.

### **Demand-Based Flow**

Epicor Manufacturing is designed to meet the needs of discrete, mixed-mode manufacturers and manages clear visibility between end customer demand and production and procurement activity. This ensures that everyone in an enterprise can visualize which customers they are working for at any given time even though a production worker may be working for multiple customers simultaneously. The real-time pegging of demand to supply ensures that all employees at all times understand that the customer is at the center of the company's business.

### **Paperless Manufacturing**

Epicor Manufacturing is designed to be a real-time, paperless solution. All employees can have their tasks driven by electronic work queues. Whether it be the buyer making purchasing decisions, the machine operator selecting the next job to work on, the credit manager monitoring the latest customer going over their credit limit or shipping packing the latest delivery—every user has access to all the information needed to fulfill their task. For example, the shop floor worker has access to the latest manufacturing processes for the part as well as drawings, material requirements, and manufacturing instructions, including quality documentation. Not only can the employee look at how to produce the product, they can also redline drawings and provide feedback on ways to improve the process.

### **Automated Workflow**

Epicor Manufacturing includes an embedded workflow that manages the streamlining of business processes for best practices as well as unique processes and business rules. From Marketing and Sales, to Production and Planning, Sourcing and Procurement, Installation and Service through to Financial Recognition, Epicor enables the whole business process to be real-time and paperless. All users of the system, whether internal such as a planner or external such as a supplier, are presented with a workbench view that summarizes those tasks that need to be carried out. The entire Epicor Manufacturing solution is designed to embrace the elements of lean by streamlining the business cycle so that an enterprise can maximize its resources, minimize its costs and improve profitability. The workflow toolset embedded in Epicor Manufacturing includes the following key features that enable manufacturers to streamline operations.

- Activity Workbenches
- Business Activity Management/Monitoring
- Task Management

### **Activity Workbenches**

Activity Workbenches resonate throughout the system to streamline use of the Epicor system as well as provide for control and access to key information required in the “Day in the Life” of the agent performing the daily transactional work. For example, the Sales Order Workbench is a single view of all customer related information. This view allows sales and sales management to manage pipelines, marketing, telemarketing, leads, opportunities, orders, returns, service orders, contracts, jobs, calls, and tasks and see all related information on a customer from one place. A work list also ensures that the sales person is working on the right task at the right time. There are over 10 workbenches available in the system including: Sales Workbench, Planners Workbench, Engineering Workbench, Inspection Workbench, Service Call Center Workbench, Buyers Workbench, Credit Manager Workbench, Plant Floor Workbench, as well as our on-line business partner portals, Supplier and Customer Connect.

### **Business Activity Management**

Business Activity Management is a further extension of the workflow process. Rather than a series of interlinked tasks surrounding a process the Business Activity Management module, including the Business Activity Monitor allows a company to build in simple proactive business rules within all functions in the system. This monitoring of activity in real time enables decision makers to be proactive in making decisions as well provides an avenue to identify and manage unique business rules. Forms of communicating these components of workflow include historical logging of activity, HTML-based e-mail to key agents that require the information, as well as the Business Activity Monitor user interface. This interface is designed to fit the unique needs of the user and contains the key “monitors” required to perform their job functions.

### **Task Management**

The Epicor Manufacturing Task Management functionality allows users to define workflow processes that key transactions need to go through in order to be completed. Tasks may be a single step process or may be a series of interlinked processes involving many different parties. At all times users have a dynamic task list that informs them in real time of what they are needed to do. Task sets can be dynamically assigned based on circumstances. For example, different types of engineering change may require different levels of authorization and work. The task management system will automatically assign and route the work needed to process the change. Task sets are tightly embedded into the system ensuring that transactions can only be updated if the task set is at the right status. For example, a quote cannot be sent out to the prospect unless the sales manager has approved the pricing.

### **JIT Manufacturing**

With Just-in-Time methodologies, many manufacturers are faced with constantly changing blanket orders, small run repeat orders and delivery schedules that are shorter than material lead-time. Epicor supports JIT manufacturing through its integration of procurement with production schedules as well as customer order monitoring for optimum delivery schedules.

In addition, the Epicor Material Requirements Planning (MRP) module can alleviate the stress of these situations by automating the processes required to keep supply and demand synchronized. Specific functionality related to material control includes automatic adjustment of MRP based orders and forecasts and automated purchasing tools that ensure materials are delivered when needed.

## Measure and Respond

Continuous improvement doesn't just happen. For manufacturers, the tools to measure how business is performing need to be concise and well delivered. Epicor Business Intelligence (BI) provides a predefined toolset for measuring efficiencies across the entire enterprise. From Sales and Marketing to Production, Inventory Management, and Finance, Epicor Business Intelligence is delivered "out of the box" ready with key measurements that lean manufacturers require. In addition, enterprise specific measurements are easily identified and racked for optimum efficiencies. From high-level measurements of enterprise-wide analysis to the detailed events that drive key business decisions, Epicor Business Intelligence gives upper and middle management the tools to define and make changes for optimum efficiencies.

More than just after the fact analysis, Epicor Business Intelligence also offers real-time "watch dog" analysis of key events. Epicor BI Alerts can be used to easily manage key processes for improvement as the inefficiencies happen, rather than waiting for the results.

Automation of response streamlines process flow and helps manufacturers more proactively improve their processes. From sales and customer service to production and quality, the flow of information to key individuals making decisions and acting is automated through Epicor standard workflow and the real-time monitoring provided by the Epicor Dashboard.

## Customer Relationship Management

In lean organizations, inefficiencies are not streamlined solely on the production floor. From initial prospect contact to customer account follow up, the sales and marketing processes are managed for optimum efficiencies and customer service. Whether your customer is Boeing or a tier 2 or 3 manufacturer, the customer relationship management solution you select needs to be built on solid manufacturing principles for sales and marketing. Epicor CRM is one of the first truly embedded customer relationship solutions designed specifically for the needs of today's manufacturer. Whether doing simple account follow-up, defining marketing campaigns, reviewing sales analysis for the year, quoting a custom part on the road, or responding to customer inquiry over the Web, Epicor's customer-centric CRM module incorporates leading technology for optimum customer service and sales effectiveness.

## Supplier Relationship Management

Epicor Supplier Relationship Management (SRM) makes the entire purchasing process more cost-efficient, improves quality of purchases, and enables more strategic and prudent spending decisions. Epicor SRM incorporates supplier management with demand-based purchasing to enable purchasing agents to minimize work in process expenditures while building key relationships with vendors. A primary component to minimizing wasteful inventory, Epicor SRM enhances visibility during the buy process and alerts of changes in demand as they occur.

The following is included in the toolset available with Epicor SRM:

- Purchasing Management
- Purchasing RFQ Management
- Payables
- Vendor Management

## Product Lifecycle Management

For manufacturers that engineer, sell, and manufacture their own product lines, managing the mountain of information around the life of a product from initial conception to product decline can be an overwhelming task with multiple databases and documents in multiple locations as well as historical analysis surrounding the product during its life. Analyzing and streamlining this process has come to the forefront in terms of new technology offerings and Epicors' PLM module with document management control. Various CAD integration tools streamline the flow of information for engineers, sales, production, quality and management as they analyze and adapt new techniques for producing end products more effectively.

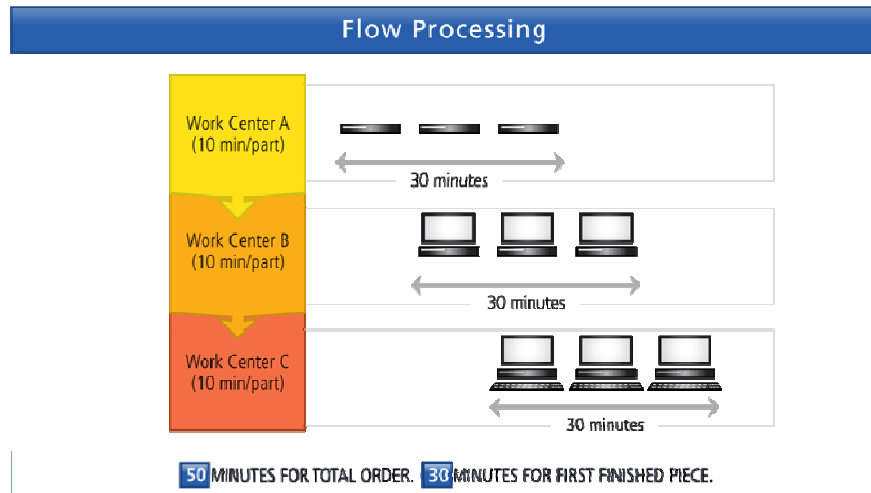
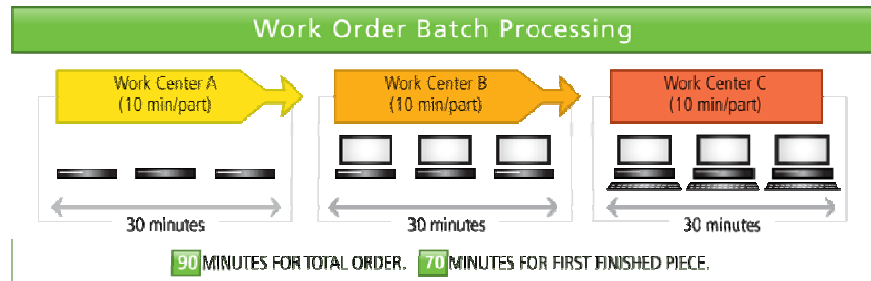
## Work-Orderless Manufacturing (Kanban Flow)

Automation of replenishment based on demand is not a new concept to manufacturers. Inventory replenishment is a key concept that has been a core functional requirement in software systems since the 1970's. However, the concept of automating the replenishment and essentially pulling the product through production without human intervention is revolutionary.

Many manufacturers are not ready to give up the control to offer this "hands off" manufacturing planning; others are embracing this concept and are realizing increased profitability as a result.

Many software solutions "bolt on" third-party "demand pull" or "work orderless" systems that have great functionality but lack the tight integration to the core enterprise system that would make them effective tools.

Epicor Manufacturing-embedded Kanban (a signal to manufacture or move product) functionality is tightly integrated with the core application and offers the functionality required to manage several types of systems for Kanban Control, including Manufacturing Real-Time Kanbans, Manufacturing Flow Kanbans, Purchase Real Time Kanbans, and Stock Replenishment Kanbans. Essentially, as inventory levels or order demand requires additional product, Kanbans are automatically requested. The Kanban Requests component manages the stocking and order demand for parts flagged as needing Kanban Control. Additionally, user-definable rules enable parts to be flagged for Kanban Control at the part, warehouse, or individual bin or cell location level.



### Real-Time Manufacturing Kanban

Real-Time Manufacturing Kanbans eliminate the need for work orders or jobs and reduce the amount of on-hand inventories as parts are electronically triggered for replenishment as they are needed. Instead of planning for each individual order that is processed, parts or components are pulled through production as inventory stocking levels or cell stocking levels fall below minimums. Visually the cell is queued to produce based on the Kanban quantity to take the on-hand back to the maximum quantity for the part at its warehouse, individual bin or cell location.

### **Manufacturing Flow Kanban**

Differing from the Real-Time Manufacturing Kanban, the Manufacturing Flow Kanban looks at future demand to dynamically calculate future replenishment Kanbans. This gives downstream cells and suppliers visibility of future demand (even though the actual Kanban events may differ during execution). As Kanbans are acted on, the downstream demand requirement is dynamically updated. Thus, ensuring all cells and suppliers have real-time up-to-date visibility of future demand.

### **Real-Time Stock Replenishment Kanban**

Much like the Real-Time Manufacturing Kanban, the Real-Time Stock Replenishment Kanban moves inventory around the company as it is needed in a particular manufacturing cell, shipping area, customer consignment location or any other location in the company. This automatic triggering of stocked inventory enables manufacturers to use Material Request Queue's to tell material handlers where the stocked inventory is required so that it can be moved as needed.

### **Real-Time Purchase Kanban**

Used to replenish directly from the end supplier, the Real-Time Purchase Kanban tells purchasing that a stock replenishment is required and optionally can automatically send an email to the supplier requesting additional inventory against an open purchase contract, detailing the location that the material then be received directly to the main stores or directly to the production floor if needed. Real-Time Purchase Kanban functionality automates the replenishment of material from vendor stores and provides for visibility of current supply requests.

Choice enables Epicor manufacturers' flexibility in implementation of lean and produces production schedules that more closely match what is being worked on. Whether "pulling" or "pushing" the manufacturer has choice in system implementation at the part and location level. In addition, Epicor Manufacturing is designed to, in real-time, generate the supply signals for the demand that is generated. A further emphasis of this is that the product was designed to also handle not just standard builds but also rapidly changing customer designed parts. It was only later that Epicor offered MRP and MRPII options. But again, when these options were introduced they were written to fit into the lean principles at the core of Epicor.

## **Automated Material Flow**

In Kanban, material is not "delivered." In practice, the using operation obtains (pulls) material from the supplying operation. This "pull" then becomes the authorization for the supplying cell to make a predefined quantity of the same item just pulled. It should be noted that in a job shop environment, where the same item is rarely repeated, the pull signal becomes the authorization to commence manufacture of the next predetermined block of work.

Epicor Manufacturing offers advanced functionality when it comes to the management of material in the lean environment. A company can set up any number of methodologies simultaneously for managing this and supports either push or pull methods. Epicor allows floor stock locations to be set up. These can be fed in a number of ways: a Job operation that needs material, an operator who wants to build a certain amount of a part, an operator who wants to run a machine for a certain time, or based on re-order levels of the floor stock location. The floor location can be supplied via another cell, main stores, or a supplier directly. Even in a 'jobbing' environment Epicor Manufacturing helps to keep stock at a minimum. Backflushing can take place at an operation level rather than waiting for the whole job to be completed. Also when inventory is issued to WIP it is not a black hole. Epicor allows users to track inventory that is in WIP but not physically consumed. Many companies will run a hybrid approach (certainly in the 'to order' market) Epicor allows companies to do this with complete consistency. Epicor Manufacturing will keep track of a cells raw material automatically and allow the cell periodically to count itself in order to keep the raw material status accurate.

## Enterprise-Wide Shipping Management

As enterprises move towards lean, they drive the need for their customer to ship more often and in smaller quantities. This adds to the workload of any shipping department and demands that the shipping process—identifying what to ship, from where to ship, picking the product, interfacing with carriers for freight information, as well as tracking information and billing the customer—appropriately provides the maximum throughput. The Epicor shipping solution, Advanced Shipping Management, is designed to maximize output of any shipping department. Whether your organization ships directly from Work in Process or Zone Picks from multiple warehouses located in separate states, the tools to cost effectively manage the shipping process are available from Epicor.

## Quality Management

A cornerstone to lean, quality standards have developed on the basis of continuous improvement and the principle of "doing it right the first time." Whether your organization has selected to use the ISO9000 structure, the Six Sigma approach, or any other quality system, Epicor Manufacturing fully integrated Quality Assurance module and supporting Document Management capabilities help you define processes and implement them in your organization.

The Quality Assurance module ties together all quality functions, whether it's scrapping end parts, rejecting raw materials or tracking first article inspections. Inspectors have queues of items to inspect with full disposition and corrective action follow-up. Shop floor employees can flag parts as non-conformant, which moves them into an inspection queue. Parts that fail inspection may be flagged or reviewed by a Material Review Board.

"We never could have received the awards and certifications without Epicor. Epicor's manufacturing solution showed us where our weaknesses were and helped us excel in those areas. The Quality Assurance module has allowed us to integrate five separate ISO-related databases into one centralized solution." General Manager/Owner, Epicor Manufacturing Customer

(In 1997, this Epicor Software customer was the first and only vendor to receive "World Class" status from Sikorsky Aircraft, followed by a "Supplier of the Year" award from Sikorsky in 2000. These ratings were based upon guidelines set forth in engineering, technical, inspection and environmental issues.)

## Supporting Your Kaizen Events

Empowering employees has become a cornerstone to continuous improvement implementations. From the shop floor to the top floor, manufacturers have found improved efficiencies and reduction of unneeded processes by placing the information to make decisions in the hands of employees. Epicor empowers employees by providing essential information to them to make key decisions – right from Data Collection terminals on the shop floor. For example, it enables them to make key non-conformance suggestions and process improvement suggestions as well as define corrective action requests. Shop employees can be empowered with supporting information surrounding their current project. Whether they require part, project, order, engineering, drawing, or procurement information, the tools are available at their fingertips to make better decisions.

In addition, Epicor PLM organizes the documentation required by key employees for a product and offers direct integration with CAD for real time responses and solutions for problems that might occur on the plant floor.

## Electronic Collaboration with Partners

Reducing the need for paperwork, the Epicor electronic communication functionality enables manufacturers to procure, sell, and communicate electronically with business partners.

### Customers

Create better customer service by offering customers 24x7 access to the information they need, with:

- StoreFront
- Customer Portal Pack
- EDI
- CRM

The Epicor StoreFront functionality provides customers with the ability to place orders online. The Customer Portal enables customers to track orders and other information via the Internet. Epicor EDI supports a customer's need for using more traditional methods of electronic communication. And finally, Epicor CRM makes it possible for all of the information held within Epicor CRM to be available to salespersons via the Web.

### Suppliers

Provide the means for your suppliers to respond to RFQs, view inventory levels for selected parts, or view invoice payments without a single phone call to you, through:

- Supplier Portal Pack

The Supplier Portal Pack enables your suppliers to review inventory levels, check on payments, and process open POs and RFQs online.

### Integrated EDI

With the Epicor EDI solution, you can expand the market for your products, eliminate a great deal of paperwork, and streamline operations. In addition, as an integral part of the overall Epicor solution, EDI can enhance your company's productivity and professionalism.

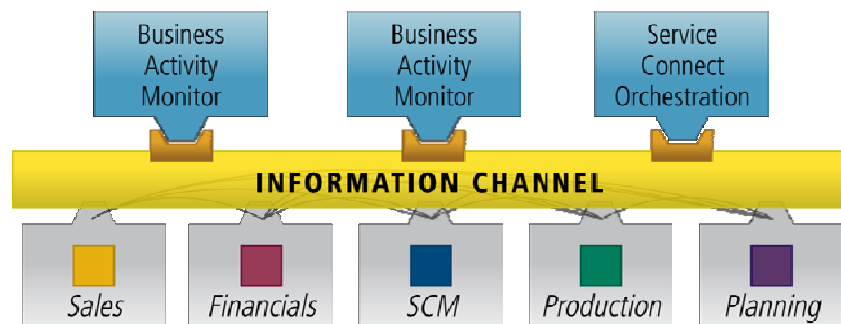
## Support for Hybrid Approaches to Lean

Manufacturers looking to get lean will not migrate their factories and supply chains overnight. Epicor accommodates a phased approach to lean that allows manufacturers to track material, MRP, and Kanban in a mixed environment. By offering manufacturers the capability to choose at the part location level how the part will be managed, manufacturers can more easily migrate to lean, while synchronizing MRP planning and Kanban execution.

## Emerging Technologies in Support of Lean

Businesses that focus on their customers and business relationships to stay competitive will benefit from Epicor Manufacturing, a revolutionary solution that enables manufacturers to more easily deploy business information across an entire supply chain of business partners. This sharing of information electronically, and via many different device options, allows manufacturers to stay connected with key relationships and share information for improved response to changing requirements and demands. This leads to more efficient operations, and stronger business relationships with key customers.

An illustration of the architecture for a system that supports lean principles might look something like this.



Your business is comprised of all these departments and external partnerships in the supply chain. You would need an information channel that connects these disparate entities together, so that those doing the *planning* have access to critical information in the *sales* area, and so on.

Additionally, you need tools such as business activity monitors to flag critical events. And business process management systems with the intelligence to send out alerts to the right decision makers in the organization—or even execute decisions based on pre-determined criteria. And finally, you need the means via an orchestration technology to interact with other systems, both internal and external to your own, in other words, to communicate or send a pull signal to the next step in the supply chain. With a system like this, you can:

- Detect and respond to changing business conditions
- Model, automate and monitor business processes
- Incorporate and manage human workflow

Epicor Manufacturing is based on Microsoft® .NET and has a 100% service-oriented architecture (SOA). This means that every aspect of functionality within the system can be deployed in any way you want: In a Web page; in a Windows form; on a PDA, in an Orchestration tool such as Microsoft® BizTalk, etc. This new class of product delivers unrivalled flexibility and collaborative capabilities. It allows cells, departments, companies, enterprises, suppliers and customers to collaborate more effectively than ever before.

To learn more about Epicor Manufacturing, contact your Epicor Customer Account Manager or Sales Representative.

# Summary

## Supporting Lean Principles

Manufacturers will continue to leverage technology to stay competitive. For today's manufacturer, technology provides the edge to streamline process flow and reduce waste in the enterprise. With the Epicor fully integrated enterprise solution, in your arsenal, you are prepared to meet the challenges of today's market place—becoming lean to do so.

As new technologies become available that can further enable “lean principles” to become reality in practice, your Epicor solution is designed with the flexibility to embrace these new technologies.

For lean manufacturers, the end of the road has always been just the beginning. As we look toward the future, this has never been more accurate. With lean thinking moving to the enterprise, manufacturers have a whole new set of challenges—and opportunities.

# About Epicor

Epicor Software (NASDAQ: EPIC) is a global leader delivering business software solutions to the manufacturing, distribution, retail, hospitality and services industries. With 20,000 customers in more than 140 countries, Epicor provides integrated enterprise resource planning (ERP), customer relationship management (CRM), supply chain management (SCM) and enterprise retail software solutions that enable companies to drive increased efficiency and improve profitability, and also empower global enterprises to achieve even greater success..

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**For more information,** contact Epicor Software Corporation: [info@epicor.com](mailto:info@epicor.com)

## **EPICOR**

Worldwide Headquarters  
18200 Von Karman Avenue, Suite 1000  
Irvine, California 92612  
USA  
Toll Free: +800.449.6772 (US/Canada)  
Phone: +952.417.5207 (International)  
[www.epicor.com](http://www.epicor.com)