

Modern Enterprise Applications Help Reduce IT Cost and Complexity

Manufacturers in make-to-order and mixed-mode production environments must satisfy increasingly demanding customers by continually reducing lead times, increasing quality and reducing costs—all while addressing ever more stringent government regulations. To achieve a competitive advantage in this environment, they must optimize their internal operations and the entire supply chain.

The right technology can play a major role in this effort. Yet existing legacy and ERP solutions are not up to the task. These systems are incomplete, difficult to modify in the face of changing business conditions, and unable to furnish the visibility necessary to streamline enterprise and supply chain operations.

The answer is found in a new class of enterprise applications manufacturers—these integrated, manufacturing enterprise applications are built on a service-oriented architecture (SOA) and incorporate modern business rules and business intelligence to furnish flexibility, interoperability, and visibility. With these solutions, manufacturers can improve productivity, streamline the supply chain, reduce costs, achieve regulatory compliance—and thereby enhance customer service and increase their competitive advantage.

Is your business relying on an antiquated system?

Technology is a critical enabler for addressing manufacturing business challenges. Yet, much of the technology manufacturers currently have in place is unable to support today's requirements. Some manufacturers continue to use stovepipe legacy applications. Because these systems automate only a single business function, not an entire, cross-functional business process, they demand manual, labor-intensive processes, such as re-keying data into separate systems. Legacy systems are also inflexible. They do not permit manufacturers to change their business processes to adapt to changing business requirements. Nor do they provide visibility across the organization—let alone across the supply chain.

Other manufacturers continue to use early enterprise resource planning (ERP) solutions installed prior to Y2K. These legacy ERPs are comprised of a large, monolithic code base that makes them difficult to change. Early solutions, moreover, were not complete. Manufacturers often purchased several separate solutions including enterprise resource management (ERP), customer relationship management (CRM), and supply chain management (SCM). As a result, achieving visibility across the organization—as well as with customers and the extended supply chain—required extensive integration. Business intelligence relied on a data warehouse that pulled data from these multiple systems in batch mode, resulting in delays. Developing automated workflows to streamline business processes required similar, extensive integrations.

How Modern Technology Can Support Manufacturers

Although older solutions are inadequate, more modern solutions are becoming available that address make-to-order and mixed-mode manufacturers' requirements by furnishing the following: Complete make-to-order and mixed-mode manufacturing specific capabilities that simplify implementation and reduce costs; An SOA platform that enhances business agility; Automated, fully customizable workflows that streamline business processes; and, Full integration and embedded business intelligence that enhance visibility.

A Complete Enterprise Solution Simplifies Implementation and Reduces Costs

Today, discrete and mixed mode manufacturers have the option of replacing piecemeal solutions with ones that are more complete. State-of-the-art solutions incorporate a

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Epicor is a global leader delivering business software solutions to the manufacturing, distribution, retail, hospitality, and services industries. Founded in 1984, Epicor serves 20,000 customers in more than 150 countries, providing solutions in over 30 languages.

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complete set of manufacturing modules—all on a single platform. These capabilities include advanced planning and scheduling, product configuration, field service, customer relationship management, projects, financials, product data management, and e-business capabilities. Such solutions also include business intelligence that enables manufacturers to monitor key performance indicators in real time and business rules and workflows that streamline cross functional operations.

Manufacturers can find solutions that are highly customized to their business requirements. For example, build-to-stock and build-to-order are completely different processes and need to be handled from within the same system as manufacturers increasingly operate in mixed modes. Modern solutions can meet this requirement.

By purchasing a complete solution from a single vendor, manufacturers reduce total cost of ownership. By using one solution, manufacturers lower implementation as well as IT and end user training costs. Annual maintenance fees for a single solution are likely to be less than those for multiple solutions performing the same functions. Accountability is greater when support comes from a single vendor. And all applications can share a single source of data, enhancing visibility across the organization while eliminating the need for systems integration.

A complete and modern enterprise manufacturing solution enables manufacturers working in make-to-order and mixed-mode production environments to automate their end-to-end order processes. One that sits on a service-oriented architecture allows these organizations to modify their applications as needed in a highly granular fashion and to easily interact with customers, suppliers, and partners over the Internet. One that includes workflow enables manufacturers to streamline their cross functional business applications to improve productivity and reduce costs. One with a full complement of business specific manufacturing modules and business intelligence provides a real-time visibility to enable manufacturers to quickly answer customer questions and proactively head off issues

before they can have a negative impact. Using such a manufacturing solution, make-to-order and mixed-most manufacturers can improve customer satisfaction, reduce costs, enhance regulatory compliance, and boost competitive advantage.

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