

Benefits of mobile
ERP function in
manufacturing

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Manufacturing activity has started to rebound after years of repressed growth rates, but as international competition heats up, streamlining the value chain through ERP is essential in order to capitalise on upward momentum.

Export and manufacturing data for 2013 suggests recovery is in sight for the UK economy, but as international competition heats up, strengthening the value chain with enterprise resource planning (ERP) will allow UK firms to capitalise on the upward momentum.

Office for National Statistics (ONS) figures for June 2013 show a 1.9 per cent increase in manufacturing output month-on-month following declines in both May and April. The figures compliment a raft of positive indicators emerging from the sector, such as exports, which also showed positive growth thanks to surging demand from countries outside Europe.

Britain recorded an all-time export high for the second quarter of 2013, hitting £78 billion and narrowing the trade deficit to £8.1 billion in June from £8.7 billion the previous month. Howard Archer, chief UK and European economist at IHS Global Insight, said the trade data is “encouraging for hopes that growth is not only strengthening but becoming more broadly based,” adding that a competitive pound and gradually improving global growth is supporting exports.

In order to remain competitive in a global age, UK manufacturers are constantly tasked with making cost savings through efficiency gains. There are entire books devoted to lean supply chain practices, but there are a few relatively simple steps that will help any enterprise lean their supply chain. In essence, it comes down to establishing a complete overview of procurement, manufacturing, distribution and sales order processing which can enable informed decisions on the go.

Five benefits of mobile ERP function in manufacturing

Improvements in global transport infrastructure, advancements in information and communication technologies and a reduction in trade barriers has enabled goods to travel over longer distances much more quickly and cheaply than before. But in order to fully capitalise on global opportunities, a holistic view of operations is essential.

Today, not only is a complete overview necessary, but the mobility of information is increasingly sought after. Information on the go via smart phones, PDAs, tablets, forklift mounted monitors and elsewhere ensures data is available at the location where it occurs, supporting decision making with immediate impact and results.

Managing the factory floor

Integrating the different plant processes and business solutions to prevent the same information in different systems not only helps to manage the production process but it gives an overview of actual capacity of the factory and real-time visualisation of the whole production process. Instead of this function been tied to the desk, managers can receive the information from the factory floor, which will avoid high costs, improve scheduling and increase resource utilisation.

Streamlining BI and processes

The ability for manufacturers to use consolidated data to generate powerful insight is key to overall business performance, and considering this process is leveraged on real-time data, having mobile capabilities is key. From customisable dashboards to graphical charts, mobile technology arms decision makers with information to make improved decisions about planning, forecasting, production scheduling, supply chain management and more.

Driving productivity

Mobile ERP is a productivity enabler. It can transform unstructured processes into routine transactions, replace human labour involved in processes, transfer information rapidly and carry out detailed analysis almost as an afterthought of its primary duties. Inventory, by its very nature, is wasted investment, but ERP tools can minimise the administrative hassle of manufacturing and ensure more productive operations.



Improving response times through collaboration

Most manufacturers are faced with a conflict between the need to be efficient in production and the need to be responsive to customers. By tying manufacturing to other areas of the business, such as sales and marketing, projections of what customers are actually asking for can be made, improving customer service and allowing greater responsiveness to customer requirements

Communication gains

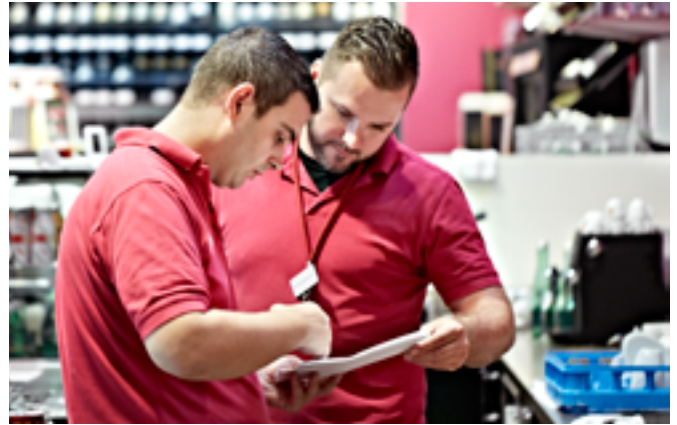
Not only does a holistic view of manufacturing data improve internal relations, but it can also improve external comms. Supply chain visibility shrinks the time people spend on paperwork and messages, which become automatically available to keep suppliers well informed.

Why ERP?

ERP brings decision makers closer to internal processes through automated insight, improving productivity whilst developing crucial business information. The ability to access information on the move is likely to have ramifications over how the workforce is run, particularly as orders start to pick up and overseas competition intensifies the requirement to streamline operations and stay productive.

Jakob Bjorklund, senior advisor at IFS AB, said that although some people might think of lean supply chain technology as having to do entirely with purchasing, distribution, global sourcing and other activities that relate directly with supply chain management, “we know that within a manufacturing enterprise, everything impacts everything else, and in order to make real progress, we need to see things holistically across the enterprise”.

Having the ability to do this on the go will be crucial in an age of global interconnectivity. Sage ERP X3 has been designed to meet the demands of process manufacturers, improving the supply chain and product development. It records every step of production and every transaction, giving decision makers accurate and real-time information about stock, pipelines and deliveries on the go.



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