



# Simplifying Manufacturing

How ERP Can Help

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## How the Right ERP Can Help Simplify the ever Changing Business of Manufacturing

As the manufacturing sector is poised to enter a new era—with additive manufacturing, cluster manufacturing, and near-shoring— and as digitization of the shop floor is creating new connections and new data streams, the need for responsiveness is more critical than ever.

Organizations must turn the explosion of data they have into intelligence and insights to support real-time decision making, at every level and across every function in the organization, and the extended supply chain. But over time, the ERP system—originally intended to automate and integrate business activities for improved productivity—starts becoming a real drag, literally, dragging down operational performance.

### Complexity Creep

Legacy systems built a decade ago met the needs of a very different generation of users. Many manufacturers followed a path of adding on new technology to meet new requirements with the end result of “complexity creep.” This complexity exacts a high toll on the organization. Invisible to the eye, it’s akin to a virus that penetrates the DNA of the organization, impeding responsiveness and agility. It’s pervasive and it becomes more evident as companies grow and attempt to address new and emerging requirements. To use another analogy, complexity is like a “governor”—a limiting device that prevents organizations from reaching top speed and optimal performance.

Complexity is particularly detrimental in the area of decision making. “It takes too long and it’s too difficult to get the information that’s needed!” is the lament from many an employee. <sup>1</sup>Research shows the biggest request on the ERP wish list is to be “simpler to use” for everyone in the organization.

Looking ahead, the need for responsiveness will only become more pronounced. As more new and emerging digital technologies become part of the manufacturing landscape, we build more connections. And as we become more connected, building the Internet of Things, we generate more data. And as data grows, we need new and faster ways to drive insight and actions, and easier ways to access information to support decision making. This need for responsiveness is placing new and different demands on ERP systems.

Manufacturers must have the right ERP systems in place to move confidently forward in the new manufacturing era, and simplicity is paramount—key to increasing the reach of ERP to every part of an organization, making it as useful and usable on the shop floor as it is in the boardroom.

<sup>1</sup> cite RedShift 2014 survey research, <http://www.epicor.com/company/whats-next.aspx>

## Simplifying ERP

- Strategically
- Operationally
- Externally
- Personally

## Simplifying ERP

It's a misconception that in order to gain simplicity, ERP must be "dumbed down". To the contrary, simplicity doesn't mean scaling back on functionality; it means finding new ways to make ERP easy and intuitive to use, deploy, and manage. It's not just about ditching clunky interfaces, it's about redefining the relationship people have with ERP. It means removing the barriers to accessing information and minimizing steps in the flow. And it means leveraging new means of visualizing, interacting, and consuming information to provide actionable insights to the whole organization.



**Strategically** it's about supporting a management team's ability to access information and respond to changes in the business and the market that allows them to be in greater control. Doing so requires getting the right information, in the context of the decisions that need to be made in a form that can be quickly digested and with the ability to take immediate action.

**Operationally** it means being able to react to day to day requirements and changes, dynamically managing business activity, automating and optimizing processes, and dealing with exceptions as they happen, where they happen. This is the backbone of any business and it demands comprehensive, workflow—enabled, industry-specific, globally-compliant, integrated ERP.

**Externally** it's about supporting an ongoing collaborative exchange with customers and partners. It's about providing differentiated service levels through every touch point with the organization, being able to identify problems and opportunities, then empowering the business to act quickly and decisively.

**Personally** it's about valuing peoples' time, leveraging their knowledge and experience, empowering them to manage exceptions in the moment while embedding and automating best practice processes wherever possible. It's about supporting productivity, ease, and simplicity of use.

## Simplifying Deployment

Simplification is also about new and improved ways of deploying ERP. Many manufacturers are moving to a cloud-based model as more and more companies see the benefits of a single, global deployment in providing greater visibility and control, plus the advantages of moving specific workloads to the cloud. The cloud removes the onus of system upkeep and maintenance, removing a heavy IT burden, and freeing up resources to focus on other areas of innovation within the company.

Cloud ERP supports today's most pressing technology imperatives—the desire to accelerate speed to value through cloud delivery models; the need to reduce IT complexity and simplify integration; the responsibility to address data security and compliance mandates; and the need to improve collaboration across the enterprise.

## Closing

By simplifying ERP, organizations can attain greater responsiveness. With greater responsiveness, organizations can adapt more quickly to new requirements and in response to new disruptive forces, opportunities and threats.

## About Epicor

Epicor Software Corporation is a global leader delivering business software solutions to the manufacturing, distribution, retail, and service industries. With more than 40 years of experience, Epicor has more than 20,000 customers in over 150 countries. Epicor solutions enable companies to drive increased efficiency and improve profitability. With a history of innovation, industry expertise and passion for excellence, Epicor inspires customers to build lasting competitive advantage. Epicor provides the single point of accountability that local, regional, and global businesses demand. For more information, visit [www.epicor.com](http://www.epicor.com).



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