Microsoft®
Business
Solutions

MANUFACTURING

GAIN THE COMPETITIVE edge

Flexibility is key. Manufacturing is still a major engine in today's economy. The fundamental success factors in this industry remain constant: produce the right products, in the right quantities, at the right time, with good quality, and at a price the customer is willing to pay. However, flexibility and continuous improvements are also imperative.

This includes the flexibility to respond to emerging markets, such as today's growth opportunities in China and Eastern Europe, and the flexibility to respond to the ever-changing needs of the customers. Capitalizing on these opportunities and demands involves quickly adapting to new approaches, trading partners, and procurement strategies.

This is especially true for small- to medium-size manufacturers, seeking to grow and thrive in an increasingly competitive environment. Even small companies can have complex business needs. A small company benefits just as much as, or more than, a large company from a technology infrastructure built to support powerful manufacturing processes.

The best approach is to expand the use of information technology to support new business practices that add value while enabling more cost-effective operations. A flexible and affordable computing infrastructure makes it easy to share data for effective decision-making while creating and supporting new business processes on the fly. Equally important is deploying technologies that allow your organization to work as an integrated team, including both internal operations and outside business partners such as customers and suppliers.

The need to reduce the manufacturing cost structure has led to an increase in the use of lean manufacturing strategies and outsourcing to global sources with lower labor costs. Advanced enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems now offer powerful capabilities to support these streamlined business practices. The increased complexity of outsourcing requires improvements in production management and supply-chain management tools. New, integrated IT infrastructures enable flexible and easy-to-use communication between all partners and, at the same time, automate many of the tasks associated with efficiently managing production. Improved scheduling and coordination with suppliers, quality management across the supply chain, and increased visibility result in a leaner, more demand-driven organization.

For many manufacturing industries, product innovation is the key to staying ahead of the competition. Not only are companies increasing the number of products they offer, but they also need to continually reduce the time necessary to introduce these new products to the market. By creating integrated systems that link customer requirements, product design teams, manufacturing, purchasing, finance, and sales, time-to-market continues to be reduced while management has clear visibility into the entire process.

FLEXIBILITY IS key

More Responsive, Cost-Effective Manufacturing

A robust computing infrastructure provides clear, up-to-the-minute visibility from an easy-to-use interface of information from your entire manufacturing organization, including customer demand, factory activity, order status, service information, customer data, financial reporting, and supplier information. This increased visibility to material inventories, resource availability, and production orders gives manufacturers the means to reduce capital tied up in finished goods, work-in-progress, and raw material inventory while optimizing available resources and improving customer service levels. Complicated processes, such as tracking and coordinating inventory and resource availability can be streamlined to allow for reduced customer order lead times.

For manufacturing companies, customer service is now recognized as a path to differentiation in an ever more commoditized marketplace, and is vital to establishing continued sales growth. Establishing primacy in customer satisfaction across all areas of the company—from products, service, and information delivery—is separating industry leaders from their competition. Implementing customer-focused technologies allows companies to increase customer retention and revenue-enhancement opportunities. Manufacturers are finding new levels of success with applications such as Sales and Opportunity Management, Channel and Distributor Management, Customer- and Channel-Facing Portals, Catalog and Content Management, and Product Configuration.

Maax Spas, a leading manufacturer of portable spas in North America, needed new, integrated business systems software to better manage operations. Using older, inadequate systems, one of their divisional plants had no software to support inventory control; other plants had problems with either proprietary or antiquated systems. Labor costs were higher than necessary because of time spent on manual efforts for basic processes.

Deploying Microsoft Business Solutions to manage all its operations has enabled Maax Spas to automate manual efforts and improve visibility into manufacturing processes. The greatest benefits include reduced personnel costs, a reduction in excess inventory costs, increased revenue from reduced receivables, and reduced overpayments on warranty costs. These benefits have resulted in a 161 percent annual return on investment on their implementation of a new, comprehensive ERP system.

Well known, easy-to-use tools such as Microsoft® Excel, Internet Explorer, Outlook®, and wireless devices can now be utilized in new, innovative ways to solve manufacturing and customer service challenges as they emerge.

The use of these new techniques can improve the effectiveness of business processes and increase the value you deliver while driving down the costs of your transactions. Portals enable immediate communication with your customers and suppliers. Customer relationship management tools improve the buying experience and overall customer satisfaction. ERP systems, combined with demand planning, can help you migrate your operations from a make-to-stock to a more efficient demand-driven environment.

All this leads to a laser-sharp focus and the ability to make fast and accurate decisions throughout your entire manufacturing operation. The result is a more cost-effective integration with your suppliers, lower costs due to less inventory, and better overall customer service—all of which allow you to deliver new and powerful value to your customers.

Adapt with Ease Using Microsoft Business Solutions

Microsoft Business Solutions offers a set of strong applications that, when combined with the underlying Microsoft technology, delivers a compelling suite of technologies for small- and medium-size manufacturers. Microsoft Business Solutions provides systems specifically designed to assist manufacturers with managing complex business processes without the burden of building a large, expensive IT infrastructure.

Our technology platform enables small- and medium-size manufacturers and distributors to assemble a complete,

integrated set of leading-edge business applications. These integrated applications can be deployed quickly and inexpensively without complicated customizations and drawn-out implementation projects. Knowing no company can be all things to all people, Microsoft Business Solutions teams with our powerful worldwide partner network. Together we deliver solutions with deep functionality and business expertise for the specific needs of manufacturers in many industries.

Our solutions are based on advanced, security-enhanced Internet technologies that extends and enhances traditional ERP systems to deliver the flexibility and ease of information gathering you need to support new and demanding business processes. Microsoft Business Solutions provides you with a solid growth path for years to come. Our ongoing commitment to enhancing current solutions and the continued integration of well known and easy-to-use Microsoft software will deliver even more value to you than it does today.

In short, Microsoft Business Solutions can help you lower costs while increasing the delivered value, improve your interactions with customers and suppliers, and make faster, smarter decisions.

Build a World-Class Manufacturing Operation

Microsoft knows deep industry expertise is required to address the range of manufacturing needs. That is why we work closely with more 6,000 partner companies from around the world to bring you world-class software combined with the world-class capabilities and expertise to implement a solution to meet your specific business needs.

Technology from Microsoft is designed to operate on a global scale. We have consultants, independent software vendors, and value-added resellers conveniently located near you, almost

STAY AHEAD OF THE competition

The order-management process at Lindab Inc. in Stamford, Connecticut is a testament to how well Microsoft Business Solutions enterprise software meets the needs of small- and medium-size manufacturers. Lindab is the North American business unit of a Swedish company that builds custom sheet-metal components for heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning systems.

Using Microsoft Business Solutions ERP software as a basis, Lindab has created a reliable process that enables custom specifications from customer orders to be defined and loaded from a customer's desktop to the cutting and stamping machines on Lindab's shop floor without human intervention. The results from Lindab are significantly lowered costs and greatly improved customer service levels, giving the company a considerable competitive advantage.

"The Microsoft Business Solutions development environment is based on open technology. That made it easy to do the customizations—and the integration with other applications—necessary to execute this order management process."

Dwight Marcellus :: MIS Director, Lindab

DSI Australia, manufacturer and supplier of specialized products to the underground mining industry, replaced its aging information systems with enterprise resource management and planning software from Microsoft Business Solutions.

The company immediately increased its operational flexibility and cut information technology costs by 66 percent. Access to information in the system has also improved greatly, with the new system providing much more functionality. People can access, sort, and filter data, and export it to other applications using the drill-down facility, resulting in greater visibility of information. At the same time, DSI has realized savings in annual information technology operations costs of $250,000 per year, and has cut payroll processing expenses by $42,000 annually.

"We do a lot of moving of product from manufacturing to distribution centers. Microsoft Business Solutions allows us to track goods from the factory/warehouse through to another warehouse or consignment stock location."

David Caldwel : : Information Systems Manager, DSI Australia

WORKING AS ONE INTEGRATED team

anywhere you operate. These manufacturing-focused partners deliver the knowledge needed to quickly implement successful manufacturing applications.

To help ensure a seamless computing environment, all our solutions and our partner offerings integrate fully with Microsoft Office and the financial tools to meet the diverse needs of your business, including accounting, human resources, payroll, and more.

Don't Get Left Behind

Microsoft Business Solutions Manufacturing technology is designed to address the needs and challenges of small- and medium-size manufacturing operations. We offer an outstanding portfolio of enterprise-wide solutions combined with world-class

financial resources and the technical expertise to improve those systems over time. We also offer an outstanding and cost-effective implementation channel to deliver solutions for the mid-market-manufacturer.

Visit our Web site at:

http://www.microsoft.com/BusinessSolutions/Industry

to learn more about Microsoft Business Solutions for Manufacturing and how our cost-effective integrated applications can help you build a sustainable advantage in the competitive world of manufacturing.

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