

Tackling 10 Key Manufacturing Challenges using SharePoint

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Introduction

Most organizations are facing major challenges: increasing productivity, managing an overload of complex information and making teams work together. These challenges are particularly amplified in the manufacturing industry.

Scenario 1: Reduce Cycle Times of Approvals & Automate Complex Business Processes

Manual processes consume 30% of productive time during handoffs and rejections in production. With SharePoint, you can digitize and automate your business processes using built-in workflow capabilities, thus eliminating waste related to manual handling and tracking. Notifications ensure that relevant parties are aware of activities and their status. Digitization of business forms using InfoPath helps in building validations that ensure that the prerequisites are provided, which drastically reduce the number of rejections. Manufacturing firms are leveraging SharePoint to automate manual processes like stock transfer approval, purchase requisition, vendor/customer setup, item setup and expense reimbursement thereby freeing up resources to focus on core activities.

Expedite stock transfer approvals, purchase requisitions, reimbursement process and more.

Scenario 2: Paperless Back Office and Shop Floor Document Management Systems

SharePoint's document management capabilities can help in maintaining vendor/customer contract documents, product histories and equipment controls, thereby eliminating costly reliance on manual paperwork. Using out-of-the-box connectors, ERP/CRM

can be integrated with SharePoint to build document management capabilities that are often lacking. While the data itself resides in ERP/CRM, supporting documents such as policies/procedures, contracts, work orders and compliance records exist in SharePoint. These supporting documents are governed by strong document management policies such as versioning, retention, disposition and record declaration. SharePoint can also be used as a platform to link planning, administrative systems and the shop floor.

Manage policies, contracts work orders & compliance records efficiently.

Scenario 3: Stream line Cash Flow - Avoid Delays & Reduce Task Closure Time

Overdues, whether in production scenarios or on payment fronts, adversely affect cash flows and disrupt client/vendor relationships. Besides, follow-up and coordination have major impacts on organizational productivity. SharePoint simplifies these bottlenecks by

facilitating tracking of items through closure. Examples of potential bottlenecks include overdue invoices, disputed POs, and shipping issues. By configuring the business logic in SharePoint, required supporting documents can be accessed, reducing closure time and duplication of effort.

Manage overdue invoices, on-time delivery, disputed POs, shipping issues etc.

Scenario 4: Business Intelligence - Calculated Decision Making using Real Time Data

SharePoint has a feature-rich BI module which provides self-service BI capabilities out-of-the-box. SharePoint's ability to integrate with a versatile set of applications can be leveraged to consolidate data from disparate systems. This brings together actionable insights to enable informed decision making. It can also provide front end input to a master production scheduling system

to optimize inventory planning. It also can be leveraged, for example, to correlate production data (burn rate), warehouse data (inventory current volume) and procurement (order placed and lead-time) to identify items which might lead to a production slowdown. Instead of scanning through tons of data to find discrepancies, employees can save time and get actionable insights instantly using SharePoint's self-service BI capability.

Forecast demands, identify trends, manage production planning, and optimize inventory levels.

Scenario 5: Unified Collaboration Platform for Cross-Functional Teams

Certain processes such as design and quality require various stakeholders to collaborate together. Without a proper platform, haphazard communication can lead to duplicity, misalignment, recurrence of common errors, and restricted distribution of information. SharePoint provides a centralized platform where employees from

dispersed geographic locations or cross-functional teams can collaborate effectively during any phase. Tangible benefits are achieved with SharePoint when it is coupled with workflow to create a platform for collaborative processing, e.g., from conceptual design to analysis to design modeling to drafting /

Eliminate silos, recurrence of common errors; Collaborate effectively in a complex workflow

documentation to machining. You can achieve collaboration with minimal end-user efforts and IT involvement as SharePoint enables effective collaboration.

Scenario 6: Empower Sales Team on-the-Go with Enhanced Mobility Features

SharePoint is a great platform to assist your mobile sales team. Improved mobile support makes the data available to the salesforce on their devices. Product information, metrics, document templates, case studies and real time production data can all be accessed from mobile devices. Sales collateral maintained in SharePoint provides a sales team with additional information required for improving the credentialization of your organization. The search capabilities ensure that your sales team on the West Coast is aware and can showcase an implementation done on the East Coast.

Avail product information, metrics, document templates, demos on the go!

Scenario 7: Strengthen Relationships with Interactive Vendor Portals

According to a Gartner study, organizations that are not using portals to connect with trading partners lack the visibility to leverage the opportunities and benefits of collaboration. In the manufacturing industry, organizations vary widely in how they administer and monitor contracts with their vendors. SharePoint can be used to develop distinctive contract management capabilities and facilitate sharing of contract documents, performance metrics, and Purchase Orders with external vendors. The portal provides vendors a better view into your processes, which in turn improves their efficiencies in serving your organization. SharePoint 2013 has simplified licensing that permits license holders to host external vendor portals at zero additional costs. Compared to the earlier versions of SharePoint TCO is significantly reduced.

Manage contracts, POs, issues, performance and more - with zero overheads

Scenario 8: Better Manage Complex Projects, Initiatives etc.

A recent survey by IFS suggests a lack of confidence in how business critical projects are being managed in the global manufacturing sector. The primary cause cited is the absence of robust, comprehensive project management applications to support the efforts. Increasingly in manufacturing, both initiatives and

Cost reduction, product redesign, contractual projects - manage it professionally

regular functions are being treated as projects with the application of project management fundamentals to manage them. Be it cost reduction initiatives or contractual improvements in efficiency, they are monitored and governed as independent projects. SharePoint provides out-of-the-box features like workspace with security controls to maintain project artifacts, assign tasks, manage milestones, monitor resources, track project time-lines and report project metrics. SharePoint also provides integration options with MS Project Server for those who are looking for more sophisticated project management capabilities.

Scenario 9: Use SharePoint to get Higher ROI from your ERP

ERP solutions are often built generically for an industry, with minimal customizations to adapt to your business. Utilizing a generic solution can lead to loss of competitive advantage. Your business functions, which have evolved over time and are specific to your organization, may not be fully supported by ERP solutions. You cannot let software dictate how processes should run; rather, software should support the required processes. ERP customizations are often discouraged and can be expensive. The SharePoint platform provides a cost effective alternative to custom built business applications for specific business functions. The flexible nature of the SharePoint platform, along with the wealth of features provided out-of-the-box, reduce development time by 40%, thereby improving the ROI and time to market.

Don't let ERP software dictate your process, let process define the software

Scenario 10: Product Life-cycle Management (PLM) with SharePoint

SharePoint is fast becoming the progressive CIO's first choice for PLM/PDM. For instance, SharePoint can be used to improve innovation, collaboration and coordination at a global scale. Additionally, it can free up PLM/PDM team members from the hassles of time-consuming requests from extended members by providing the information through a structured, search powered repository. Participants are enabled to "discover" the information themselves. SharePoint facilitates creation of collaborative work-spaces for work-in-progress activities and provide a repository to maintain digital artifacts with mark-up/comments. SharePoint workflow is leveraged to facilitate process-centric functions such as engineering change orders (ECOs). The platform is configured to remain in-sync and up-to-date with the master PDM or PLM system, ensuring that all information is represented accurately and consistently.

Manage engineering change orders (ECO), work-flows, collaborate globally, and stay abreast

About Trigent Software Inc.

Trigent is a privately held, professional IT services company and a Microsoft Gold Partner with its U.S. headquarters in the greater Boston area and its Indian headquarters in Bangalore. We provide consulting services in various technologies including Microsoft Solutions. Our operating model is to conduct sales, customer relationships and front-end consulting (e.g., business case, requirements, architecture) onsite with our clients and perform the detail design, development, integration, testing and quality assurance offshore at our world class development and support center in Bangalore. We are a SEI CMM Level 4 company and is ISO 9001:2000 TickIT certified organization.

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