

An Epicor® White Paper

How the Right ERP Can Help Simplify the Ever-Changing Business of Manufacturing



EPICOR®



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Introduction

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. Research¹ 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.

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



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.

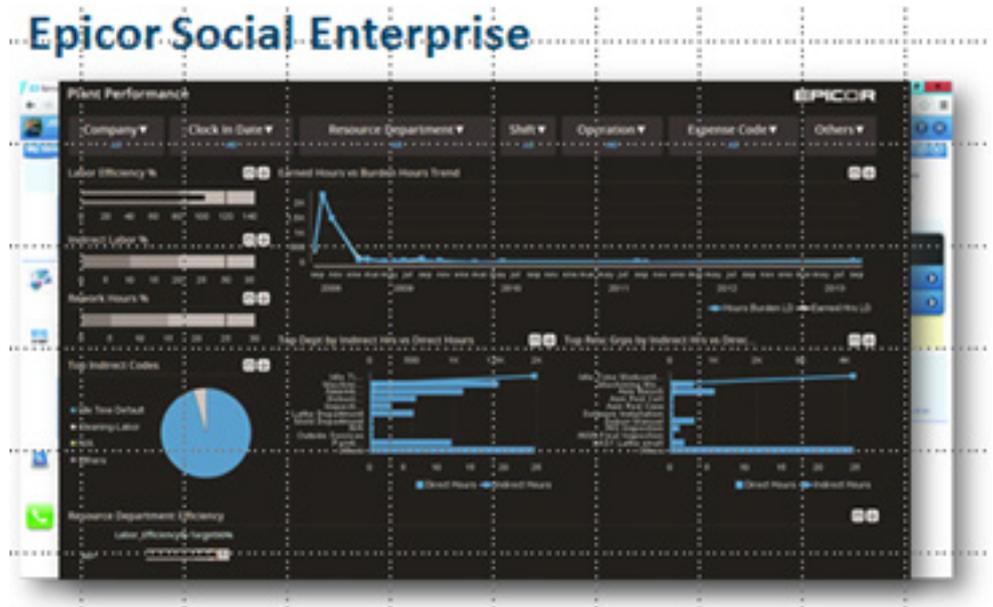
Epicor ERP: Simplifying the Business of Manufacturing

Epicor has eliminated complexity to make ERP easier to use, more collaborative, and more responsive. With Epicor ERP, companies gain a technology platform that can support them as they conduct business today and in the future—on any device, anytime, anywhere in the world. Optimized for the new world of work—encompassing mobile and social business—Epicor ERP gives manufacturers a powerful platform to adapt and thrive in the era of digital disruption. Through the incorporation of technologies such as mobile and social into Epicor ERP, manufacturers have the opportunity to amp up responsiveness and agility, and to close time lags and gaps between the boardroom and the shop floor, and between the company and its customers.

Epicor ERP: User Interaction Tools

Responsiveness demands simplicity with tools designed to meet the specific needs of specific users. Epicor ERP makes user interaction fast, easy, and painless.

- ▶ **Mobile:** The Epicor ERP touch-enabled, intuitive Microsoft Windows® user interface (UI) is designed to work with touch screen devices—empowering users to work the way they want.
- ▶ **Social:** Epicor Social Enterprise allows users to collaborate in real time around orders, customers, suppliers, configurations, and service issues, and mitigate “information overload” through activity stream management, so they can follow application data or people alerts on an ad-hoc basis.



Imagine interacting with your ERP in a completely new way. No more menus, no more transaction screens, no more complexity—straight to the point, 24/7, from anywhere. Every user can choose what they stream into their feed, identifying trigger events relating to the subjects that are important to them—customers, orders, products, machines, assets, cash, inventory, etc.

Underlying this is the ERP system engine—hidden from view, but still there. Employees interact with it direct from their stream, acting on information they are receiving in real time, collaborating with colleagues and sharing their insight, requesting and receiving advice, resolving issues, and leveraging opportunities. They can be processing transactions or redesigning processes; in this way they become more responsive and more agile.

- ▶ **Dashboards:** Epicor ERP dashboards provide real actionable insight without the complexity of the source transactional systems. The “right click open with” feature allows users to access other related forms and drill down to find necessary information from any dashboard. Having accurate information at hand via reports and dashboards enables organizations to answer important day-to-day operational questions and keep a finger on the pulse of the business.
- ▶ **Search:** Consumer-grade search anywhere capabilities allows employees to find the information they are looking for quickly and easily. “Partial search” enables them to locate information by typing in only the first few letters or words in the search box.



Epicor ERP: Simplifying Deployment and Maintenance

Epicor ERP enables manufacturers to spend less time deploying and maintaining their ERP so they can focus on the business of manufacturing.

Cloud: ERP deployment flexibility is key to building agile organizations. Epicor enables organizations to deploy in the cloud today and on premises down the road—or vice versa. The Epicor cloud software strategy is virtually unique in that it offers complete choice and flexibility in deployment in the cloud or on your premises.

Solution Workbench: ERP customizations and configurations have long been the bane of existence for IT. While necessary to make the software responsive and tailored to specific company needs and demands, in the past they have been a source of frustration because they would not carry over when moving to a new software release. The Epicor Solution Workbench tool makes it very easy for organizations to package up these customizations and configurations and transport them between versions.

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.

Through a focus on simplicity, Epicor ERP enables bringing information to those who need it, at the moment they need it, in a form that they can use, and in a way that is actionable—in real time and anywhere.



About Epicor

Epicor Software Corporation drives business growth. We provide flexible, industry-specific software that is designed around the needs of our manufacturing, distribution, retail, and service industry customers. More than 40 years of experience with our customers' unique business processes and operational requirements is built into every solution—in the cloud, hosted, or on premises. With a deep understanding of your industry, Epicor solutions spur growth while managing complexity. The result is powerful solutions that free your resources so you can grow your business. For more information, [connect with Epicor](#) or visit www.epicor.com.



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