

## Plant Managers: Get Savvy to Get on with It!

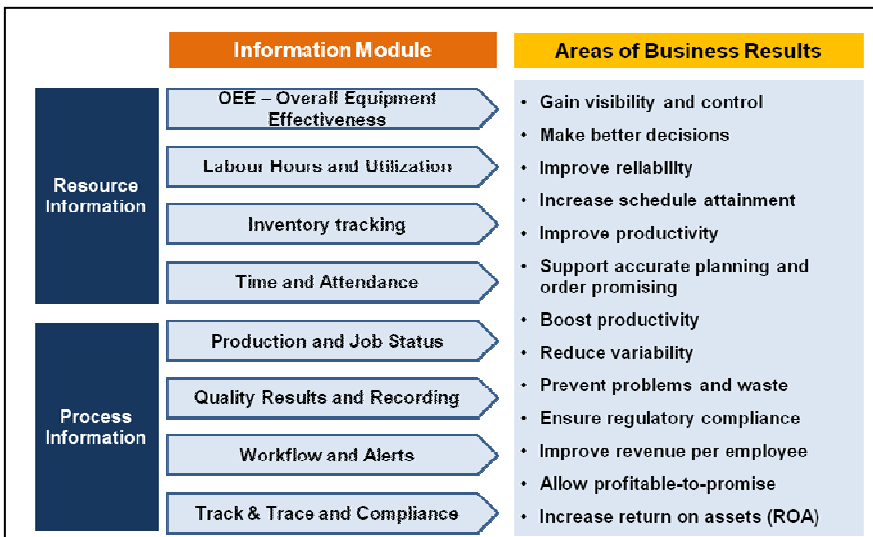
A successful leader knows how to focus effort where — and when — it matters. What to focus on is a matter of being savvy, which is defined as well-informed with practical knowledge. In fact, every plant and operations manager we've ever met harnesses their own practical knowledge to make progress by simply "getting on with it." However, in today's unrelenting manufacturing space, staying sufficiently well-informed on where to spend effort means knowing what's happening in the factory right now, which for most has not been so easy.

Production plants are complex and dynamic, with constant changes, interdependencies and tradeoffs. As a result, it's often hard for executives to get a clear picture of production while it's happening so that useful decisions can be made to improve outcomes. The key information is generally about job progress, equipment status and utilisation, employees, inventory, and quality and compliance.

Most systems in factories today cannot deliver even simplified views in a timely, accurate, and accessible way. Paper is subject to errors and delays, and homegrown spreadsheet and database solutions don't deliver accuracy and timeliness over the long term. Manufacturers that have tried enterprise resource planning (ERP) "shop floor modules" in the factory have usually found these actually hurt productivity because employees must navigate too many screens even for simple transactions. ERP is generally not flexible enough for the factory, nor can it handle the data quantity, granularity, and timeliness needed.

*Modular software from a plant-focused provider may deliver critical real-time visibility within a week or two and within a plant manager's budget authority.*

The good news is that with today's technology, manufacturers can indeed stay informed, and as a result, know where to focus their efforts throughout the day. Almost any plant can now install modern tools that provide the needed, real-time insight, quickly and for relatively little cost and effort. In today's factory a forward-thinking plant manager should be able to gain significant advantage without the multi-year project, huge costs and upheaval we are used to with conventional ERP projects. Intelligent tools packaged to 'fit in' to the factory without disruption are making their way into even traditional factories. And the results can be impressive with reports of one- or two-week projects coming in successfully at well-under the plant's budget sign-off authority.



The graphic to the left lists modules plants often need, along with some of the business benefits you can expect. Look for a system that is easy for operators to use, and that engineers (not IT) can configure for the plant's specific needs. Look for a system that adds on to your existing ERP and can be installed without disruption to the factory. Most managers will want an interactive real-time dashboard display. Begin small, and get to know the tools by

tackling obvious problems first. Some providers will host in a software as a service (SaaS) or cloud-based environment, so there is no infrastructure to set up, configure, or manage.

A modular approach allows the business benefits to build up one piece at a time. Experienced plant managers will start with the module that will provide the greatest ROI. Generating benefits quickly helps to get employees on board, as well as to secure broader management buy-in. Then, they can either call it done or, if the situation warrants, use the experience and the pay-back from the first module to justify another. Either way, a stepwise approach allows the savvy manager to stay in control and to reap the rewards for the factory along the way.

## **About the Sponsor, Mestec Ltd.**

Mestec helps manufacturers overcome today's challenges with easy to use tools which map comfortably into existing processes and are plug-compatible with ERP systems.

The Mestec Manufacturing Smart Box can help manufacturers achieve rapid improvements and cost savings on a low-cost, low-risk basis. Clients report immediate and dramatic improvements with a return on investment in 2-6 months. [www.mestec.net](http://www.mestec.net)

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