

# Six Steps For Streamlining Manufacturing Processes

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Manufacturers are eager to streamline complex processes in an effort to produce significant cost and time savings while increasing overall productivity and profitability. However, streamlining long-established processes can be a daunting, time-consuming endeavor. If manufacturers put the right quality programs and new technologies in place from the start, they are able to easily improve existing processes and realize immediate benefits. Here are six key tips that will place manufacturers on the right track from the get-go.

### Tip #1. Follow Three Best Practices

The three best practices for streamlining manufacturing processes are:

- Improving quality throughout the entire manufacturing process
- Keep the sales, production and engineering teams in sync and in regular communications
- Minimize both wasted time and materials across the production environment

### Tip #2. Put the Right Quality Program In Place

By putting the right quality program in place, manufacturers can ensure that the correct products are available when needed, thereby maximizing overall productivity. The quality program should not only validate the bill of material but also validate the routing steps and the expected time to complete those steps. It can also help manufacturers decrease waste by instructing them to only use the materials they need and minimize the scrap.

### Tip#3. Use Technology to Improve Communications between Teams

Through regular synchronized communications, the sales, production and engineering teams can continue to improve products and get new products to market faster than ever before. These teams need to spot trends and buying patterns, understand which items are selling briskly versus those that are stagnant and be able to quickly determine where forecasts could potentially go off track. In a make-to-order environment, this is particularly critical because when the sales team gets an order and commits a delivery date to the customer, there must be regular communication between the departments to achieve the promised delivery date, and/or update the customer with any changes to the expected delivery.

The best way to facilitate synchronous communications between teams is through technology. For example, BEGA-US, a privately-held architectural lighting firm that

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supplies lighting products, chose to implement VAI's S2K for Manufacturing for a broad range of interior and exterior applications. BEGA sought a solution that would reduce processing and development time across the sales, engineering and manufacturing departments - a critical quality in an industry where sale-to-delivery timeliness can define a company's reputation.

Since the implementation BEGA has seen a significant improvement in their operating efficiency and data management is streamlined in an integrated accessible solution. BEGA also saw key improvements in the process flow as well as reductions in order-to-shipment times.

### Tip#4. Mine Production History Data

One of the best ways for manufacturers to streamline processes is to use technology to analyze and measure how much material they used, how much they scraped and how much time they spent on the overall manufacturing process. To start, they should review current bills of materials and routing steps to confirm accuracy. From there, they should track the usage of components and overall production time. It is critical to mine production history data for this iterative process which should ideally involve all core teams. By carefully analyzing past performance, manufacturers can better understand where they can save time and resources throughout all manufacturing and production phases.

### Tip#5. Become Mobile

Invest in mobile and analytics technologies to improve overall quality. Using an ERP analytics solution for manufacturers can get information from the shop floor in real time and act on it accordingly. For example, if there is a scrap product causing a production issue on the shop floor, management will be notified immediately before the problem escalates. And, a production supervisor can immediately race to the shop floor and resolve the issue by receiving real-time information via a mobile device.

### Tip#6. Leverage Big Data

Big Data allows manufacturers to analyze their enterprise data to significantly improve operations. It is critical for manufacturers to implement solutions that leverage the power of Big Data today by capturing their corporate data and analyzing overall productivity and profitability trends across the organization.

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### *About the Author*

*As President & CEO of VAI, Bob Vormittag is responsible for setting the company's strategic goals, building a world-class executive team, and providing an environment that encourages customer-focused technical and business innovation. Vormittag works closely with VAI's executive team to drive product development and marketing and sales initiatives, which facilitate the company's achievement of ongoing, productive growth. To learn more about VAI, please visit [www.vai.net](http://www.vai.net) [1].*

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