

Why Traditional Production Management Practices Fail Today

Seismic Industry Shifts Necessitate Faster, Better-Informed, Data-Driven Decision Making



Traditional Production Management Tools

Traditional production management thinking and gut instincts are simply no match for today's complex manufacturing challenges.

That was the key message IPE Managing Director Brad Mikes shared with sewn products production and supply chain executives in the Tech Zone Theater at the recent Texprocess Americas trade show in Atlanta. He also explained why, despite current economic uncertainty, manufacturers are moving ahead with digitizing plant and factory floor operations and what benefits they are achieving.

Smarter factories are, indeed, advancing. More than 85% of respondents in a recent survey conducted by the [Manufacturing Leadership Council \(MLC\)](#) said that they expect digital investments to continue unchanged or increase this year. The primary drivers for this bullish approach include the possibilities for better operational efficiency (59%), better decision-making (51%) and cost reduction (50%).

Traditional Methods are Now Ineffective

The IPE presentation contrasted age-old, error-prone industry practices, such as using paper production tickets and gum

sheets to measure performance and calculate incentive payroll, with semi- and fully automatic production data collection and processing tools. Other inefficient practices like waiting in line at time clocks and tracking orders on whiteboards were also used to illustrate how such traditional tools fail to provide executives, managers, supervisors and production employees with the timely information and performance feedback they need to make faster, better-informed and more productive decisions.

Taking a more strategic view, Mikes provided the following **reasons why traditional methods fail today.**

- » **Business Velocity** – everything must be done faster today.
- » **Little Margin for Error** – even small errors/delays can cause big problems.
- » **Non-Productive Time** – an excess that no business can afford today.
- » **Transparency** – demanded by suppliers, customers and consumers.
- » **Agility** – pivot quickly to address multiple/rapid changes to plan.
- » **Quality** - early detection/fast resolution is essential.
- » **Workforce Development** – quickly train, engage, motivate, build trust.



About the Author

Brad Mikes has spent the last 25 years solving manufacturing challenges through improved business processes and information technology. He focuses this expertise on sewn products, consumer goods, technical textiles, and other discrete manufacturers.

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Smart Factories/ Smart Manufacturing

Smart Industry explains, "Automation and digital technology are already a thing, even in traditional factories. Smart factories, however, have more advanced automation and implement smart technology into their workflows. A smart factory maximizes the applications of smart manufacturing "enablers" to improve traditional manufacturing processes. The manufacturing systems empowered by data analytics and the Internet of Things (IoT) provide transparent, real-time data access and analysis, as well as optimized production systems."

Critical advantages of smart factories include:

- » **Increased Efficiency** – Smart factories use data-driven technologies to optimize production processes, reduce waste and increase productivity.
- » **Enhanced Flexibility** – Smart factories have faster response times to customer needs, are highly flexible and can easily reconfigure production lines to fast-changing supply and demand.
- » **Improved Quality** – Smart factories can monitor and control the manufacturing process, ensuring early detection, high-quality output and reduced defects.
- » **Cost Savings** – Smart factories reduce manufacturing costs by optimizing production processes, reducing waste and increasing efficiency.



Daily or Real-Time Information

IPE's solutions use barcode/QR code scanners, specialized tablet-based apps, and other innovative tools to collect and report data on all production activities on the shop floor. The company offers daily (batch) and real-time data collection and processing solutions.

Mikes described the company's **IP-Batch™** solution as its most affordable and simple to set up and use production management tool. It automates bundle setup and barcode ticket printing. At the end of the shift, production sheets are scanned to streamline daily production reporting, order status and incentive payroll calculations. Managers use the daily production information to track individual, team and plant performance, expose excess costs, reduce non-productive time/activities, track orders and more. Production employees can get a daily accounting of their production performance and incentive earnings. Comprehensive reporting of all types of performance/status reports is available.

The more comprehensive **IP-Realtime™** solution provides the ultimate visibility and transparency. Using standard Android tablets with Wi-Fi and onboard scanners on the production floor, this always-on system tracks all activities immediately as they occur throughout the day/shift. Immediate performance feedback, product/job information, pacing tools

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Disengaged to Engaged/Informed/Productive

and clock-in are instantly available on employee tablets. Supervisors and managers rely on real-time dashboard displays to make better-informed and timely decisions.

Mikes noted that many manufacturers opt for a hybrid deployment of his company's technology by integrating IP-Batch and IP-Realtime on a where-needed basis. Less time-sensitive areas, such as component construction operations, use daily (batch) data collection, while more critical processes, like product assembly, leverage real-time reporting.

The presentation wrapped up with a discussion of the workforce development and retention benefits of more engaged, informed and productive employees armed with these solutions' real-time feedback, communications and tools. According to Mikes, "Traditional verbal management performance feedback was often seen as negative by production employees. Today's real-time tablet technology enables associates to self-track their performance, work pace and importance to the business and teammates. Where production associates and managers were once disengaged from business

processes and goals, today's tech-enabled workforce is better informed, motivated and productive."

Key Takeaways

The IPE presentation showed how smarter factories are transforming sewn products manufacturing by integrating advanced technologies such as IoT and analytics. These technologies are driving efficiency, productivity, and profitability in manufacturing by enabling data-driven decision-making, automation, and real-time monitoring.

When asked about roadblocks to implementing their digital strategies, one-third of respondents in the MLC survey cited an organizational structure or culture that resists change. While the adoption of smart factory technology is still in its early stages, the benefits to manufacturers are clear, and it is expected to continue to revolutionize the industry in the coming years. It further shows why it is vital for manufacturers to overcome related roadblocks, stay up-to-date with the latest developments and invest in smart factory technology to remain competitive in the global marketplace.

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Struggling to achieve the manufacturing performance you need to reduce costs, win new business and sustain margins? Want to equip your production workers, supervisors and managers with the technology they need to monitor performance better, increase output and make faster, better-informed decisions? Start by phoning IPE at (864) 498-1310, [email](#) or [visit the website](#).