

Your Single Best Move to Boost Manufacturing Productivity and Profits

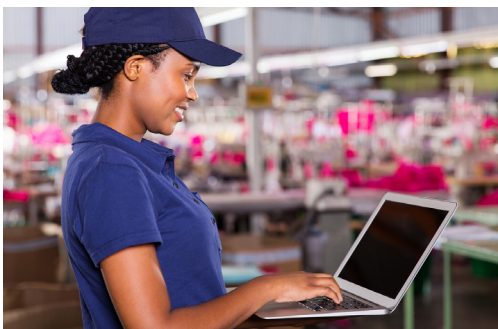
by Brad Mikes, Managing Partner IPE



There are many potential investments you can make to improve your apparel and sewn products manufacturing operations. You can buy automated machinery, hire more employees or make facility improvements. You can invest in preventive maintenance, workforce upskilling or associate recognition and rewards. All of these options might hold merit, but resources are finite. Chances are, you cannot make all the desired investments and improvements on your list, at least not all at once.

If you really want to increase productivity and profits, and reduce your costs, the biggest bang for your buck is next-generation production management technology. Also known as shop floor control (SFC), this is the single best investment you can make to boost manufacturing competitiveness.

What Is Shop Floor Control?



A shop floor control solution is one that enables apparel and sewn products companies to:

- » track production accurately across all operations, styles and cut orders;
- » permanently eliminate time-consuming manual tasks related

- to data entry and managing production;
- » reduce costs associated with off-standard events and non-value-add activities such as correcting payroll errors;
- » simplify and automate piecework payroll calculations; and
- » increase productivity by motivating associates, giving them greater visibility to their performance and earnings and decreasing downtime.

SFC analyzes production data in real time or on a daily basis. Either way, management gets a clear view of order status, productivity, efficiency and off-standard events such as quality problems, machine downtime or operators waiting for work.

Rather than relying on manual data-capture methods, businesses benefit from the accuracy of scanning barcode or QR code bundle tickets at every operation across the factory floor. In a real-time SFC installation, there are wireless tablets at every workstation where operators scan their work bundles, clock in and out for shifts and breaks, and notify supervisors or mechanics about off-standard events. Supervisors and managers can authorize off-standard time at the operator workstation or via off-the-shelf Android® devices.

With all production data accurately and securely collected, SFC empowers supervisors and managers to quickly track order status, monitor individual and team productivity, resolve quality issues, manage off-standard events and better balance production lines.



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.

“...the biggest bang for your buck is next-generation production management technology.”

Production management/SFC technology usually is designed to run as either a stand-alone solution or integrated with enterprise resource planning (ERP), engineering and other software used in the factory.

Why SFC Makes the Most Sense



Here are four reasons why an investment in SFC is the fastest, most effective way to transform your manufacturing, increase productivity and grow profits.

1. Plant-wide Benefits vs. Operation-specific Wins

Companies that have implemented fair and carefully planned individual or team incentives routinely report 30 percent to 40 percent gains in overall productivity compared with their plant performance on hourly pay plans without incentives. A production management solution enables businesses to not only run incentive pay plans more easily and accurately but also to increase productivity rates even further. Other types of factory investments return far more limited gains. For example, a new automated machine might deskill, speed up and improve quality for one operation, but it won't enhance plant-wide profitability and productivity across the board as SFC can. The machinery investment won't improve payroll accuracy or give operators greater visibility to their earnings. It won't generate valuable reports on order status, attendance, costs and efficiency. SFC will do all of these things, offering powerful return on investment (ROI).

2. Visibility

With next-generation production management technology, apparel and sewn products manufacturers gain greater visibility to individual, team and overall plant performance. With a new level of shop floor transparency, management can quickly see both opportunities and challenges. In turn, they can react and respond to avoid costly problems, seize new business and sharpen the sword. For example, SFC provides daily or real-time reports on operator productivity. Supervisors and managers will clearly see which operators are strong performers. This opens the door to observe and understand these associates' work methods and potentially leverage their best practices across teams. In this way, companies raise the team's performance, plant productivity and every individual worker's earnings potential and skills.

Production management solutions give manufacturers visibility to issues that can cause bottlenecks, empowering them to prevent these productivity-robbing problems. Armed with daily reports or real-time data, they can respond rapidly to bottleneck risks, such as absent operators or operations trending slower than standard.

SFC also gives businesses visibility to brewing quality problems. SFC solutions capture results of in-line quality audits so that supervisors and managers see straight to the source of quality control (QC) issues by operation. Then they can assign rework and retraining before substandard quality potentially leads to more serious problems such as missed shipments, customer complaints and chargebacks.

Visibility made possible by production management software also improves customer service. Manufacturers are always able to provide customers with order status, immediately and accurately.

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3. Flexibility

One of the most exciting benefits of production management technology is the flexibility it gives manufacturers to adapt and respond to changing customer demands and requirements. Knowing exactly where they stand on capacity, productivity and payroll costs, they can confidently bid on new business and schedule production runs.

SFC simplifies the process of adding new operations, making it faster and easier for businesses to set or adjust rates for new fabrics and styles. This opens the door for manufacturers to say “yes” to new product types without as many concerns about setup time and resources.

With an SFC solution in your corner, you will know your order status clearly at all times, giving you the freedom and flexibility to add new customers, satisfy customer expectations and continually gauge your performance every step of the way.

4. Easier Management of Incentive Pay

Last but not least, production management technology makes it easier to manage incentive payroll. The latest SFC solutions are a great option for manufacturers considering how to add an incentive pay program at their factories or looking for a better, less complex way to track and manage existing incentive pay plans. While proven to significantly boost productivity, incentive pay is notoriously challenging to manage — and to manage fairly, accurately and consistently — without automation. Thankfully, next-generation production management, or SFC, alleviates many headaches and complexities of collecting, administering and processing production data. Manufacturers spend less time and staff resources on manual, error-prone processes.

SFC automates incentive pay program management. Data collection, calculations and reporting are fast and accurate. Associates have transparency to their incentives, performance and earnings, which is empowering and encourages greater productivity, morale, motivation and trust.

“With an SFC solution in your corner, you will know your order status clearly at all times”



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