

7 Must-Have ERP Features for Plastics Manufacturers



Market Challenges

As a plastics manufacturing company, you compete in a highly competitive marketplace, with short product lifecycles and thin margins. Your industry is driven by volatile commodity-based raw materials with end customers demanding quality products, fast delivery, and competitive prices. The ability to manage these variables while maintaining a profitable outcome is a major challenge you face on a daily basis.

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7 Must-Have ERP Features

1. As the prices of commodity based raw materials fluctuate, you need to price products to reflect the volatility in the marketplace so you can maintain a profitable business and remain competitive. A flexible quoting system that builds on accurate cost calculations gives you end-to-end visibility from quote to order fulfillment. With proactive sales and operations planning, you can minimize the effects of demand volatility on your businesses with just-in-time inventory and resources. An ERP system that relies on lean manufacturing streamlines inventory and enables proactive collaboration with suppliers.
2. Reconciling the availability of raw material, machine, tooling, and skilled labor to meet customer delivery expectations makes planning accurate production schedules a complex task. An integrated master production scheduling system can help you maintain that fine balance between customer demand and available capacity and resources. When material requirements planning and manufacturing execution systems (MES) are seamlessly integrated into an ERP system, master scheduling can drive purchasing and production activities. It also gives you the ability to adjust the plan based on continuous updates from the shop floor, building a foundation to compute available-to-promise quantity for future orders.
3. Plastic resin can be the single most valuable asset on your books. Managing this, and any inventory, to a very high degree of accuracy is mandatory. Category-level forecasting helps you effectively manage your plastic resin inventory throughout your supply chain. An ERP that provides access to real-time MES, with serial and lot management capabilities, along with full traceability of inventory from receiving to production to shipments, helps you keep a close tab on valuable inventory usage and tracking.
4. Whether your company is an injection molding, extrusion molding, blow molding, or rotational molding manufacturing company, you need a system designed for your industry to effectively manage bill of materials. Not only should your ERP maintain a single version of bill of materials information but it should also support flash and regrind tracking, variable bills of material for blend adjustments, the ability to produce by weight and/or length, rejects and yield or single-in with multi-out's the bill-of-material tracking, and shop floor control system.

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5. While managing labor and material are essential aspects of the business, plant equipment is the heart of your company. Maintaining equipment with preventive maintenance schedules and knowing how machines are performing in real time is critical. An ERP system that provides performance monitoring information through PLC integration is essential for peak performance. Real-time visual information like production throughput, OEE, asset utilization, and scrap reporting can keep plastic manufacturers in control of their manufacturing operations.
6. The Industrial Internet-Of-Things (IIoT) may be a new term to the marketplace but the plastics manufacturers have been integrating plant equipment information into their systems for decades. Plant equipment needs to communicate in real time with the ERP system on parts produced, parts scrapped, quality specification readings, power consumption, and equipment status changes. Low-cost mobility and sensing devices enable you with more insight including two-way context-aware and collection of structured and un-structured data.
7. Quality is an integral part of your business. You need to be confident that your company is infusing quality at every stage of production. You may even rely on methodologies like Total Quality Management (TQM), Six Sigma, or Kaizen. Your ERP system then needs to integrate with a digital quality management system that feeds highly visual SPC analysis to identify potential quality problems before they occur, whether quality information is captured at receiving, during manufacturing, or at the final completion step.

Plex Plastics Manufacturing Customers



“Before implementing Plex inventory accuracy was roughly 20%, inventory accuracy is now at 95%”

CHAMPION PLASTICS, INC.



“Plex has allowed us to reduce our entire company’s paperwork by over 50%”



“Plex Cloud ERP helps standardize business functions across multiple North American facilities”

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About Plex

Plex is the Manufacturing Cloud, delivering industry-leading ERP and manufacturing automation to 450+ companies across the globe. Plex pioneered Cloud solutions for the plant floor, connecting suppliers, machines, people, systems and customers with capabilities that are easy to configure, deliver continuous innovation, and reduce IT costs. With insight that starts on the production line, Plex helps companies see and understand every aspect of their business ecosystem, enabling them to lead in an ever changing market. All of the above mentioned requirements can be found native in the Plex Manufacturing Cloud ERP solution.