

# Supplier Portals: Insight Into an Efficient Supply Chain



## At a Glance:

- Describes the benefits that suppliers and manufacturers derive from implementing supplier portals — an adjunct to the Plex Manufacturing Cloud® that is often an afterthought but which soon becomes an invaluable aid for efficient operations.
- Explains how Plex's supplier portals enable non-EDI capable suppliers to efficiently communicate with and manage deliveries with the enterprise.
- Describes how supplier portals provide the enterprise with a transparent overview of the status of the supply chain and support strategic delivery of necessary components and ingredients in a timely fashion.
- Provides a real-world explanation of benefits from global supplier of precision metalstamping components Batesville Tool & Die.

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## Supplier portals add increased efficiency, quality, and transparency to the supply chain

Manufacturers previously tracked suppliers and their deliveries of goods in a predictable method that often resulted in errors. Faxing orders/schedules/specifications, tracking deliveries via spreadsheet, creating labels in an ad hoc fashion, manually inputting data on various forms, inventorying more product than needed to ensure no interruption in production — these approaches often led to wasteful, expensive operations.

Manufacturers addressed this challenge by mandating suppliers adhere to the strict regimen of electronic data interchange — EDI. EDI is efficient, but is also time-consuming to achieve and expensive to implement.

For small to midsized suppliers eager to adopt more efficient communications with customers but lacking access to an established EDI-compliant system, supplier portals are an attractive, alternative cost-saving solution. Supplier portals also give the supplier insight into the customers' demand and specifications, quality issues, and forecast information for help in the planning process.

## Suppliers leverage portals in a variety of ways

Suppliers typically find immediate value in several portal functions:

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- Supplier scorecards provide easy access to an automatically generated graphic that shows performance in a number of key areas.

The screenshot shows the PLEX Supplier Assessments interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the PLEX logo, 'EDGE Enterprises', and 'Supplier Assessments'. Below this is a search bar with 'Show all filters', 'Save As Default', and a 'Search' button. The main content area contains a table with the following columns: Supplier, DUNS No, Date, and Score. The table lists various suppliers and their assessment dates and scores.

Supplier	DUNS No	Date	Score
A NEW COMPANY		5/10/2016	9
Alkar Steel	585858521	9/3/2014	16.5
Acadiana Machine		10/23/2013	3
Pokatawsee Cable, Plastics and Metals		9/19/2013	14
Alkar Steel	585858521	9/5/2013	12
Airo Metals		8/9/2013	0
Acme Machinery		7/18/2013	10
A and B Tube Benders		12/9/2004	15
A NEW COMPANY		9/5/2012	10.5
True Manufacture		4/10/2013	9.5
ROYAL PLASTICS INC.	723070184	10/1/2012	14.5
Dow Plastics		9/15/2012	19
AAM Carrier		9/5/2012	7
A NEW COMPANY		9/6/2012	5.5
Alkar Steel	585858521	5/25/2012	7
Alkar Steel	585858521	2/3/2012	17
Alkar Steel	585858521	2/3/2011	17
Alkar Steel	585858521	3/25/2010	16
Alkar Steel	585858521	3/31/2011	15
Alkar Steel	585858521	6/15/2011	8
Alkar Steel	585858521	3/31/2011	15
True Manufacture		12/8/2010	9
Spacely Sprockets, Inc		6/16/2010	8
Alkar Steel	585858521	3/25/2010	3.5
Alkar Steel	585858521	8/28/2006	15

- Real-time customer releases, defined label printing formats, and less paperwork combine to enable speedier processes and more efficient receiving of material.

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- Corrective action forms — Plex Cloud ERP supports all major root cause/ corrective action forms, which can be integrated into the scorecard and allow the supplier and customer to collaborate on the corrective action.

Problem No	Methodology	Problem Status	Part No	Brief Description	Problem Category	Champion	Supplier Code	Customer Code	Department Code	Building Code	Recorded Date	Problem Due Date	Recurrence Count
569	8D	Open	4799-AAA	No Shipping Docs/Customer Return No.: 4)				GM			4/10/2017		0
570	7-Step Corrective Action	Open	4799-AAA	No Shipping Docs/Customer Return No.: 4)				GM			4/10/2017		0
571	5P	Open	1227-B-756-B	Cracks(Customer Return No.: 6)				GM			4/10/2017		0

- Portals enable suppliers to submit quotes online in an easily populated template with detailed pricing info broken down to whatever level is required. An added benefit is that all quote responses are saved in the same location and easily accessible — allowing the customer to easily compare the quote responses from different suppliers.

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EDGE Enterprises 11-0 (RFQ Responses)

Show all lines Save As Default Search

Add Suppliers to RFQ Delete Attachments Revisions RFQ Header RFQ Lines Email Distribution List

Supplier	Location	DUNS No	Supplier Status	Supplier Rating	Response Status	Valid Through	Response Note	Source Status	Source Note
A and B Tube Benders ABT00	Columbus, IN		Approved	90	Acknowledge...			BLANK	
Alkar Steel Alkar	St. Louis, MO	585858521	Active	100	Acknowledge...		This is a note entered via the Response Status Form	BLANK	
Decker Manufacturing DEC00			Conditionally Acceptable	75	No Response...			BLANK	
Sterling Heights Steel SHSTEEL	Norwich, NE		Acceptable		No Response...			BLANK	

Prices below displayed in United States Dollars (USD)

RFQ Lines	Suppliers			
	A and B Tube Benders	Alkar Steel	Decker Manufacturing	Sterling Heights Steel
Part 16744-0				
Supply				
Description Forged Flange				
Edit Response Line for	ABT00	Alkar	DEC00	SHSTEEL
Prototype Lead Time	5	2	21	
Production Lead Time	10	3	7	
Year	0	0	0	0

Apply

EDGE Enterprises 11-0 (RFQ Details)

Quick Print Print and Notify Revise Delete Revisions Add ECR Link Details ECR Link RFQ Lines Responses Email Distribution List Linked Sales Quote

DETAILS -

Description Grind OAL machine fac

Cost Request No

Linked Sales Quote 511.0 Session Test Quote

STATUS -

RFQ Type Plex UX Transition

RFQ Status Published

RFQ Date 11/7/2002

RFQ Priority No Value Selected

Added RFQ AcmeRFQ 11/7/2002 8:47:01 AM

Updated Grant, Michael 8/29/2006 3:33:49 PM

ROUTING -

Building

CONTACT INFO -

RFQ Buyer

Originator Acme, Joseph

Sales Rep

DATES -

Valid Through 5/7/2003

Response Due Date 11/22/2002

NOTES -

Note To All Suppliers

Internal Note

SIGN OFF -

Buyer Signoff

Manager Signoff

Director Signoff

ECR -

New ECR Link

ECR No	Brief Description
60	Change to Nissan Handle

Cancel Apply OK

The scorecard is customized by the customer and driven by attributes within Plex Cloud ERP. Outside data can also be entered. Using the scorecard, suppliers can review on a regular basis and compare results of key metrics. The problem control module allows suppliers to access problem record data — and if a slippage in a key area is identified, the root cause can be identified and a

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corrective action applied. All of this activity can be conducted with confidence as the customer can — if necessary — establish security safeguards that ensure that only a specified supplier will have access to the data.

“The typical Plex customer adds supplier portal functionality as a pilot with a few suppliers. They soon are expanding to more suppliers, as both the supplier and customer appreciate the ease with which it can be implemented and the advantages it brings.”

## How one manufacturer leverages supplier portals to improve efficiency and eliminate waste

Batesville Tool & Die is a global supplier of precision metalstamping components for automotive, appliance and related industries. For more than 30 years, Batesville Tool & Die has produced complex stampings and welded assemblies, with stamping capabilities ranging from 50 to 1,200 tons. Before implementing the Plex Manufacturing Cloud, the company faxed materials orders, delivery schedules and product specifications to suppliers. It was time-consuming, inefficient and prone to errors.

### Using the Plex supplier portal

With Plex’s supplier portal, that same communication flows over the Internet. More than 65 different suppliers use the Plex supplier portals to streamline communication and operations with Batesville Tool & Die.

- Ten tooling suppliers enter their tool building progress using Iteration Assignments. Training occurred over the phone and via email, taking no more than 30 minutes. Said Batesville IT Manager Sam Wintz, “It’s very straightforward for the suppliers.”

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- Ten raw materials/steel suppliers and 25 purchased components suppliers get daily releases using the Online Releases screen and use the forecast data from the Material or Component Requirements Forecast. Suppliers appreciate the automated process and were using the supplier portal within a week.
- Twenty processing subcontractors record production and print labels using the Control Panel, manage and track inventory, build master units, and use Plex reports to set priorities for running parts.
- A staffing supplier checks attendance and manages associates working for Batesville with the Time and Attendance functions.

The supplier portal is user-friendly, and Batesville's suppliers find it simple to retrieve and share timely information. "Our supplier communication has greatly improved. We have better visibility on our supplier inventory," said Wintz.

## Supplier portals are an often overlooked benefit of the Plex Manufacturing Cloud

Manufacturers typically don't deploy ERP systems like Plex Cloud ERP in order to provide suppliers access to portals, even though they provide a myriad of benefits for the supplier and customer. However, when manufacturers consider the benefits of deploying this functionality of Plex, it's often the proverbial no-brainer for both supplier and customer.

"Supplier portals are a jewel in the rough for manufacturers, suppliers and their customers."

Supplier portals ensure better, more transparent communication with the customer, reduce paperwork for releases, speed the supply process, and automatically provide a supplier with metrics to evaluate how well they are performing and what areas can be improved.

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Supplier portals provide a win-win scenario for suppliers and their customers without the expense or time-consuming overhead of managing an electronic data interchange.

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## About Plex

Plex Systems, Inc.<sup>®</sup> delivers industry-leading ERP, MES, and Industrial IoT solutions to manufacturers across process and discrete industries. Plex pioneered cloud solutions for the production line, connecting suppliers, machines, people, systems, data, and customers with capabilities that are easy to configure, deliver continuous innovation, and reduce IT costs. With insight from the shop floor to the top floor<sup>®</sup>, the Plex Manufacturing Cloud<sup>®</sup> helps companies see and understand every aspect of their business ecosystems, enabling them to transform their businesses and lead with precision, efficiency, and agility in an ever-changing market. Learn more at [www.plex.com](http://www.plex.com).

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