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The Manufacturing Leader's Guide to IT &ERP

How to reduce downtime, strengthen compliance and build the right foundations for growth

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Introduction

Manufacturing organisations today face more pressure than ever. Production targets continue to rise, customers expect tighter traceability, audits are more rigorous, and cyber risks increasingly threaten both output and reputation. The leaders responsible for operations, finance, supply chain and technology are all dealing with the same core challenge: **how to make the business more resilient without adding unnecessary complexity or cost.**

This guide brings together practical advice from decades of working inside manufacturing environments. It highlights the most common issues we see across the sector and how the right blend of IT and ERP can create a more stable, secure and scalable operation.

Keeping Production Running: Reducing Downtime & Improving Efficiency

Unplanned downtime is one of the biggest hidden costs in manufacturing. It affects output, customer satisfaction, staffing and profitability. Many organisations come to us after recurring outages, slow systems or persistent issues that no one seems able to diagnose.

Why downtime happens more than you think:

- ✗ Ageing infrastructure that hasn't been reviewed for years
- ✗ WiFi dead zones around the shop floor
- ✗ Poor network segmentation causing cross-site instability
- ✗ Legacy systems unable to cope with modern demands
- ✗ Support providers who don't understand industrial environments

What strong IT foundations look like:

- ✓ Robust networks that keep multi-site operations connected
- ✓ Dual-site VPNs that protect continuity
- ✓ Proactive monitoring that spots issues long before they escalate
- ✓ Fast, expert support that prevents small faults becoming production stoppages
- ✓ Modernised infrastructure that improves OEE, cuts MTTR and raises plant availability

Practical tip:

If downtime is recurring and no one can explain why, it's almost always a sign of underlying IT infrastructure weaknesses not just isolated device failures.

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Cybersecurity: Protecting your business & the Supply Chain

Cyber incidents are no longer isolated IT issues. They shut down production, halt shipments, cause audit failures and damage customer relationships. Many manufacturing businesses only seek support after a near miss or a serious scare that exposes vulnerabilities they didn't know existed.

Where manufacturing businesses are most exposed

- ✗ Unpatched devices and servers
- ✗ Weak or inconsistent MFA
- ✗ Flat networks with no separation between guest, office and production
- ✗ Missing or inaccessible backup documentation
- ✗ Poor visibility across multiple sites

Security measures that strengthen both resilience and audit confidence

- ✓ MFA and encryption across all devices
- ✓ Automated patching and update control
- ✓ Clear separation between corporate, guest and shop-floor networks
- ✓ Backups with test restores and audit-ready documentation
- ✓ A standardised security baseline across every site

Practical tip:

Compliance requirements increasingly expect security controls to be fully documented. Strong cybersecurity and strong audit performance now go hand-in-hand, even if they are separate disciplines.

Compliance, Audits & Traceability: Keeping Pace with Customer Expectations

Manufacturers supplying into medical, automotive and aerospace sectors face increasing demands around documentation, traceability and evidence of control. Many reach out to us when a customer audit reveals weaknesses or when they're preparing for an upcoming ISO review.

Common compliance pressures

- ✗ Gaps in traceability or batch records
- ✗ Manual processes that are prone to error
- ✗ Disconnected systems across production, quality, finance and dispatch
- ✗ Documentation that's difficult to produce during an audit
- ✗ ERP systems too limited to support industry expectations

How the right technology reduces compliance stress

- ✓ Upgrading to an ERP software solution such as Sage X3 to improve traceability and reporting
- ✓ Workflow automation that removes repetitive tasks and human error
- ✓ Document capture and smart integrations that centralise information
- ✓ Audit-ready backups and evidence packs
- ✓ A single technology partner who understands regulatory pressures

Practical tip:

If audits feel harder every year, it's a sign that your systems are being outpaced by customer expectations, not that your team is doing anything wrong.

Why IT and ERP Work Better Together

In many manufacturing businesses, IT and ERP can sit in separate silos, with separate suppliers, separate contracts and separate priorities. This often leads to delays, finger-pointing or projects that stall because one side depends on the other.

The problems this causes

- ✗ Projects take longer than necessary
- ✗ Upgrades depend on infrastructure changes no one planned for
- ✗ Integrations break between providers
- ✗ No single view of risk or total cost
- ✗ Leadership receives incomplete information

Benefits of having ERP and IT under one partner

- ✓ Faster delivery because all teams collaborate from day one
- ✓ Reduced risk of delays or miscommunication
- ✓ Infrastructure designed specifically to support ERP performance
- ✓ A clearer roadmap for future digital initiatives (IIoT, MES, machine data)
- ✓ One accountable partner responsible for the outcome, not just the technology

Practical tip:

If an ERP upgrade, integration, or reporting change requires several suppliers to coordinate before progress can be made, it usually indicates that your IT and ERP environments are too disconnected.

Building for Growth: Preparing for Expansion, IIoT & Digital Initiatives

As manufacturing businesses expand, open new sites or roll out IIoT and MES projects, the underlying technology needs to keep up. Many organisations only discover limitations when a major initiative exposes gaps.

Where growth projects typically struggle

- ✗ New sites without reliable connectivity
- ✗ Ageing server rooms not ready for modern workloads
- ✗ Sensors and machine data overwhelming legacy networks
- ✗ ERP systems unable to scale
- ✗ A lack of strategic IT planning

What scalable, future-proof foundations look like

- ✓ Infrastructure designed to support sensors, MES and predictive maintenance
- ✓ Secure networks that separate shop-floor and office systems
- ✓ Scalable ERP that grows with the operation
- ✓ Cloud options that reduce on-site complexity
- ✓ A roadmap that aligns technology with business growth

Practical tip:

If your team is discussing IIoT, machine-level data or automation, start by reviewing the network, not the software. Most delays come from infrastructure, not capability.

Improving productivity, control and performance

Customer Success Stories

CASE STUDIES

When unreliable data undermines confidence in your numbers

After a failed ERP upgrade left a UK manufacturer struggling with data accuracy, stock control and financial reporting, EBS carried out a detailed system review, cleaned up data and improved stock processes. Working with the business and its accountants, EBS helped restore confidence in the information and reduce year-end reporting from nine months to just five weeks.

Read the full case study.

When paper-based processes slow down your warehouse

EBS helped a manufacturing business improve stock accuracy, traceability and despatch by implementing Sage ERP and improving its stock processes. The work also supported the business through a site move, helping it maintain greater operational control.

Read the full case study.

When warehouse teams need better visibility of stock

EBS helped a business replace paper-based warehouse processes with handheld devices integrated with Sage ERP. This improved stock visibility, data accuracy and warehouse workflows, helping the team work more efficiently and reducing reliance on manual processes.

Read the full case study.

When outdated communications hold back customer service

EBS supported a business in modernising its telephony with a VoIP solution, helping maintain customer service during lockdown. Sales increased by 40% during the first lockdown and a further 30% during the second, illustrating how reliable communications can help a business stay responsive in challenging conditions.

Read the full case study.

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About EBS: Your IT Partner for Manufacturing

EBS has supported manufacturing organisations since 1979. We understand the pressures on modern operations; uptime, compliance, traceability, cyber threats and the need to scale without disruption.



A business solutions partner with hands-on manufacturing experience



A dedicated onboarding process aligned to your goals



In-house developers who create time-saving, error-reducing automations



ERP, IT, cloud, networking, security and support under one partner



Solutions designed to scale with your business

Our aim is simple: to give manufacturing leaders stable, secure and efficient technology systems that support growth, not restrict it.

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Next step: Strengthen Your Operation

Business Process Review for Manufacturers

If you're looking to take a more structured approach to improving your systems, we offer a Business Process Review designed specifically for manufacturing environments.

This is a focused assessment of your current workflows, IT infrastructure, and ERP setup to help you identify inefficiencies, reduce risk, and uncover opportunities to improve performance.

What the review covers

- ✓ **Expert-led assessment**
  A detailed review of your systems, processes and challenges, carried out on-site or remotely.
- ✓ **Clear recommendations**
  Practical, prioritised actions to improve efficiency, visibility and control across your operation.
- ✓ **Tailored solutions**
  Guidance aligned to your business: from ERP optimisation and integrations to infrastructure, automation and cloud.
- ✓ **Focused on outcomes**
  Identifying opportunities to reduce costs, improve performance and support future growth.

What you gain

A clearer understanding of where your current environment is holding you back and a practical path forward to strengthen your IT and ERP.

Request a Business Process Review

Call: 0121 384 2513

Speak to our team to arrange a review and explore how your systems can better support your manufacturing operation.

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Our experienced and friendly team are always happy to assist with your enquiries. Customer Service is at the heart of everything we do, and we'd love to hear from you.

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