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ENTERPRISE CORNERS

Purchase-Order Processes -

When it comes to improving supply-chain efficiency with information technology, manufacturers typically focus on improving and streamlining their most common and costly business practices. One of the areas that has the greatest potential benefit is managing the way purchase order changes are handled, and today technology solutions can help companies deal with this issue specifically.

ClearOrbit, www.clearorbit.com, Austin, Texas, a supply-chain execution software provider, recently launched a new purchase-order change management solution and part of its suite for collaborative replenishment. The system automates communication of order changes, taking data from the manufacturer's material requirements planning system. It's also designed to allow buyers and suppliers to change, manage, and collaborate on purchase orders.

"Our clients demand more visibility and control over their purchase-order management than is available in their current systems," says Tom Dziersek, president and CEO of ClearOrbit. "We can now 'layer-in' a comprehensive, Web-based purchase-order change management tool that enables significant new collaborative capabilities while avoiding the massive integration costs associated with alternative approaches."

Handling change orders is also a key aspect of product-lifecycle management (PLM), and there are several technology providers that have solutions specifically geared to help manufacturers in this area, including Agile Software, www.agile.com, San Jose, Calif., and MatrixOne, www.matrixone.com, Bedford, Mass. With these solutions, companies can develop standard workflow procedures, which means orchestrating shared data between systems in correlation with the processes that a company uses to manage a product during its lifecycle.

A good example of workflow in PLM is the management of engineering change orders (ECOs). With standards in place for annotating changes, the manufacturer can automatically process ECOs by routing documents and signatures based on the flow of data between product-data management, enterprise resource planning, and production systems.

For manufacturers trying to improve business processes in both supply-chain management and product-lifecycle management, focusing on change orders can be one of the most effective ways to cut costs and boost efficiency.

The Enterprise Corners will give a synopsis of how manufacturers can leverage technology to effectively manage their business processes. Start has sought out industry leaders to provide insightful editorial and snapshots of what technology solutions are available to helping you make more money. The best way to understand how technology will impact your business is by reading articles from the industry experts who are introducing technology solutions that allow you to overcome market challenges. These companies are committed to helping you meet your needs faster and better.

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