

sap order management system

SAP Order Management System: Streamlining Business Operations for Success

sap order management system is an integral part of modern business operations, especially for companies aiming to enhance their order processing efficiency and customer satisfaction. As businesses grow and customer demands become more complex, managing orders seamlessly from initiation to fulfillment becomes a critical challenge. This is where an SAP order management system steps in, offering a robust framework to handle orders effectively, reduce errors, and accelerate the entire sales cycle.

Understanding what an SAP order management system entails helps businesses appreciate its value beyond just processing orders. It integrates various functions such as inventory management, billing, delivery scheduling, and customer relationship management into one cohesive platform. This article explores the core features, benefits, and practical applications of SAP order management systems, shedding light on how it can transform your business operations.

What is an SAP Order Management System?

An SAP order management system is a software solution designed to facilitate the entire order-to-cash process within an organization. Built on SAP's enterprise resource planning (ERP) platform, it enables companies to manage sales orders, track inventory levels, coordinate with supply chains, and ensure timely delivery to customers. The system supports multiple sales channels and integrates with other SAP modules such as SAP Customer Relationship Management (CRM), SAP Supply Chain Management (SCM), and SAP Finance.

Unlike traditional order management tools, SAP's solution offers real-time data visibility and automation, reducing manual intervention and errors. This not only improves operational efficiency but also enhances customer experience by providing accurate order status updates and faster response times.

Key Components of SAP Order Management

The SAP order management system consists of several interconnected components that work together to streamline order processing:

- **Order Entry and Processing:** Captures and validates customer orders across various channels, including online, in-store, and phone orders.

- **Inventory Management:** Monitors stock levels and availability to ensure orders are fulfilled without delays.
- **Pricing and Discounts:** Applies pricing strategies, promotions, and discount rules automatically.
- **Credit Management:** Assesses customer credit risk to minimize financial exposure.
- **Order Fulfillment and Delivery:** Coordinates warehouse operations, shipment scheduling, and logistics.
- **Billing and Invoicing:** Generates invoices and integrates with financial systems for payment tracking.

Together, these components create a seamless flow from order placement to delivery, reducing operational bottlenecks.

Benefits of Using an SAP Order Management System

Implementing an SAP order management system offers numerous advantages that can significantly impact a company's bottom line and customer satisfaction levels.

Enhanced Operational Efficiency

By automating many manual tasks such as order entry, inventory checks, and invoicing, businesses can reduce errors and speed up the entire order cycle. Real-time data synchronization ensures that all departments—from sales to warehouse—are working with the most current information, minimizing delays caused by miscommunication.

Improved Customer Experience

Customers today expect transparency and quick responses. With SAP's order management system, businesses can provide accurate order status updates and faster delivery times. The system also supports flexible order modifications and returns handling, which enhances customer trust and loyalty.

Scalability and Flexibility

Whether a company operates in a single region or across multiple countries, SAP's order management system can scale accordingly. It supports multi-currency, multi-language, and multi-warehouse setups, making it ideal for global enterprises. Additionally, it can be customized to fit specific industry requirements, from retail to manufacturing.

Better Inventory Control

One of the critical challenges in order management is aligning inventory levels with demand. SAP's integrated inventory management helps businesses maintain optimal stock levels, avoid overstocking or stockouts, and improve warehouse utilization. This leads to cost savings and smoother fulfillment processes.

How SAP Order Management Integrates with Other Business Systems

The true power of the SAP order management system lies in its ability to integrate seamlessly with other enterprise systems, creating an end-to-end solution that covers all aspects of business operations.

Integration with SAP Supply Chain Management (SCM)

By connecting order management with supply chain processes, businesses can better forecast demand and manage procurement. This integration ensures that raw materials or finished goods are available when needed, reducing lead times and preventing order delays.

Linking with SAP Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

Integration with CRM systems enables sales and customer service teams to access order histories, preferences, and payment statuses. This holistic customer view supports personalized marketing efforts and proactive service, boosting customer satisfaction.

Financial and Billing Integration

Orders processed in the SAP order management system automatically feed into the finance module, streamlining invoicing, payment processing, and financial reporting. This reduces manual reconciliation efforts and enhances financial transparency.

Implementing SAP Order Management: Best Practices

Rolling out an SAP order management system requires careful planning and execution to maximize its benefits.

Assess Your Business Needs Thoroughly

Before implementation, conduct a comprehensive assessment of your current order processing workflows, pain points, and growth projections. This helps tailor the SAP solution to your specific needs and avoids unnecessary customizations.

Ensure Data Accuracy and Cleanliness

Since SAP order management relies heavily on master data such as customer information, product details, and pricing, maintaining clean and accurate data is essential. Invest time in data cleansing and establish governance policies to keep data quality high.

Train Your Team Effectively

User adoption is critical for the success of any new system. Provide thorough training to sales, warehouse, finance, and customer service teams, focusing on how the SAP order management system impacts their roles and daily tasks.

Leverage SAP Analytics for Continuous Improvement

Use the reporting and analytics capabilities within SAP to monitor order processing performance, identify bottlenecks, and track key performance indicators (KPIs). Continuous analysis drives informed decisions and operational improvements.

Emerging Trends in SAP Order Management Systems

As technology evolves, so does the landscape of order management. Staying informed about new developments can help businesses stay competitive.

Cloud-Based Order Management

Many organizations are moving their SAP order management systems to the cloud, benefiting from enhanced flexibility, scalability, and reduced IT overhead. Cloud solutions also facilitate easier integration with third-party applications and enable remote access.

Artificial Intelligence and Automation

AI-powered features such as demand forecasting, intelligent order routing, and automated exception handling are becoming more prevalent. These technologies help reduce manual workload and improve accuracy.

Omnichannel Order Management

With customers shopping across multiple channels—online, mobile, in-store—SAP's order management system is evolving to provide a unified experience. This omnichannel approach ensures consistent order processing regardless of the purchase channel.

Enhanced Mobile Capabilities

Mobile access to order management systems allows sales representatives and warehouse staff to manage orders on the go, improving responsiveness and operational agility.

In the dynamic world of business, having a reliable and efficient order management system like SAP's can be a game-changer. It not only streamlines internal processes but also creates a better buying experience for customers, paving the way for sustained growth and success. Whether you're a small business or a global enterprise, exploring the capabilities of an SAP order management system could be the key to unlocking greater operational excellence.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is SAP Order Management System?

SAP Order Management System is a comprehensive solution within SAP ERP that helps businesses manage the entire order-to-cash process, including order creation, processing, fulfillment, and billing.

How does SAP Order Management improve order processing efficiency?

SAP Order Management automates and streamlines order entry, validation, and tracking, reducing manual errors and accelerating the order fulfillment cycle, which improves overall processing efficiency.

Can SAP Order Management integrate with other SAP modules?

Yes, SAP Order Management seamlessly integrates with other SAP modules such as SAP SD (Sales and Distribution), SAP MM (Materials Management), SAP WM (Warehouse Management), and SAP CRM to provide end-to-end visibility and control over orders.

What are the key features of SAP Order Management System?

Key features include order capture and validation, real-time inventory checks, pricing and discount management, order tracking, returns processing, and integration with fulfillment and billing systems.

Is SAP Order Management suitable for e-commerce businesses?

Yes, SAP Order Management supports multi-channel order processing including e-commerce platforms, enabling businesses to manage online orders efficiently along with other sales channels.

How does SAP Order Management support customer satisfaction?

By providing accurate order status updates, timely fulfillment, and efficient returns handling, SAP Order Management enhances customer experience and satisfaction through reliable and transparent order processing.

Additional Resources

SAP Order Management System: Streamlining Enterprise Sales and Fulfillment Processes

sap order management system represents a critical component in the suite of enterprise resource planning (ERP) tools designed to optimize sales order processing, inventory management, and customer fulfillment workflows. As businesses increasingly demand agile and integrated solutions to handle complex order lifecycles, SAP's approach to order management stands out for its capacity to unify diverse operational functions under a single, scalable platform. This article delves into the architecture, features, and strategic advantages of the SAP order management system, providing an analytical perspective on its role in contemporary supply chain and customer experience management.

Understanding the SAP Order Management System

At its core, the SAP order management system is engineered to manage the entire order-to-cash cycle, facilitating seamless coordination between sales, inventory, logistics, and finance departments. Unlike standalone order processing tools, SAP's solution integrates deeply with other SAP modules such as SAP S/4HANA, SAP Customer Experience (CX), and SAP Extended Warehouse Management (EWM), creating a robust ecosystem that supports real-time data sharing and process automation.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of the SAP order management system is its ability to handle complex order scenarios including split shipments, backorders, and multi-channel sales. This flexibility is crucial for enterprises operating in industries such as manufacturing, retail, and wholesale distribution, where order fulfillment intricacies and customer expectations continuously evolve.

Core Features Driving Efficiency

The system's feature set illustrates its comprehensive nature:

- **Order Capture and Validation:** SAP order management supports multiple input channels—web portals, EDI, mobile apps—ensuring accurate and rapid order entry with built-in validation rules to reduce errors.
- **Real-Time Inventory Visibility:** Integrated inventory management allows businesses to view stock levels across warehouses and distribution centers, enabling informed commitments and dynamic allocation.
- **Automated Pricing and Discounting:** The system applies complex pricing

algorithms and promotional rules automatically, which enhances pricing accuracy and compliance.

- **Credit and Risk Management:** Embedded credit checks and risk assessments help minimize financial exposure by verifying customer creditworthiness before order confirmation.
- **Order Fulfillment Orchestration:** The platform coordinates with logistics and warehouse management modules to optimize picking, packing, and shipping processes.
- **Comprehensive Reporting and Analytics:** Advanced analytics provide insights into order trends, fulfillment performance, and customer behavior, facilitating strategic decision-making.

Integration and Scalability

Integration capabilities are among SAP's strongest suits. The order management system can be deployed as part of the broader SAP S/4HANA environment or as a standalone cloud-based service, SAP Order Management Cloud. This flexibility enables organizations to adopt the technology incrementally or as a full-scale transformation initiative.

From a scalability standpoint, the system caters to both mid-sized enterprises and global corporations. Its architecture supports high transaction volumes and complex business models, including B2B and B2C operations. Moreover, SAP's continuous investment in cloud infrastructure ensures that performance can scale elastically with business growth.

Comparative Analysis: SAP Order Management vs. Competitors

When compared to other leading order management solutions such as Oracle Order Management Cloud, Microsoft Dynamics 365 Supply Chain Management, and Salesforce Order Management, SAP's offering holds several competitive advantages:

- **Deep ERP Integration:** SAP's order management is tightly woven into the SAP ERP ecosystem, which reduces data silos and enhances operational coherence, whereas some competitors require additional middleware for integration.
- **Industry-Specific Functionality:** SAP provides tailored templates and best practices for industries like automotive, pharmaceuticals, and

consumer goods, which accelerates deployment and adoption.

- **Global Compliance and Localization:** The system supports multi-currency, multi-language, and region-specific tax and regulatory compliance out of the box, a critical requirement for multinational companies.
- **Robust Analytics:** Leveraging SAP Analytics Cloud and embedded AI capabilities, the order management system offers predictive insights that many competing platforms are still developing.

However, SAP's solution may present challenges such as a steeper learning curve and higher initial implementation costs compared to some cloud-native competitors focused on smaller enterprises or startups.

Challenges and Considerations

Despite its strengths, the SAP order management system is not without potential drawbacks:

1. **Complex Implementation:** Organizations often require significant consulting support and change management efforts to fully realize the system's benefits, which can extend project timelines.
2. **Customization Needs:** Businesses with highly unique order processes may need bespoke development, increasing both cost and maintenance complexity.
3. **User Experience:** While SAP has improved its user interfaces, some users find the system less intuitive compared to newer, more consumer-focused SaaS applications.
4. **Cost Factors:** Licensing fees and infrastructure investments can be substantial, particularly for smaller companies exploring digital transformation.

These considerations underscore the importance of thorough needs assessment and strategic planning before committing to SAP's order management solution.

Emerging Trends and Future Directions

The evolution of order management systems is tightly linked to broader digital transformation trends, and SAP continues to innovate in this space. Key future-oriented developments include:

- **Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning:** Enhanced AI-driven demand forecasting and dynamic order prioritization aim to boost efficiency and reduce fulfillment delays.
- **Omnichannel Order Management:** SAP is expanding capabilities to unify orders from online marketplaces, social media, physical stores, and call centers, delivering consistent customer experiences.
- **Blockchain for Supply Chain Transparency:** Integrating blockchain technology to improve order traceability and fraud prevention is an area of active exploration.
- **Cloud-Native Deployment:** Continued migration to cloud-native architectures promises greater flexibility, faster updates, and reduced total cost of ownership.

Businesses leveraging SAP order management systems must stay attuned to these innovations to maintain competitive advantage and operational resilience.

The SAP order management system stands as a comprehensive, enterprise-grade platform designed to address the multifaceted challenges of modern order fulfillment. Its integration depth, configurability, and industry focus make it a compelling choice for organizations seeking to harmonize their sales and supply chain operations. However, successful adoption hinges on aligning the system's capabilities with organizational needs, readiness, and long-term strategic goals. As the digital economy continues to reshape customer expectations and operational paradigms, SAP's continuous enhancements in its order management offerings will be pivotal in defining how businesses orchestrate their order-to-cash journeys.

[Sap Order Management System](#)

sap order management system: Operations Management Peter Jones, Peter Robinson, 2020
Concise, engaging, and relevant: light on quantitative techniques and packed with cases offering a real-world perspective, this text provides the most accessible approach to operations management.

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SAP is a market leader in enterprise business application software. SAP solutions provide a rich set of composable application modules, and configurable functional capabilities that are expected from a comprehensive enterprise business application software suite. In most cases, companies that adopt SAP software remain heterogeneous enterprises running both SAP and non-SAP systems to support their business processes. Regardless of the specific scenario, in heterogeneous enterprises most SAP implementations must be integrated with a variety of non-SAP enterprise systems: Portals

Messaging infrastructure Business process management (BPM) tools Enterprise Content Management (ECM) methods and tools Business analytics (BA) and business intelligence (BI) technologies Security Systems of record Systems of engagement The tooling included with SAP software addresses many needs for creating SAP-centric environments. However, the classic approach to implementing SAP functionality generally leaves the business with a rigid solution that is difficult and expensive to change and enhance. When SAP software is used in a large, heterogeneous enterprise environment, SAP clients face the dilemma of selecting the correct set of tools and platforms to implement SAP functionality, and to integrate the SAP solutions with non-SAP systems. This IBM® Redbooks® publication explains the value of integrating IBM software with SAP solutions. It describes how to enhance and extend pre-built capabilities in SAP software with best-in-class IBM enterprise software, enabling clients to maximize return on investment (ROI) in their SAP investment and achieve a balanced enterprise architecture approach. This book describes IBM Reference Architecture for SAP, a prescriptive blueprint for using IBM software in SAP solutions. The reference architecture is focused on defining the use of IBM software with SAP, and is not intended to address the internal aspects of SAP components. The chapters of this book provide a specific reference architecture for many of the architectural domains that are each important for a large enterprise to establish common strategy, efficiency, and balance. The majority of the most important architectural domain topics, such as integration, process optimization, master data management, mobile access, Enterprise Content Management, business intelligence, DevOps, security, systems monitoring, and so on, are covered in the book. However, there are several other architectural domains which are not included in the book. This is not to imply that these other architectural domains are not important or are less important, or that IBM does not offer a solution to address them. It is only reflective of time constraints, available resources, and the complexity of assembling a book on an extremely broad topic. Although more content could have been added, the authors feel confident that the scope of architectural material that has been included should provide organizations with a fantastic head start in defining their own enterprise reference architecture for many of the important architectural domains, and it is hoped that this book provides great value to those reading it. This IBM Redbooks publication is targeted to the following audiences: Client decision makers and solution architects leading enterprise transformation projects and wanting to gain further insight so that they can benefit from the integration of IBM software in large-scale SAP projects. IT architects and consultants integrating IBM technology with SAP solutions.

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development process and governance and, finally, how to spot common problems in how architects communicate their solutions. By the end of this Salesforce book, you'll have gained the confidence to architect and communicate solutions on the Salesforce platform while dodging common mistakes. What you will learn

- Create a balanced system architecture by identifying common mistakes around on- and off-platform functionality and interfaces
- Avoid security problems that arise from anti-patterns on the Salesforce platform
- Spot common data architecture issues and discover intuitive ways to address them
- Avoid the dual traps of over- and under-customization in your solution architecture
- Explore common errors made in deployment setups, test strategy, and architecture governance
- Understand why bad communication patterns are so overlooked in architecture

Who this book is for This book is for Salesforce architects, aspiring architects, developers, consultants, and decision makers who want to start making the right architectural choices or prepare for their journey to CTA. This book helps you gain a professional understanding of Salesforce and its building blocks. It is not code-centric, so you will benefit from both functional and technical experience, but a basic level of platform understanding is required.

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sap order management system: *Masterclass Enterprise Architecture Management* Jürgen Jung, Bardo Fraunholz, 2021-09-06 This textbook provides a hands-on introduction to enterprise architecture management. It guides the reader through the applications of methods and tools to typical business problems by presenting enterprise architecture frameworks and by sharing experiences from industry. The structure of the book represents the typical stages of the journey of an enterprise architect. Chapter 1 addresses the central question of what to achieve with the introduction of an enterprise architecture. Chapter 2 then introduces concepts and visualizations for business architecture that help with understanding the business. In chapter 3 the development of an

application architecture is outlined, which provides transparency on information systems and their business context. Next, chapter 4 presents visual tools to analyze, improve and eventually optimize the application landscape. Chapter 5 discusses both traditional organizational as well as collaborative approaches to enterprise architecture management. Eventually, several established enterprise architecture frameworks like TOGAF, Zachmann, ArchiMate, and IAF are described in chapter 6. The book concludes with a summary and an outlook on future research potential in chapter 7. Based on their experiences through several years of teaching, the authors introduce students step-by-step to enterprise architecture development and management. Their book is intended as a guide for master classes at universities and includes lots of exercises and references for further reading.

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Covers planning and control of supply chain operations, optimizing logistics, inventory, and distribution.

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The revised edition of the single-best source of project management case studies
Compiled by Harold Kerzner, the leading authority on project management, Project Management Case Studies, Third Edition presents the most comprehensive collection of project management case studies available today. Featuring more than 100 case studies, this essential book illustrates both successful implementation of project management by actual companies as well as the pitfalls to avoid in a variety of real-world situations. This new edition: Contains case studies illustrating successful and poor implementation of project management Represents a wide range of industries, including medical and pharmaceutical, aerospace, manufacturing, automotive, finance and banking, and telecommunications Covers cutting-edge areas of construction and international project management plus a new super case on the Iridium Project, covering all aspects of project management Follows and supports preparation for the Project Management Professional (PMP®) Certification Exam Project Management Case Studies, Third Edition is a valuable resource for students, as well as practicing engineers and managers, and can be used on its own or with the latest edition of Harold Kerzner's landmark reference, Project Management: A Systems Approach to Planning, Scheduling, and Controlling. Other powerful tools by Harold Kerzner, Ph.D.: Project Management: A Systems Approach to Planning, Scheduling, and Controlling, Tenth Edition (978-0-470-27870-3) Project Management Workbook and PMP®/CAPM® Exam Study Guide, Tenth Edition (978-0-470-27872-7)

sap order management system: Enterprise Intelligence: Building Scalable Data Products for the Digital Supply Chain 2025 Author 1 : NAVEEN SAIKRISHNA PUPPALA, Author 2 : MASTER DR. S. B. KISHOR, PREFACE
In today's hyper-connected global economy, supply chains have evolved from linear, function-centric processes into complex, data-driven ecosystems. As enterprises strive to remain agile, resilient, and customer-centric, the ability to harness and operationalize vast quantities of supply-chain data has become a strategic imperative. Enterprise Intelligence: Building Scalable Data Products for the Digital Supply Chain is designed to guide practitioners, architects, and decision-makers through the journey of transforming raw data into actionable intelligence that fuels competitive advantage. Drawing upon both industry best practices and cutting-edge research, this book is organized into eleven interrelated chapters, each addressing a critical dimension of end-to-end data-product development:

- Foundations of Enterprise Intelligence in the Supply Chain establishes the conceptual framework, defining key principles and illustrating how data products differ from traditional reporting and analytics.
- Architecting Scalable Data Infrastructure delves into the technology stack storage, compute, and networking required to support high-volume, low-latency workflows.
- Data Governance and Quality in Supply Chain Systems underscores the importance of trust, consistency, and compliance, presenting methodologies to measure and enforce data integrity.
- Real-Time Data Ingestion and Processing Pipelines explores modern stream-processing architectures that enable timely insights and reactive decision-making.
- AI and ML for Predictive Supply Chain Intelligence demonstrates how machine learning models can

anticipate demand fluctuations, optimize routes, and reduce inventory costs. · Digital Twins and Simulation for Operational Optimization shows how virtual replicas of physical systems empower “what-if” analyses and continuous process improvement. · Intelligent Inventory and Demand Planning Systems focuses on advanced algorithms for balancing stock levels, minimizing stockouts, and adapting to shifting market conditions. · Supplier and Risk Intelligence Platforms examines frameworks for evaluating supplier performance, forecasting disruptions, and automating risk mitigation. · Orchestrating Data Products for Supply Chain Collaboration addresses the cultural and technical mechanisms needed to share insights across organizational boundaries. · Cloud-Native Integration with ERP and Logistics Systems guides readers through seamless connectivity with enterprise resource planning and transportation-management solutions. · Visual Analytics and Decision Intelligence Dashboards demonstrates how intuitive, interactive interfaces translate complex data into clear, decision-ready insights. Whether you are building your first data-product prototype or scaling a global analytics platform, this book offers both strategic guidance and hands-on techniques. Throughout, you will find real-world examples, illustrative diagrams, and practical checklists designed to accelerate adoption and drive measurable outcomes. It is our hope that by the end of this journey, you will possess the knowledge and confidence to architect, deploy, and govern data products that unlock the full potential of your digital supply chain. Authors Naveen Saikrishna Puppala Master Dr. S. B. Kishor

sap order management system: Knowledge Acquisition, Modeling and Management Rudi Studer, 2003-06-29 Past, Present, and Future of Knowledge Acquisition This book contains the proceedings of the 11th European Workshop on Knowledge Acquisition, Modeling, and Management (EKAW '99), held at Dagstuhl Castle (Germany) in May of 1999. This continuity and the high number of sessions reflect the mature status of the knowledge acquisition community. Knowledge Acquisition started as an attempt to solve the main bottleneck in developing expert systems (now called knowledge-based systems): Acquiring knowledge from a human expert. Various methods and tools have been developed to improve this process. These approaches significantly reduced the cost of developing knowledge-based systems. However, these systems often only partially fulfilled the task they were developed for and maintenance remained an unsolved problem. This required a paradigm shift that views the development process of knowledge-based systems as a modeling activity. Instead of simply transferring human knowledge into machine-readable code, building a knowledge-based system is now viewed as a modeling activity. A so-called knowledge model is constructed in interaction with users and experts. This model need not necessarily reflect the already available human expertise. Instead it should provide a knowledge level characterization of the knowledge that is required by the system to solve the application task. Economy and quality in system development and maintainability are achieved by reusable problem-solving methods and ontologies. The former describe the reasoning process of the knowledge-based system (i. e. , the algorithms it uses) and the latter describe the knowledge structures it uses (i. e. , the data structures). Both abstract from specific application and domain specific circumstances to enable knowledge reuse.

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explains the difference between supply chain logistics and manufacturing logistics. It is a useful reference for those in the industry as well as for those taking related courses.

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people, companies, and projects.

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Manufacturing Ilkyeong Moon, Gyu M. Lee, Jinwoo Park, Dimitris Kiritsis, Gregor von Cieminski, 2018-08-24 The two-volume set IFIP AICT 535 and 536 constitutes the refereed proceedings of the International IFIP WG 5.7 Conference on Advances in Production Management Systems, APMS 2018, held in Seoul, South Korea, in August 2018. The 129 revised full papers presented were carefully reviewed and selected from 149 submissions. They are organized in the following topical sections: lean and green manufacturing; operations management in engineer-to-order manufacturing; product-service systems, customer-driven innovation and value co-creation; collaborative networks; smart production for mass customization; global supply chain management; knowledge based production planning and control; knowledge based engineering; intelligent diagnostics and maintenance solutions for smart manufacturing; service engineering based on smart manufacturing capabilities; smart city interoperability and cross-platform implementation; manufacturing performance management in smart factories; industry 4.0 - digitaltwin; industry 4.0 - smart factory; and industry 4.0 - collaborative cyber-physical production and human systems.

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Harris C. Makatsoris, Howard D. Richards, 2004-03-31 In the last half of the twentieth century industry encountered a revolutionary change brought about by the harnessed power of seemingly ever-increasing capacity, speed and functionality of computers and microprocessors. This strength provided management and workers within industries with new capabilities for management, planning and control, design, quality assurance and customer support. Organized information flow became the mainstay of industrial companies. New tools and information technology systems emerged and evolved to enable companies to integrate the various departments (Design, Procurement, Manufacturing, Sales and Finance) within companies, particularly the larger ones, including international corporations. This was to give them a chance to meet new demands for product time to market, just in time supply of orders, and customer support. To the smaller company these changes were not so apparent. Neither the tools nor systems nor indeed their economic value seemed appropriate to them except for special cases. While all this was happening the structure of the larger companies began to disintegrate. Strong competitive pressures and globalization of the market place brought this about. Shedding unwanted competence and subcontracting it to others became common practice. Regional market pressures triggered companies to reorganize to create, produce, and distribute goods and services. Greater dependency on chains of supply from external companies became the norm. Medium and smaller sized companies began to gain some advantage and at the same time some were sucked into management and control systems governed by the larger companies.

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