



Integrating Kanban with MRPII: Automating a Pull System for Enhanced JIT Inventory Management

Raymond S. Louis

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If you manage inventory, you probably use MRPII, a system based on a push method that embraces work and purchase order execution. MRPII helps you plan and integrate data relevant to your entire organization. But, when you have shifts in demand, you have to: 1) Realign and cancel hundreds of open manufacturing and purchase orders, and then 2) issue new orders.

Another system, kanban, is designed specifically to replenish inventory in just-in-time manufacturing. As consumption occurs, the kanban manual system triggers replenishment signals to the source of supply, so that both production and the supplier are constantly reacting to actual consumption. Compared to MRPII, kanban lowers inventory and minimizes shortages. But the manual process of recalculating every part number by hand, and triggering replenishment by faxing or calling suppliers, is time consuming and non-value-adding.

Automating kanban by blending the planning strength of MRPII with manual kanban pull methods enhances your flexibility and competitive position.


MRP's forward projection capability is used to:

- recalculate kanban lot size.
- perform a simulation to protect against non-linear demand.
- inform production areas and suppliers of the anticipated demand levels for resource planning.
- calculate staffing requirements for flexible work cells.

This system:

- Automatically recalculates and triggers replenishment.
- Integrates suppliers into the manufacturing loop.
- Uses bar codes to enhance speed and accuracy of the receipt process.

Before moving in this direction, preparatory work is required. Work cells should be constructed with material located at the point of use. Container options and transportation methods need to be selected, kanban lot size calculations, and work cell staffing modules to develop. This book will help you deal with these and other topics. You will be able to take advantage of the author's expertise in the design, implementation and evaluation of these systems.

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