Manufacturing Practices Adoption Grid

Six levels of practice adoption that measure an organization's commitment to process discipline, and reveal the performance gaps that put change efforts at risk.

PURPOSE

This scale helps manufacturers evaluate their organization's adoption of current best practices, so they can identify the gaps to address in order to limit risk when considering or executing a process change — a software implementation, the introduction of additional resources such as AI, or the automation of processes with new equipment.

By evaluating how consistently practices are understood, followed, and supported across the organization, manufacturers can identify the internal areas most likely to challenge or undermine success through lack of preparation.

Score each category independently. The pattern of scores across categories reveals where operational gaps are most likely to create friction during a change effort.

SCOPE OF ASSESSMENT

Evaluate current state across the core activities that govern how work moves through the shop floor:

1. **Initiating work** — how production orders are released and communicated to the floor
2. **Tracking work** — how in-process status is captured, updated, and shared
3. **Scheduling** — how capacity is planned and work is sequenced
4. **Expediting** — how priority shifts are managed and communicated across teams

In the evaluation consider as a measure how effectively production control communicates and coordinates with the aligned supporting functions. Likely supporting functions are:

- **Procurement** — material availability, supplier communication, and purchase order visibility
- **Quality** — inspection processes, non-conformance handling, and corrective action
- **Warehousing** — inventory accuracy, material flow, and receipt-to-floor traceability
- **Maintenance** — equipment availability, planned vs. unplanned downtime, and responsiveness to production priorities

HOW TO SCORE

For each of the seven categories of examination, read across the six levels of adoption and select the level that most accurately reflects current state — not goal state or recent best performance. Score based on consistent, day-to-day reality.

Your current state will almost always fall between levels. Use the quarter-level scale to indicate how accomplished the team is within the selected level, and to give a clear picture of what it will take to reach the next one:

> ¼ This level's characteristics are beginning to appear but are not yet consistent.

> ½ This level's characteristics are present and functioning most of the time.

> ¾ This level's characteristics are well established; the next level is within reach.

THE SIX LEVELS IN THREE BANDS

Each band marks a change in what the organization is willing and able to do, not just an increase in capability.

Awareness

LEVELS 1 & 2

1 — Discovery. Just Get It Done.

2 — Visibility. Patterns emerging but still unconvinced.

Buy In

LEVELS 3 & 4

3 — Engagement. Willing to support the obvious.

4 — Conviction. Committed to process over crisis management.

Operational Excellence

LEVELS 5 & 6

5 — Mastery. Reliable, explainable performance.

6 — Innovation. Operational capability as strategic advantage.

Six Levels of Adoption by Category of Examination

	AWARENESS		BUY IN		OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE	
Horizons International hzs.com CATEGORY	Level 1 **Discovery** Just Get It Done	Level 2 **Visibility** Patterns emerging but still unconvinced	Level 3 **Engagement** Willing to support the obvious	Level 4 **Conviction** Committed to process over crisis management	Level 5 **Mastery** Reliable, explainable performance	Level 6 **Innovation** Operational capability as strategic advantage
CATEGORY 1 **Leadership Alignment** SCORE ☐	No knowledge of manufacturing best practices. Post-crisis blame common; no structured accountability. Material availability, equipment issues, and sales-to-resource mismatch cited as causes of limited success.	Leadership generally recognizes that production disciplines may be of value but remains unconvinced of the need to provide funds or time resources. Investment in other departments is perceived as more valuable.	Outside influences force recognition that production control discipline is relevant and meaningful. Leadership begins supporting and enforcing processes. Accepts role in driving necessary changes and supports investment in technology to update information more quickly.	Understand absolutes of required performance constraints. Recognize role in continuing improvement. Willing to do the uncomfortable.	Consider role of production control as essential part of company system for delivering consistent information and performance to customers. Manufacturing leadership drives strategic direction, not just operational execution.	Investment in emerging technologies (AI, predictive analytics, digital twin) is initiated from within manufacturing. Production capabilities are leveraged as a competitive differentiator in sales conversations.
CATEGORY 2 **Organization Recognition** SCORE ☐	Staff resources are hidden across departments — shipping, engineering, materials, and sales. Constant switching of priorities by departments. Emphasis on meeting end goals with limited or no intermediate metrics. Multiple versions of the truth. Vague process controls.	Production Control or Operations established as its own department with internal hierarchy. Work direction begins to follow the formal chain of command, allowing less frequent redirection by outside departments. Paper-based processes dominate; information updates are batched and relevant only as snapshots once a day, week, or month.	Recognize need for: (1) real-time information across many status points; (2) value of skilled staff with experience in formal production control disciplines; (3) plan to acquire resources to support shift to digital tools.	Production control established as a funded priority with dedicated budget and staffing plan. Digital tools replace paper-based and spreadsheet-driven processes. Single version of the truth established across departments; intermediate performance metrics tracked regularly.	100% digital information processing with the goal of leveraging IoT and machine learning (ML) to improve accuracy and speed. Top manager regularly identified as key decision maker and included in strategic decisions.	Leadership position on par with CFO or CRO. Operational performance is reliable and predictable, meeting or exceeding industry benchmarks.
CATEGORY 3 **Problem Handling** SCORE ☐	Problems fought as they occur. No long-term resolution, inadequate root cause analysis, accountability diffused across parties.	Teams set up to address major shortcomings, then abandoned when a new crisis develops. Actions occur in expedited manner with constant communication of priority shifts. No investment in long-term tracking or communication systems.	Real-time problems reported immediately and resolved in an orderly manner with a multi-team approach. Firefighting teams are disbanded as standard processes across departments are enforced and meet objectives without special actions.	Standard problem resolution processes documented and followed consistently. Root cause analysis performed on recurring issues; findings tracked and acted on. Shift from reactive resolution to early pattern recognition underway.	New situations previewed in advance. Early warning of challenges appreciated and not dismissed as irrelevant. Corrective actions regularly reviewed and improvements developed as part of active continuous improvement policy.	Problems are prevented except in cases where unusual or unpredictable circumstances occur. Rigorous, well-defined crisis responses are modeled and understood.

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CATEGORY 4 **Workforce Engagement** SCORE	Employees are self-directed and choose actions and priorities based on influences and staying out of trouble. Resist uncomfortable changes by calling on organization influencers, not direct leadership. Very low retention levels.	Invest effort in managing individual offline systems. Unable to accept big-picture needs over individual concerns about productivity. Heavy emphasis on job security based on historical knowledge or controlling information. Retention moves from very low to moderate.	Recognize unity of purpose. Support big-picture concepts over individual impacts. Recognize self-value in participation, not individuality. Moderate to better retention levels.	Commit to stated processes and hold peers accountable to the same standards. Actively participate in training; adopt digital tools without resistance. Report issues and suggest improvements through formal channels rather than workarounds. Retention levels stabilize in the high range.	Employees actively contribute to continuous improvement and effectively justify investments in technology and training for process improvement. Extra-high retention levels.	Employees operate as subject matter experts who actively identify process improvements and champion technology adoption. Cross-training is standard, reducing single points of failure. Staff regularly participate in industry forums or peer manufacturer exchanges. Recruitment strengthened by reputation for operational maturity. Extra-high retention levels continue.
CATEGORY 5 **Cost of Production Errors Against Revenue** SCORE	Undetected because it is ignored. Considered irrelevant in the face of special customer needs. Actual cost likely 30% or greater.	Cost of late performance still not tracked directly. Aware of impacts through indirect measures like Customer Satisfaction reported below 80%. Customer Service staff levels high to support communication. Actual cost likely 25% or greater.	Agreed formula for capturing cost of errors in production, but it does not accurately capture all elements. Formula generates an 8% cost but real impact is likely 15%. Late delivery recognized as a multi-faceted issue not solely dependent on production factors. Priority changes negotiated with tradeoffs.	Cost of production error formula updated with departmental responsibility assigned. Addressed as part of quality goals and corrective action. Error cost trends reviewed monthly; cost reduction targets tracked against baseline.	Managed through Corrective and Preventive Action (CAPA) or continuous improvement. Consistently at or below 2.5% reported and actual.	Error costs tracked in real time with automated root cause attribution. Predictive quality analytics identify emerging cost patterns before they become systemic. Production error costs consistently below 1% of revenue. Error cost data used proactively in quoting and capacity planning.

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CATEGORY 6 **Manufacturing Systems Status** SCORE ☐	No multi-department coordinating processes. Priorities negotiated and frequently switched. No enforceable performance standards achievable.	Obvious coordinating activities such as stand-up meetings and spreadsheet status tracking deployed. Management workload increases without measurable on-time or related performance improvements. Performance standards inconsistently achieved.	Begins digitizing select processes, primarily to support communication outside of manufacturing. Cost/benefit of further digitization remains unclear due to competing demands for resources.	Digitization accelerates as productivity gains from moving away from paper and spreadsheet-based processes become measurable. Performance improvements linked to reduced manual information tracking. Employees achieve high levels of self-directed work.	Digital processes are well established, well understood, and fully supported by staff. Information sourcing reliably originates from digital tools. Process escapes are rare or non-existent and immediately become subject to CAPA processes to reassert control.	Active projects delivering system-wide integration — bar codes, Business Intelligence, IoT — are complete or underway. Paper other than regulatory labeling is eliminated from shop floor areas. Decision data is 100% digital and immediate.
CATEGORY 7 **Production Control Posture** SCORE ☐	Heroes celebrated for high-visibility rescues. Consistent performance limited to priority projects. Costs of heroic effort absorbed into overall results and ignored.	Hero fatigue sets in. Morale suffers as key resources cannot sustain superhuman responsiveness. Recognition grows that the rescue model is not a long-term strategy.	Recognition that even heroes operate within a chain of command. Boundaries established around deadlines, data accuracy, and escalation paths. Designated communication points replace ad hoc firefighting.	The hero is no longer needed for routine operations. Process compliance replaces individual heroics; deviations trigger corrective action. Customer commitments are reliable.	The shift from hero culture to operational discipline is complete and accepted. Alignment with standards produces consistent outcomes without undue sacrifice. Lines of control are clear, understood, and supported at all levels.	Capabilities are well understood internally and externally. Demanding requirements are met within known parameters — no heroics required. The organization delivers on commitments without anyone falling on the sword.

ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

Transfer the score for each category, then record the pattern the scores reveal.

CATEGORY 1 Leadership Alignment	CATEGORY 2 Organization Recognition	CATEGORY 3 Problem Handling	CATEGORY 4 Workforce Engagement	CATEGORY 5 Cost of Production Errors Against Revenue	CATEGORY 6 Manufacturing Systems Status	CATEGORY 7 Production Control Posture
· v1.0	· v1.0	· v1.0	· v1.0	· v1.0	· v1.0	· v1.0

GREATEST STRENGTH

Highest-scoring category, and the practice that earns it.

GREATEST WEAKNESS

Lowest-scoring category, and what keeps it there.

TOP THREE AREAS OF CONCERN

Gaps that need to be closed to prepare for a change effort and lower risk.

1.
2.
3.