



What Should Be On Manufacturing Leaders' Radar in 2026



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Manufacturing is moving fast and companies that still rely on old habits are falling behind. In 2026, success isn't about working harder, it's about building smarter systems, creating stronger leadership habits, and making better decisions faster.

In this guide, we share four critical focus areas manufacturers need to prioritize to succeed in today's environment. Based on real-world insights from Tervene and Genius ERP, it covers what's working for leading manufacturers—and how you can put these strategies to work in your own operations.

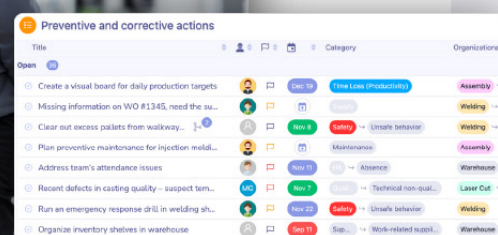
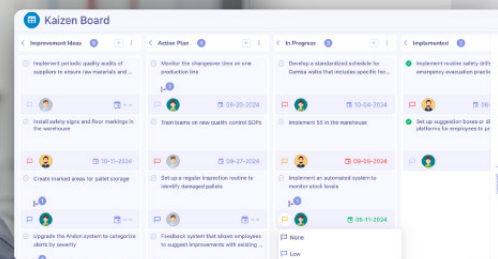
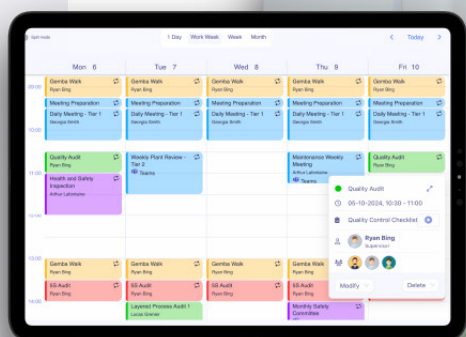
Manufacturers who focus on leadership, data, visibility, and connectivity will be the ones who stay competitive in 2026. This playbook will show you how to get there.

Who Should Read This

- Manufacturing executives and managers focused on operational performance
- Frontline leaders looking for ways to drive more structure, alignment, and accountability
- Continuous improvement teams are searching for proven methods to boost efficiency
- Anyone responsible for driving digital transformation or shop floor modernization

What You'll Learn

- How Leader Standard Work (LSW) can build stronger, more proactive leadership teams
- Why tracking the right KPIs makes or breaks decision-making speed and quality
- How Visual Management drives faster action, clearer communication, and higher accountability
- How connecting your shop floor improves productivity, quality, and real-time decision-making



Why Leader Standard Work Should Be Top of Mind for Manufacturers in 2026

The 2026 Manufacturing 10,000-Foot View

In 2026, manufacturing leaders who don't have Leader Standard Work (LSW) on their radar are falling behind. Here's why—and how to stay ahead of the curve.

Manufacturers are constantly looking for efficiency gains, but overlook how unstructured their leadership team is.

"Front-line managers are spending as little as 25% of their time on effective management activities."

BearingPoint®

Enter LSW—the proven framework to align your managers, eliminate process chaos, and future-proof your operations. If you're not paying attention to LSW, you're leaving efficiency on the table. That's the hard truth: **inconsistent leadership and processes are costing you**. Every unstructured meeting, every reactive problem-solving session, every missed communication—it all adds up.

LSW isn't a nice-to-have. It's your competitive advantage.

What Exactly Is Leader Standard Work?

LSW is an **established set of routines, processes, and tasks** that guide managers towards consistent and efficient performance. Daily. Weekly. Monthly. Think of it as a GPS for your leadership team.

LSW isn't a one-size-fits-all solution. It's a framework you'll need to customize for your unique challenges. But the foundational principles? They're universal. Leadership isn't about individual efforts—it's about creating a system where everyone knows their role, their responsibilities, and how they contribute to the bigger picture.

Key benefits? Let's break it down:

- **Align organizational goals:** Ensure every leadership action supports strategic objectives across shifts, departments, and sites.
- **Gain better control of daily operations:** Leaders are more proactive with recurring routines in place. They identify issues early, reduce unplanned disruptions, and reinforce process discipline.
- **Reduce surprises and process variation:** Standardized leadership activities minimize guesswork and stabilize fast-paced environments.
- **Structure priorities:** LSW helps managers focus on what matters most, preventing reactive decision-making and ensuring time is spent where it drives the most value.
- **Boost employee engagement:** Clear leadership routines build trust. Consistent expectations make teams feel more supported, accountable, and aligned.

Operational wins and proven results from standardized leadership:

- ✓ 24% fewer process variations - [Safran Cabin Canada](#)'s experience shows measurable improvements in operational consistency.
- ✓ 14% productivity boost - Their LSW implementation delivered real efficiency gains.

Want to help your team get up to speed? Steal [this explainer article](#).

Why **Not** Implementing LSW Is Costing You

There are actual costs to operating without structure, most of them hidden in plain sight. Without a system like LSW, here's what often happens:

- **Miscommunication bottlenecks:** Critical updates, KPIs, or shift-to-shift feedback get lost in hallway conversations or emails. The result? Delays, rework, and confused teams.
- **Inconsistent performance across shifts:** One supervisor prioritizes audits and process checks; the next skips them. Output fluctuates depending on who's on duty, leading to quality issues and uneven production.
- **Leadership burnout:** When managers spend their days reacting instead of executing a straightforward routine, they hit decision fatigue fast. LSW reduces this mental load by building structure into their workday.
- **Missed operational opportunities:** Without standard checks and follow-ups, minor problems go unnoticed until they become major breakdowns. Missed improvement ideas, preventable downtime, and rising costs are often the price.

"In many companies, there's a gap between senior management's goals and what's happening on the floor. To achieve your goals, you need supervisors who can control the floor and maintain continuous improvement initiatives."

— [Stéphane Chrusten](#), Senior Business Advisor, BDC Advisory Services



As Stéphane Chrusten put it, *“There’s a gap between senior management’s goals and what’s happening on the floor.”* **LSW helps close that gap.** When senior management communicates the need for better standards and defines the routines and expectations that make up their LSW program, they’re writing the **operational playbook** for every manager to follow.

This becomes the standard everyone rallies around, eliminating guesswork and misalignment. Instead of each supervisor running their shift differently, teams work from **a shared system that reinforces strategic goals** in daily actions. That’s how real, measurable progress gets made—site by site, shift by shift.

How LSW Drives Performance and Engagement

“Management practices account for 20% of the productivity variation across plants. Sites with more structured management consistently outperformed others.”

STANFORD GRADUATE
BUSINESS SCHOOL OF

Here’s the thing: When managers follow consistent routines, they can execute tasks more efficiently, keeping the entire operation running smoothly. And there’s a ripple effect on teams:

- **Accountability increases** when expectations stay clear
- **Engagement rises** with a more proactive workforce
- **Trust grows** as teams see predictable leadership

Tracy Ginger, Plant Manager at Dairy Farmers of America, saw immediate improvements after implementing LSW at their Utah facility:

“These are all completed actions—things that were going awry or tasks employees needed to be done. I keep scrolling and scrolling through them. As a plant manager, this says it 1000 times. These are issues that could have been left unresolved, but instead, they’re addressed and completed. It’s done, and it’s over with.”

— Tracy Ginger, Plant Manager, Dairy Farmers of America



Dairy Farmers of America

LSW Implementation: 2026 Best Practices

Implementing LSW in your organization can be straightforward if you follow these best practices:

1. Identify key tasks and activities:

Assign responsibilities to each tier of leadership, from shop floor to boardroom. Review job descriptions, standard operating procedures, and other relevant documentation to distribute the right tasks to the right people.

2. Group tasks and management activities:

Categorize tasks and activities into daily, weekly, and monthly frequencies. This method establishes a consistent workflow, giving supervisors and managers a sense of control and organization.

3. Create a calendar:

Place your routine tasks on a shared calendar so all stakeholders know exactly when, where, and how each task will unfold.

4. Monitor and adjust:

Continuously monitor the routine’s effectiveness and adjust as needed. You may notice that some tasks need to be performed more or less frequently or may be better off assigned to another leader.

5. Train and coach:

Train new supervisors and managers on all relevant standardized routines to ensure they understand their responsibilities and the timing of critical activities.

Your Next Move: Making LSW a Priority

If you're looking to make implementation easier, this **4-week LSW roadmap** lays out exactly what to do, step by step.

- ✓ Clear, week-by-week rollout plan so you know what to tackle first
- ✓ Best practices & real-world examples to avoid common roadblocks
- ✓ Goal-setting tools to track progress and drive real improvements

Free Resource: [4-Week LSW Implementation Roadmap \[eBook\]](#)



Why Business Intelligence Needs to be Driving Your Decisions in 2026

In 2026, manufacturers can't afford to rely on guesswork. With tighter margins and pressure to be more efficient, tracking the right metrics, and responding to the results, is no longer optional—it's essential.

From our experience working with manufacturers across North America, we know that those who take the time to set meaningful KPIs and track them consistently improve operations, make better decisions, and stay ahead of the competition. Metrics aren't just numbers—they show you where you're strong, where you're falling short, and what to fix.

"Strong performance management rests on the simple principle that 'what gets measured gets done.' "

McKinsey
& Company

How to Know What to Measure for Your Manufacturing Business

Not every metric will matter to every manufacturer.

What you choose to track will be unique to your business and will depend on your goals and how your operation runs. To figure out the right metrics for your business, start by asking: what are the most important outcomes for your business this year? Is it **growth**, **profitability**, **customer satisfaction**, or something else?

Once your goals are clear, choose KPIs that align with them. If you're focused on **efficiency**, track metrics like **throughput**, **OEE (Overall Equipment Effectiveness)**, and **downtime**. If **profitability** is your priority, look at **unit costs** and **return on assets**.

"Real-time KPIs don't just tell you what happened—they help you act on what's happening."

— **Kaleb James**, Managing Director, Stafford Engineering

Pick KPIs That Work for You

To find the right metrics that you should be tracking, choose KPIs that are SMART:

- ✓ **Specific and Measurable:** Know exactly what you're tracking and how it's calculated
- ✓ **Actionable:** The metric should lead to improvements—if it doesn't help you make a decision, it's not worth tracking
- ✓ **Relevant:** Every KPI should support a specific business goal
- ✓ **Realistic:** Don't track everything—focus on a few metrics that drive performance
- ✓ **Time-based:** Track progress over a defined period so you can spot trends and take timely action

"By comparing estimated machining times to real-time data from our machines, we saw where delays were creeping in—and where our assumptions were off. Tools like K2 showed us true hourly production rates, including downtime.

That kind of data helped us improve both our planning and our communication with customers. My advice? Don't try to perfect everything at once. Start with simple KPIs that matter to your business, then build from there."

— Mathieu Robert, President & CEO, G.M. Precision



Top Manufacturing KPIs

Here are some of the most commonly used—and most useful—manufacturing KPIs:

- ✓ **Throughput:** Measures how many units you produce over a specific period.
How to Calculate: $\text{Throughput} = \text{Total Units Produced} / \text{Time Period}$
- ✓ **OEE (Overall Equipment Effectiveness):** Combines availability, performance, and quality into a single measure of equipment productivity.
How to Calculate: $\text{OEE} = \text{Availability} \times \text{Performance} \times \text{Quality}$
- ✓ **On-Time Delivery:** Shows the percentage of orders delivered to customers on schedule.
How to Calculate: $\text{On-Time Delivery} = (\text{On-Time Units Delivered} / \text{Total Units Delivered}) \times 100$
- ✓ **Cycle Time:** Measures how long it takes to produce a single unit.
How to Calculate: $\text{Cycle Time} = \text{Net Production Time} / \text{Number of Units Produced}$
- ✓ **Inventory Turns:** Indicates how often inventory is sold and replaced.
How to Calculate: $\text{Inventory Turns} = \text{Cost of Goods Sold} / \text{Average Inventory}$

✓ **Scrap Rate:** Tracks the percentage of materials wasted in production.

How to Calculate: $\text{Scrap Rate} = (\text{Scrap Material or Units} / \text{Total Material or Units}) \times 100$

✓ **Production Downtime:** Measures how much time your machines are not running when they should be.

How to Calculate: $\text{Production Downtime} = \text{Sum of Downtime Events} / \text{Time Period}$

"KPIs are important because they help align the business to achieve strategic goals such as profit, growth, performance, sales levels. Numbers don't lie, and if you can quantify your key measurements, they provide objective feedback on business performance."

Forbes

How to Track and Measure KPIs

The best way to track **KPIs** is with a **manufacturing-specific ERP system**. A good ERP automatically collects **data** from across your operation—**machines, production lines, inventory, finance**—and brings it together in one place. No more spreadsheets, manual reports, or data silos.

"Too many KPIs show only what has happened, not what's happening now—usually buried in financial reports that come too late to act on. But real-time, visible KPIs can drive action right on the floor."

"We've seen a big impact just by putting large screens in key areas to display live KPIs. When the data's always available and easy to understand, teams know what matters—and they respond."

"A good BI tool doesn't have to be expensive. The value lies in connecting your data sources and building strong models that give you real insights."

— **Kaleb James, Managing Director, Stafford Engineering**



With built-in **dashboards**, **analytics**, and **business intelligence** tools, an ERP gives you a live view of your KPIs and overall performance. It also standardizes how metrics are calculated, so everyone in your organization works from the same data. That makes it easier to spot issues, compare performance across teams or shifts, and make faster, more informed decisions.

Get Started with the Right KPIs in 2026

When you track the right **KPIs**, you get a clearer picture of how your business runs. With the right **data**, spotting problems, cutting **waste**, improving **efficiency**, meeting customer expectations, and increasing **profits** becomes much easier.

At the end of the day, what gets measured gets managed. In 2026, the manufacturers that succeed will be the ones who know their metrics—and know how to act on them.

Free Resources to Help You Get Started

- ✓ [The Complete ERP Guide for Manufacturers](#)
- ✓ [How Manufacturers Can Use Data to Improve Efficiency and Profitability](#)



Why Visual Management Should Be Top of Mind for Manufacturers in 2026

The Blind Spot That's Slowing Teams Down

Only a few manufacturers give their leaders access to **real-time operational dashboards**. Most still rely on **outdated whiteboards** or **end-of-shift reports** to lead meetings and run operations. That means information is **invisible** to the people who need it most.

"Most companies do not enable frontline management to become more productive. Companies that succeed in redefining the job of the frontline manager can improve their performance remarkably."

McKinsey
& Company

In 2026, leaders who still rely on **scattered reports** or **email updates** are disadvantaged. When teams lack a **structured framework** to track metrics and actions, decisions slow down, and issues fall through the cracks.

What Visual Management Does

Visual Management uses simple, visible signals—think of boards, signs, and lights—to show what’s working, what’s not, and what to fix. It’s your operational control tower. It keeps everyone, from the shop floor to the boardroom, aligned by showing the status of operations and targets.

With the right tools, your team can:

- **Monitor key metrics** across shifts and sites
- **Support structured routines** like tiered meetings, daily huddles, and Gemba Walks
- **Spot opportunities and issues early** so you can take action before they impact output
- **Drive data-driven decisions** and improve cross-functional alignment

“All of our leads and supervisors have iPads. They have access to dashboards and reporting.”

— **Tracy Ginger**, Plant Manager, Dairy Farmers of America



Dairy Farmers of America

Dashboards should be **role-specific** and **mobile-ready**. When information flows directly to the people on the floor, leaders can **act without waiting** for end-of-shift reports or weekly meetings.

Want to help your team get up to speed? [Share this article](#) to give them an overview.

What Happens When You Can't See the Problem

Before implementing visual management tools, Norman Noble had over **500 open issues**—many with **no clear owner** or **deadline**. Issues were recorded but rarely resolved.

"We weren't really visualizing the data—we were just collecting it. It was a list. And anything stuck in the middle often got overlooked, since most people only focused on the top or bottom 5 or 10 items."

— **Steven Kalinoff**, Business Intelligence Analyst, Norman Noble



Without Visual Management, you're left with:

- **Hidden problems** that escalate
- **Missed KPIs** due to manual follow-up
- **Long delays** between detection and action
- **Disconnected shifts** and unclear ownership

5 Things You Can Fix with Traditionnal Visual Management

Visual Management tools give frontline leaders and decision-makers an instant view of what's working and what's not. When designed right, they unlock **faster reactions** and **clearer collaboration**.

Teams gain:

- **Enhanced visibility** into daily operations with **SQCDP**, **production monitoring**, and **Kanban boards**.
- **Faster issue resolution** is driven by **visual signage** and **problem escalation tools**.
- **Data-driven decisions** on facts, not gut feelings.
- **Stronger alignment** through shared standards and metrics in **tiered meetings**.
- **Greater accountability** by making it clear who's responsible and what's overdue.

How to Make Visual Management Stick in a Digital Environment

Here's how to build a Visual Management system that actually works in 2026:

1. **Digitize your whiteboards.** Manual systems fall apart under pressure. Go digital to centralize metrics and actions.
2. **Standardize your visuals.** Don't let every department invent its tools. Use customizable dashboards.
3. **Prioritize what matters.** Start with safety, quality, delivery, and performance. Don't overload the system by keeping it lean.
4. **Synchronize your teams.** Use live dashboards to align metrics and actions across shifts, departments, and sites.
5. **Train for consistency.** One template, one playbook. Don't let the system become optional.

"If I were starting from scratch, I'd build templates and training from day one. Everyone was doing their own thing—wild west. A shared standard would've saved us from firefighting."

— Steven Kalinoff, Business Intelligence Analyst, Norman Noble

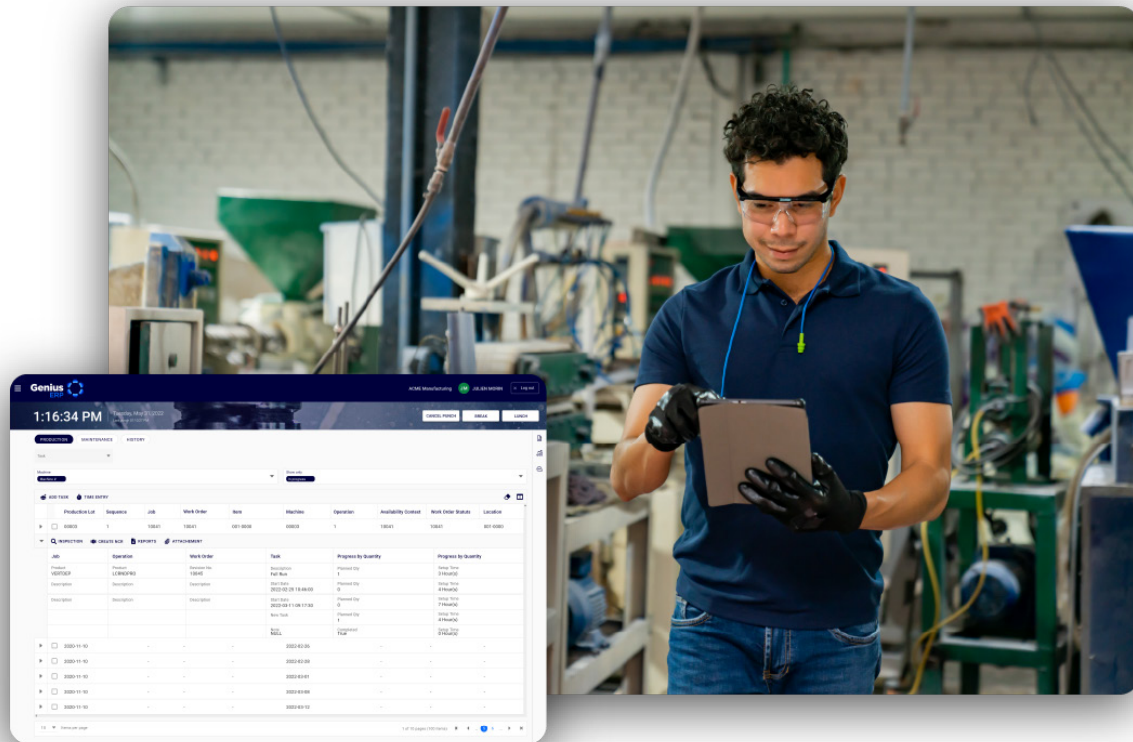


10 Visual Management Must-Haves

If you're looking to implement Visual Management with clarity, this guide breaks down what to focus on and how to roll it out.

- ✓ **Practical checklists and rollout tips** used by top manufacturers
- ✓ **Best practices** for applying tools like **digital Kanban** and **SQCDP boards**
- ✓ Actionable ways to **visualize progress, assign ownership, and drive follow-up**

Free Resource: [10 Visual Management Must-Haves \[eBook\]](#)



Why You Need a Connected Shop Floor in 2026

Too many manufacturers still rely on printed work orders and spreadsheets (and sometimes even sticky notes) to run their day-to-day operations. But a disconnected shop floor slows you down. It leads to communication breakdowns, delays, wasted materials, and frustrated employees.

A connected shop floor brings your operation together—giving you real-time visibility, faster decisions, and fewer delays.

*“Tools that connect workers both to other workers and to data will help manufacturers turn the data into actions that **generate real value**.”*

McKinsey
& Company

What Happens When Your Shop Floor Isn't Connected

Your shop floor is where the work happens. If it's not running efficiently, the rest of your operation will struggle too. Delays, missing parts, and miscommunication on the floor can quickly lead to late deliveries, extra costs, and unhappy customers.

Connecting your shop floor helps you **stay in control**. It makes it easier to **assign tasks, track job progress**, and **catch issues early**—before they turn into bigger problems.

With a connected shop floor, workers have everything they need on one screen, so they don't waste time looking for instructions or materials. **Managers** get **real-time updates** and can **adjust schedules** or **priorities** as needed to keep jobs moving.

Free Resource: [How to Become a Manufacturing Superhero \[eBook\]](#)

Paper-Based Systems Don't Cut It Anymore

Paper systems weren't designed for today's complexity. A work order printed yesterday might already be out of date. A handwritten inspection note might get lost. A part shortage might go unnoticed until it's too late to fix.

Even the most experienced production manager can't manually keep up with all the moving pieces. And when you rely on paper, there's always a risk that someone's working with the wrong info—or no info at all.

Going **digital** means everyone sees the **same data as it happens**. That's what makes a **connected shop floor** so powerful.

What a Connected Shop Floor Looks Like

A **connected shop floor** gives your team **easy access** to everything they need—**task lists, work instructions, material locations, and real-time job updates.**

Machines and sensors can automatically feed data into your system, tracking production, quality, downtime, and more. Instead of paper travelers and manual data entry, your team can view up-to-date work orders on tablets or touchscreens, see where a WIP item is at a glance, and have time and materials automatically logged.

"We used to spend hours tracking down information across departments. Now, everything is accessible in seconds. Real-time data gives us a 360-degree view of the business—from sales and production to budgeting and KPIs."

— **Vincent Larouche**, Senior Industrial Engineer, LaserAx



But connecting your shop floor isn't about adding more disconnected tools. The smartest way to do it is through your **ERP**. A **manufacturing-specific ERP** already connects your business—sales, inventory, purchasing, engineering, scheduling, and more. Bringing your shop floor into the fold gives you a single source of truth, with real-time data flowing between departments.

The result? **Fewer errors, faster workflows, better coordination**—and a shop floor that runs **smoother and smarter.**

"Manufacturing operations management and manufacturing execution systems can connect the enterprise to the shop floor and provide visibility into data across the organization."

Deloitte.

Key Benefits of a Connected Shop Floor

Here's what manufacturers gain when they modernize their shop floors with a connected ERP:

- ✓ Real-time visibility: Know the status of every job, machine, and operator at a glance.
 - ✓ Faster decisions: Use live data to prioritize tasks and adjust schedules when things change.
 - ✓ Higher productivity: Workers have the necessary information without wasting time hunting it down.
 - ✓ Less waste: Track materials, reduce errors, and eliminate unnecessary rework.
 - ✓ Better traceability: Instantly pull up inspection records, serial numbers, and production history.
 - ✓ Improved quality: Catch defects earlier and track quality metrics in real time.
- Streamlined communication: Make sure everyone's on the same page.

What Manufacturers Are Doing in 2026

More and more manufacturers are ditching paper and making the move to connected shop floors. Why? Because they see the results. Productivity goes up. Stress goes down. And they're better equipped to handle whatever comes their way.

"Thanks to real-time production loading, we knew exactly when to hire and how many people we needed—before it was too late. We make decisions based on data now, not gut feeling."

— Vincent Larouche, Senior Industrial Engineer, LaserAx



Bring Your Shop Floor into the Future

In 2026, a connected shop floor isn't just a nice-to-have—it's a must-have.

If your operation still relies on manual processes and disconnected systems, now is the time to modernize. Start with a **good ERP**, build smart **digital processes** around it, and bring your **shop floor into the future**.

Free Resource to Help You Get Started



[Connect your shop floor with Genius ERP](#)

Executive Summary: What Will Set Manufacturers Apart in 2026

In 2026, success in manufacturing comes from building structure, gaining visibility, and acting on the right data at the right time.

This eBook breaks down the four key levers that leading manufacturers are using to stay ahead:

1. Leader Standard Work (LSW): Bring Structure to Leadership

Frontline managers often spend more time reacting than leading. LSW changes that by defining clear leadership routines—daily, weekly, monthly.

When leadership activities are consistent across teams and shifts, you get stronger accountability and fewer surprises.

➔ Start here: [Download Tervene's 4-week LSW roadmap \[eBook\]](#).

2. Business Intelligence & KPIs: Use Data That Drives Action

What gets measured gets managed, but only if you're tracking the right things. Smart KPIs give you real-time insights into efficiency, profitability, and performance.

Forget lagging reports. The best manufacturers use live data to prioritize, adjust, and improve before small issues become big problems.

➔ Not sure what to track?
[Use Genius ERP's complete guide to ERPs to get started.](#)

3. Visual Management: Make Performance Visible and Actionable

Whiteboards and spreadsheets won't keep up with the pace of your operation. Visual Management brings key metrics and actions to the surface so everyone sees what's working, what's not, and what needs attention.

The result? Faster decisions, better alignment, and stronger follow-through.

➔ [Get Tervene's 10 Visual Management Must-Haves \[eBook\]](#).

4. Connected Shop Floor: Align Teams and Data in Real Time

A disconnected shop floor slows everything down. Printed work orders, manual updates, and siloed tools lead to delays and miscommunication.

A connected shop floor ties together your ERP, production data, and frontline teams, giving you live visibility, fewer errors, and smoother workflows.

➔ [Learn how to connect your shop floor with Genius ERP.](#)

The Takeaway

The manufacturers who will outperform in 2026 are aligning leadership, acting on live data, making performance visible, and connecting their people and processes.

If operational performance is on your priority list this year, these are the levers to pull.