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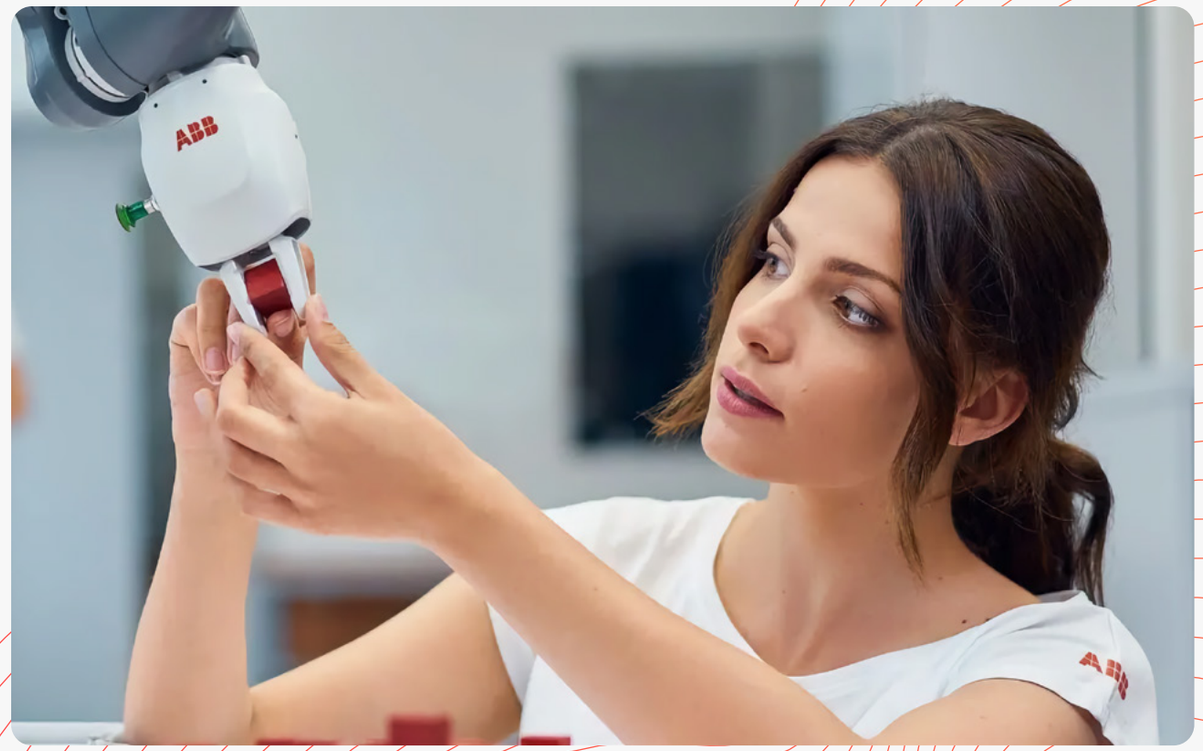
EFFICIENT PRODUCTION PLANNING AT ABB SWITZERLAND:

waySuite provides greater transparency and improves on-time delivery



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Capacity planning creates transparency

ABB is a leading global technology company that offers solutions for electrification, drive technology, robotics, and automation. At its production sites in Untersiggenthal and Baden, ABB Switzerland focuses on customer-specific production in the drive (traction & system drives) and batteries segments. Here, ABB produces the whole spectrum of frequency inverters and converters for the global market.

In 2019, ABB Switzerland realized that the company needed an advanced planning and scheduling tool (APS) to optimize production planning. The goal was to plan projects taking into account the actual capacities, materials, and resources for all products to be manufactured and all dependencies. Reliable planning was intended to replace the many tools, parallel processes, and workarounds identified as avoidable cost drivers. An important argument for choosing wayRTS as the planning system was its ability to simulate scenarios. The possibility to simulate the feasibility of manufacturing new or additional orders taking into account the actual capacity utilization promised freedom of action. If the dependencies are clear, projects can be prioritized easily and meaningfully and shifted if necessary.

Benefits from the introduction of wayRTS

- Solid decision-making basis thanks to up-to-date information about capacities and resources
- Real-time dynamic response along the entire job chain
- Optimized assembly space planning
- Personnel deployment planning (wayWFM)
- Improved on-time delivery

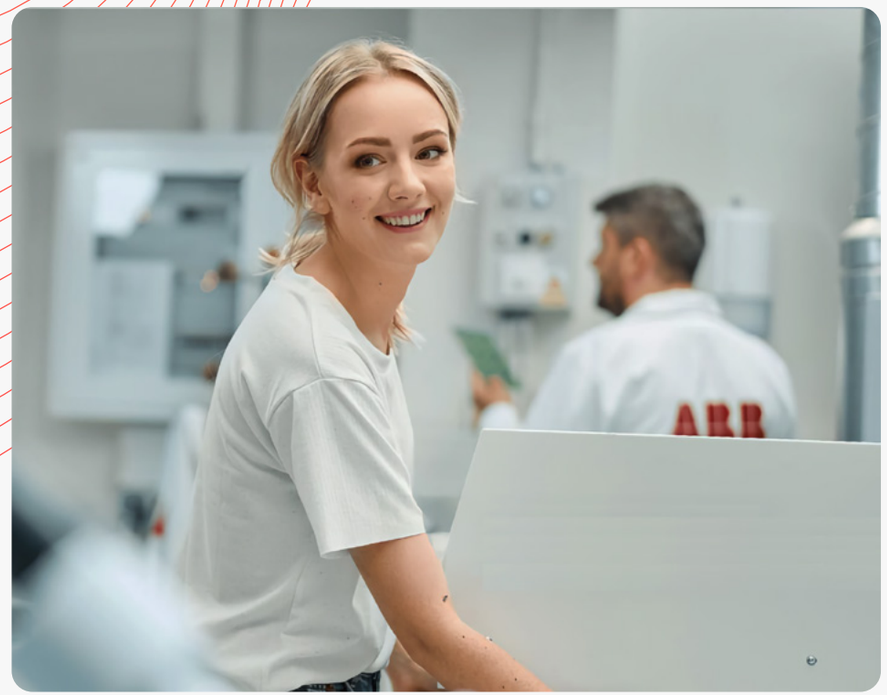
The initial situation

The production of control cabinets involves a small proportion of in-house production but very complex assembly. In ABB Switzerland's production planning, the challenge is that there is a large share of customer-specific products. (Prozentangaben möglich?) The weaknesses of the old planning system were clear due to missing parts and insufficient missing parts testing on the one hand and high storage costs on the other. Overloaded capacities, which had to be rescheduled manually, resulted in higher process and labor costs. Two aspects made it clear that the solution would be suitable planning software. Scheduling in ERP was based on unlimited capacities and constant availability – a constant source of error. The need to plan had led to a proliferation of workarounds, as was evident at the beginning of the project: More than 120 different Excel tools were in use.

Patrick Strickler

Value Chain Engineering,
ABB Switzerland

"To put it bluntly, our previous scheduling was out of date by the time it was created. Far too often, it was necessary to reschedule at short notice in order to satisfy customers. Our current operations planning in waySuite is characterized by real-time information about available and required capacities and resources. We detect possible delays early and we have ideal production sequences for all production steps at every workplace."



The approach

After a design phase, the roll-out of wayRTS at ABB Switzerland began in 2021. valantic trained the end users and ran test loops. The ABB team cleaned up master and transaction data in order to create a good data basis for the future. The assembly workstations and their assignment have always been a bottleneck. Since this concerns not just the space requirement but also the availability of the right employees, the waySuite module wayWFM was introduced in a second step starting in 2022. Workforce management recognizes that, in terms of production planning, each individual worker is a special resource that cannot be scheduled at will. Different qualifications, working hours models, overtime accounts, labor law requirements, holiday planning, further training, and sick leave make the allocation of personnel capacities complex; wayWFM makes this complexity manageable.

Summary: Production planning benefits

ABB Switzerland can look back on a successful APS implementation and has already made a first wayRTS release change. Production planning has benefited significantly from the fact that it can rely on real-time information about capacities and resources. Planning transparency improves communication with customers, who now receive a faster response to their requests, and also with suppliers, as purchasing is informed about the specific impact of changes in production or delivery delays.

Patrick Strickler sums things up this way: “If you, like us, have to allocate your capacities to a large number of customer-specific projects, it’s good to depict your order network clearly and ensure that there is comprehensive planning across the company. What I learned from this project: Change management is very important to encourage employees to accept changes. And you should not underestimate the work required: Cleaning up the data in the ERP system is an essential task in a project like this.”

About ABB

ABB is a leading global technology company in electrification and automation, enabling a more sustainable and resource-efficient future. By combining engineering expertise and digitalization, ABB ensures that industries perform at high levels while becoming more efficient, productive and sustainable to exceed their goals. At ABB, we call this «Engineered to Outrun». The company has a history of over 140 years and employs more than 105,000 people worldwide. ABB shares are listed on the SIX Swiss Exchange (ABBN) and on Nasdaq Stockholm (ABB).

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About valantic

valantic is Number 1 for digital transformation and one of the fastest growing digital solutions, consulting, and software companies on the market. More than 500 blue chip clients rely on valantic, including 33 of 40 DAX companies and many leading international companies as well. With more than 4,000 specialized digitalization experts and net sales of approx. EUR 600 million in 2024(e), valantic is represented in 18 international locations around the globe.

More than 2,000 digitalization projects over the past five years have shown that valantic understands the business challenges of its customers. From strategy to tangible implementation, they have the necessary expertise to accompany projects from start to finish and make them successful. In this, valantic combines technological expertise with industry knowledge and the human touch.

valantic consults companies on all challenges of digital transformation, helps them to better manage their corporate performance and leverage the potential of data and artificial intelligence. In addition, valantic supports its customers in optimally shaping the customer experience, profitably using core digitalization technologies and optimizing company processes from end to end.

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