Get a grip on your production planning

22 July 2025, 09:21

Pascal Pollet

Get a grip on your production planning

In many manufacturing companies offering customisation services or that have small-scale production, an efficient production planning is always a real challenge. Orders are held up, planners lose track and customers have to wait longer than expected. Sounds familiar? It’s time to change track. By taking a critical look at the amount of **work in progress (WIP)** on your shop floor, you can give a boost to peace of mind, flow and efficiency.

In our series of blogs, find out how experienced production planners take an intelligent approach to this. Chuck out the most persistent planning misunderstandings and take inspiration from efficient control systems such as **CONWIP**, **POLCA** and **Workload Control**. Are planning troubles keeping you awake at night? Read on for pleasant dreams of less WIP, shorter lead times and better coordination between capacity and workload.

What can you expect?

1. The three most persistent misconceptions about production planning
2. Solve planning problems by reducing work in progress (WIP)
3. Less WIP, shorter lead times: two concrete methods
4. CONWIP: a simple method to improve your planning
5. POLCA: keeping time in complex production environments
6. A balanced workload: say goodbye to production delays
7. Ten principles for effective production planning
8. An efficient approach to production backlog scheduling

1. The three most persistent misconceptions about production planning

nning can quickly get
ddress 3 common

A frequently heard myth: **all machines must run at all times**. A machine at a standstill is often seen as a sign of inefficiency or bad planning. But experienced

planners know better, running machines 24/7 isn't the goal. What matters is delivering on time.

Curious about the other myths?

Discover the 3 biggest planning misconceptions

2. Solve planning problems by reducing work in progress (WIP)

Unfinished goods that are stuck somewhere between raw materials and final product? That's WIP: Work in Progress. And too much of it slows production down and raises costs.

Think long waiting times, planning chaos, unnecessary waste, and overwhelmed planners who release even more orders... resulting in even more WIP. Sound familiar?

Did you know companies that **cut WIP by 80%** can become **up to 20% more productive**? And that's only one of the benefits.

3. Less WIP, shorter lead times: two concrete methods

How much WIP is still manageable, and when does it become a burden? In this article, we introduce two proven strategies to reduce your WIP without reducing output. On the contrary, the result is more transparency, shorter lead times and better flow.

Simulations show that five orders per workstation often strike the ideal balance. Adding more rarely increases output. It usually only adds complexity.
The solution? Release orders only when it is really necessary:

- Use an **MRP system** that includes retro-planning from delivery date back to start
- Or manage order release **manually**, allowing planners to gradually reduce the daily order flow

Reduce your WIP to get a grip

4. CONWIP: a simple method to improve your planning

The Japanese 'Kanban' system manages material flows using product-specific cards. While transparent, Kanban systems can quickly become overloaded in environments with many different products. The solution? **CONWIP.**

Instead of limiting work per product, CONWIP limits the total amount of work in the system. A new work order can only be launched if there is room within the WIP limit and if there is demand from the next workstation.

Want to know how this pull system reveals bottlenecks and makes your planning easier?

Optimise your planning with CONWIP

5. POLCA: keeping time in complex production environments

traditional systems
his smart card-based

POLCA combines push and pull. A job moves to the next station only when the planned time has come (push) and capacity is available at that station (pull). If not, the job stays on hold.

The result? Higher efficiency, shorter lead times and more on-time deliveries at lower cost.

Find out how POLCA works

6. A balanced workload: say goodbye to production delays

Not sure if your shop floor can handle a new order? **Workload Control (WLC)** already knows.

This planning method matches job release with capacity in 3 clear steps:

1. An **order pool** that acts as a waiting room
2. A **system** that constantly monitors the workload
3. A **controlled release of work orders**

This results in less overload, lower WIP, shorter lead times and more reliable delivery performance. Even with a high level of product variation, your planner stays in control.

Discover how Workload Control optimises

7. Ten principles for effective production planning

Unpredictable planning? Too much WIP on the floor?
Then you don't need extra software, but clear rules.

With these 10 principles, you can keep your **planning tight**, your **capacity free** and your **bottlenecks under control**. Less chaos, more peace of mind and delivery reliability.

Discover the ten principles that give your planning effectiveness

8. An efficient approach to production backlog scheduling

Is your schedule running behind? Or does it just seem that way? The distinction between real and apparent delays makes all the difference.

With one simple calculation, you can immediately see which orders are at risk and where you need to take action. This allows you to make targeted adjustments: **shift** capacity, **rearrange** tasks or temporarily **outsource**.

Learn how to manage backlogs smartly

Authors

Pascal Pollet