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Bridging the Workforce Gap: The Strategic Advantage of Partnering with Manufacturing Job Shops

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10 Steps to Evaluating and Buying Supply Chain Planning and Optimization Software

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JUNE / JULY 2025

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INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

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The Strategic Advantage of Partnering
with Manufacturing Job Shops
- 11** 10 Steps to Evaluating and Buying Supply Chain
Planning and Optimization Software

Gateway TO Manufacturing

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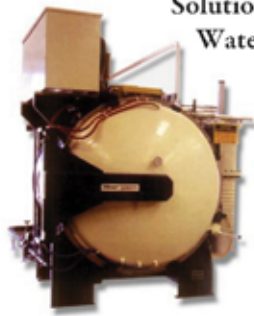
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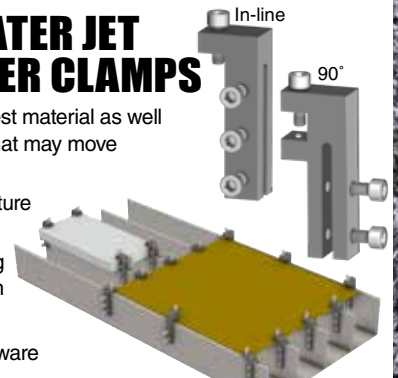
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ISSUE 309

BRIDGING THE WORKFORCE GAP: THE STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE OF PARTNERING WITH MANUFACTURING JOB SHOPS

Part two of a two-part series (part one, “Navigating the Headwinds: New England Manufacturers Battle Rising Costs and Workforce Woes into Q4 2025,” ran in last month’s issue)

The New England manufacturing landscape, grappling with escalating costs and a critical shortage of skilled labor, is increasingly looking for innovative solutions to maintain productivity and competitiveness. While long-term workforce development initiatives are crucial, a more immediate and tactical approach gaining traction is the strategic partnership with specialized manufacturing job shops. For larger manufacturers, particularly those struggling to staff foundational component production, this collaboration offers a compelling array of benefits, effectively transforming a workforce challenge into a streamlined operational advantage.

Offloading the Foundational Burden: Freeing Up Resources and Talent

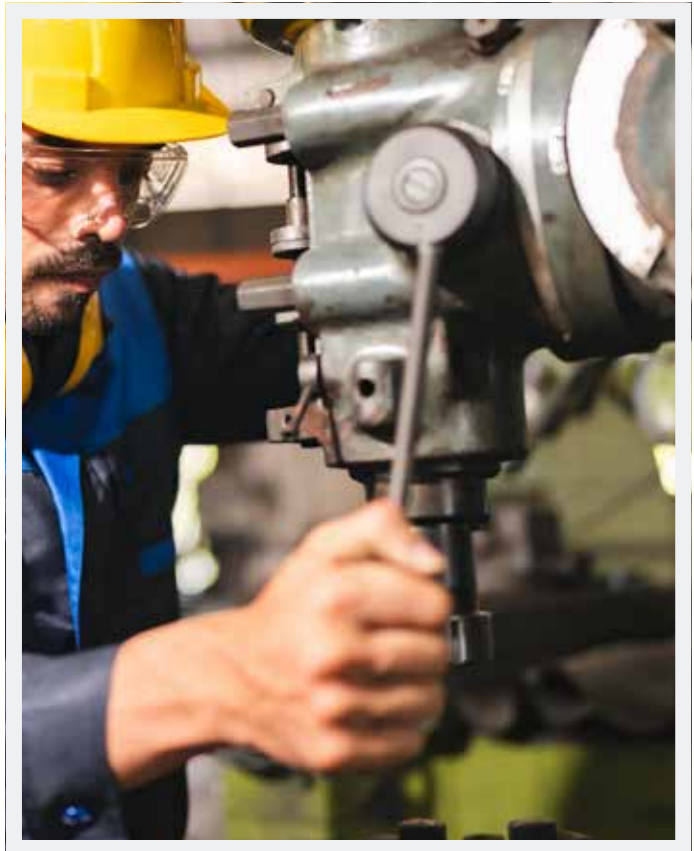
One of the most immediate benefits of engaging a manufacturing job shop is the ability to offload the production of foundational components that, while essential, may not be core to a larger manufacturer's specialized expertise or advanced processes. These "building block" parts, often requiring standard machining, fabrication, or assembly, can consume valuable in-house labor hours and machine capacity that could otherwise be dedicated to higher-value, more complex, or proprietary operations.

By outsourcing these foundational elements, prime manufacturers can:

- **Reallocate Skilled Labor:** Instead of assigning highly skilled, in-house technicians to repetitive or less complex tasks, their expertise can be redirected to advanced assembly, precision finishing, quality control, or research and development – areas where their specialized knowledge truly provides a competitive edge. This is crucial when every skilled worker is a precious commodity.
- **Optimize Machine Utilization:** Similarly, prime manufacturers' state-of-the-art machinery, often representing significant capital investment, can be freed from producing basic components. This allows these machines to be utilized for their intended purpose: high-precision, high-complexity, or high-volume work that justifies their cost and advanced capabilities.
- **Reduce Training Overheads:** Training new employees, particularly for foundational roles, is time-consuming and expensive. Partnering with a job shop transfers this training burden to the specialized shop, which already possesses the skilled personnel and expertise for these specific tasks.

Accessing Specialized Expertise Without the Hiring Hassle

Manufacturing job shops thrive on their focused expertise. They often possess niche capabilities, specialized equipment, and a workforce highly proficient in particular processes, be it precision CNC machining, complex welding, sheet metal fabrication, or intricate assembly. For a larger manufacturer, replicating this diverse skill set and equipment in-house, especially amidst a labor shortage, is a daunting, if not impossible, task.



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By partnering with a job shop, manufacturers gain:

- **Instant Access to Skilled Labor:** Job shops, by their nature, maintain a workforce already trained and experienced in their specific domains. This provides an immediate solution to a labor shortage without the lengthy recruitment, hiring, and onboarding processes that large manufacturers are struggling with. It's like having an extended, specialized workforce on demand.
- **Specialized Equipment and Technology:** Job shops often invest in highly specialized equipment tailored to their core services. This grants prime manufacturers access to advanced capabilities they might not possess in-house, without the massive capital expenditure or the need to train staff on new machinery.
- **Enhanced Quality and Efficiency:** Because job shops specialize in certain processes, they often achieve higher levels of efficiency and quality in those areas. Their focused operations allow for optimized workflows, stringent quality control protocols, and continuous improvement in their specific craft.

Flexibility, Scalability, and Cost Control

In an uncertain economic climate, flexibility and the ability to scale operations up or down quickly are paramount. Partnering with job shops offers these critical advantages:

- **Demand Fluctuation Management:** When market demand fluctuates, job shops provide a flexible solution. Manufacturers can scale their component orders up during peak periods without having to rapidly hire and train new staff, and scale down during slower times without the cost of carrying underutilized labor or equipment.
- **Cost Predictability:** Outsourcing foundational components allows for clearer cost tracking. Manufacturers can obtain quotes for specific jobs, enabling more precise budgeting and cost control compared to the often variable expenses associated with in-house production (wages, benefits, utilities, maintenance, etc.).
- **Reduced Overhead:** By relying on job shops for certain production stages, manufacturers can reduce their own factory footprint, equipment maintenance costs, utility expenses, and the general administrative overhead associated with a larger direct labor force.

Strategic Focus and Innovation

Ultimately, the most significant long-term benefit of partnering with manufacturing job shops is the ability for larger manufacturers to elevate their strategic focus. By entrusting foundational work to external specialists, in-house teams can dedicate their energy to innovation, research and development, product design, and the development of core proprietary technologies that truly differentiate their offerings in the market.

In an era defined by rapid technological change and intense global competition, this ability to focus on high-value, strategic activities, rather than being bogged down by basic component production, is a powerful enabler of sustained growth and leadership.

For New England manufacturers facing the twin pressures of rising costs and a shrinking skilled labor pool, the job shop model is not just a stop-gap measure;



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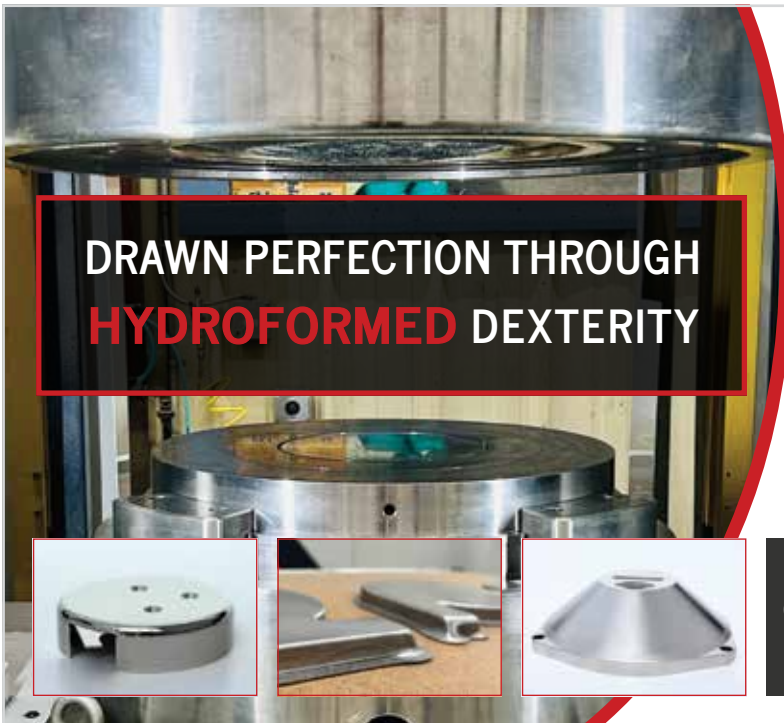
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The Workforce Conundrum: A Shortage of Hands and Skills

The Broader Economic Picture: The manufacturing employment struggles are part of a wider trend in the region. New England's overall payroll employment growth remained weak at just **0.4%** year-over-year in July 2025. For context, this is below the region's 30-year moving average of 0.7% and marks the 14th straight month of growth rates below 0.5%.

Hiring Challenges Persist: Despite the employment numbers, attracting and retaining talent remains a top business concern for manufacturers. A recent survey from the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) found that more than **48%** of respondents cited this as their primary business challenge in the second quarter of 2025.

The Strategic Advantage of Partnering with Manufacturing Job Shops

Outsourcing for Cost Savings: Outsourcing foundational processes to specialized job shops is a proven strategy for cost reduction. A 2025 report on outsourcing trends found that businesses that outsource can reduce operational expenses by as much as **30% to 50%** compared to maintaining a full-time, in-house staff for the same tasks. This provides a direct path to improving profitability in a high-cost environment.

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Accessing a Specialized Workforce on Demand: The core of the labor issue is a shortage of specific skills. A survey from the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM) revealed that over **55%** of manufacturers cited the "inability to attract and retain employees" as a top business challenge in late 2024. Furthermore, the report projected that by the end of 2025, the industry would have **1.9 million** unfilled jobs. Job shops, with their pre-existing skilled teams, offer an immediate solution to this gap, bypassing the hiring struggle and providing access to expertise without the wait.

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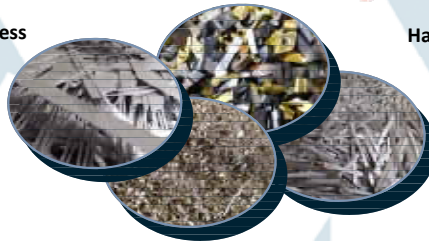
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10 STEPS TO EVALUATING AND BUYING SUPPLY CHAIN PLANNING AND OPTIMIZATION SOFTWARE

Written by Adrian Wood Strategic Business Development & Offer Marketing Director at DELMIA

In today's global economy, supply chain efficiency has become a game-changer for organizations striving to enhance operational performance and profitability. Companies with logistics-intensive operations are increasingly turning to their supply chains as a source of cost savings and improved cash flow.

For decades, businesses have relied on enterprise resource planning (ERP) and supply chain management (SCM) software to guide decision-making. However, these systems often provide backward-looking insights, failing to account for unique capabilities, assets, and future possibilities. Supply Chain Planning and Optimization (SCP&O) offers the forward-looking capabilities companies need to address these challenges and uncover new profit opportunities.

Organizations across industries—from manufacturing to retail—have implemented SCP&O software to reduce inventory costs, improve on-time deliveries, optimize resources, and bolster overall resilience. Investing in SCP&O technology isn't just a choice; it's a strategic necessity for those looking to stay competitive. The process involves more than just choosing a product—it's about finding a long-term partner for success.

Why choose SCP&O software?

Supply Chain Planning and Optimization software provides cutting-edge solutions beyond the scope of traditional ERP and SCM systems. With predictive analytics and optimization capabilities, these tools help organizations adapt to real-time changes, improve decision-making, and seize opportunities to streamline operations.

Benefits of supply chain planning & optimization software:

- **Improved decision-making** – Predictive algorithms provide actionable insights and recommend optimal strategies.
- **Scalability** – SCP&O solutions grow alongside your business, whether across regions or functions.
- **Operational resilience** – These tools enable your business to quickly respond to disruptions, ensuring continuity during crises.

The 10-step guide to choosing the right SCP&O software

Here is a roadmap to help you confidently evaluate and implement Supply Chain Planning and Optimization software tailored to meet your organization's demands.

1. Create the team

As your SCP&O investment will influence many areas of your business, you will want input regarding the functionality you need from key stakeholders in operations, manufacturing, planning, finance and IT – at a minimum. Inviting contributors from across the enterprise helps ensure that all requirements are identified, all interdependencies are documented, and the probability of problem-free implementation is maximized.

The key is to include:

1. people who set your company's business goals and determine how they are measured,
2. people who execute the daily processes that drive those goals, and
3. executive sponsors for all functions.

More specifically, the team should represent planners, as they will be operating the system; financial analysts, as they will be evaluating its effectiveness; individuals whose jobs are directly affected by planners and schedulers; IT; and management.

2. Identify critical features

To optimize your supply chain planning and operations (SCP&O), start by evaluating your organization's current processes, goals, and unique characteristics. Identify key decisions, metrics, and processes that align with your objectives, such as on-time delivery or manufacturing quality control, and determine critical features needed in an SCP&O solution.

Use tools like a goals-to-decisions matrix to pinpoint Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and evaluate how planning decisions impact these goals across the organization. Consider specific organizational

requirements, such as union regulations, multilingual operations, or regional variations, and test potential solutions with “what if” scenarios.

3. Conduct a financial analysis

The next step is to assess the financial impact of each feature on your prioritized list by considering both direct and ripple effects across the business. Start by calculating the costs of current practices to establish a baseline for measuring post-implementation performance. Build your analysis from the ground up, focusing on immediate impacts and progressing to key investment metrics like ROI, IRR, and NPV.

The formula for calculating ROI is:

Many organizations fail to calculate this accurately because they fail to account for many costs and benefits.

- Be sure to calculate the ROI yourself. Don't rely on vendor estimates.
- Consider each cost component over the entire life cycle of the SCP&O solution.
- Consider all return horizons (short-term scheduling, mid-term capacity planning, or long-term strategic planning) where savings and benefits will occur.
- Be aware of interactions, especially savings in one area that may increase costs in another.
- Look for ERP-related savings. Functions that may require time and effort to implement in an manufacturing ERP software can easily be added to an SCP&O solution.

Be thorough, accounting for interactions, lifecycle costs, and ERP-related savings. While quantifying benefits is crucial, also consider subjective advantages like improved planning capabilities. Avoid relying solely on vendor estimates, and assess how well a solution meets 100% of your requirements—shortfalls in key features can significantly impact value.





4. Research available vendors

Evaluate suppliers' industry expertise, innovation track record, and customer success stories. Opt for providers who demonstrate a deep understanding of supply chain challenges and solutions.

Some of the high-level questions you should ask yourself at this point include:

- Do we want a partner with a specialization in SCP&O or is there value in selecting a vendor for whom SCP&O is one part of a broad set of capabilities?
- Do we want a point solution that can only solve one aspect of our planning challenge or a platform that can solve many of our challenges seen today and unforeseen tomorrow?

5. Build a business case

If you've identified your unique needs and assessed vendors' capabilities, this step should be straightforward. Prepare a presentation for the evaluation team to present to decision makers, justifying the planned investment. The business case should document your unique business goals, planning decisions, critical features from Step 2, the economic analysis from Step 3, and the viable vendors identified in Step 4. The goal is to secure approval from decision makers to move forward and lay the foundation for a detailed investment analysis with real pricing, costs, and forecasted benefits from supply chain planning and optimization.

Leverage executive sponsors to guide the appropriate level of detail for the business case. Use anecdotes from "the shop floor" to highlight current inefficiencies, the value gap that puts you at a disadvantage, and how optimization will address these challenges. Show how SCP&O will improve operations, support competitive advantages, and enable planners to deliver more value. Explain how forward-looking forecasting adds agility to keep your organization ahead of competitors.

Include all implementation costs—licensing, equipment, training (initial and ongoing), and the indirect costs of organizational change—and show how these are factored into your ROI calculation. Decision makers will also expect an executive summary of the top vendor solutions being considered.





6. Assess vendors thoroughly

From your list of viable candidates, narrow it down to a manageable number for further consideration. This is when you inform them that you are starting the process to select and purchase an SCP&O solution. Prepare a document outlining your requirements and desired capabilities to share with the vendors identified in Step 4. This could be a simple list from Step 2, when critical features were identified, or a formal request for information (RFI) for potential suppliers. The document should clearly communicate the strategic objectives, scope of the SCP&O project, and your business goals.

Create a scorecard listing all requirements and capabilities, along with how well each vendor meets them. Include weighting for each factor (how important it is) and assign scores based on vendor responses. Add external information such as third-party reviews (e.g., Gartner, SSC), trusted referrals, and publicly available data. At this stage, request budgetary pricing based on your scope and requirements (but don't exclude vendors based solely on pricing).

7. Evaluate solutions with demos

Invite the shortlisted vendors to participate in detailed requirements gathering, meetings led by their sales teams, and software demos. Create a standard presentation to share with all vendors on your shortlist. You can either hold a bidders' meeting to present to all vendors at once or invite each vendor separately. In either case, present your detailed requirements under a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) so vendors can prepare their proposals.

Expect vendors to follow their own sales processes, but maintain control over the evaluation process. Develop a demo evaluation script, similar to how you'd write RFP requirements, and prepare specific challenges.

Vendors should understand your testing agenda and evaluation criteria to properly prepare and demonstrate their features. During evaluations, explore unexpected issues or scenarios—they may reveal additional product value. Use these to assess vendor responsiveness, support, and product flexibility. This is also an opportunity to gain insights into SCP&O best practices.

Your checklist should include specific functionality that is important for your unique needs. Some examples might include:

- Demand planning software
- Inventory planning
- Replenishment planning
- Sales and operations planning reports
- Capable-to-promise and available-to-promise
- Short-term Production planning software
- Long-term Manufacturing Planning software
- Scenario Planning
- Real-Time Adaptability

8. Examine implementation capabilities

Successful SCP&O implementations allow businesses to plan for profit, not just production. Unfortunately, many SCP&O implementations fail to meet expectations due to unrealistic or flawed implementation plans. Research shows that 50% to 80% of software projects either fail or face challenges.





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Since SCP&O implementations impact almost every part of your organization, a smooth process is crucial.

Ask vendors to demonstrate their expertise in project planning and execution. They should provide a documented implementation methodology for evaluation, including clear procedures, key activities, and deliverables. Look for a phased approach with steps such as:

1. Project initialization
2. Analysis
3. Modeling
4. Iterative development
5. Implementation
6. Post-launch support

9. Make the final choice

After completing evaluations, you can fairly assess the value each vendor's product brings to your organization. Use your financial analysis, including short, mid, and long-term costs and benefits, to determine the total economic impact, considering both objective metrics like ROI and subjective factors like organizational improvements. This comprehensive approach ensures you select the right vendor for your SCP&O investment, valuing it as a long-term asset rather than just a cost.

10. Verify vendor credentials

After selecting your vendor, confirm their reliability before signing a contract. Request references from similar companies in your industry, review corporate financial information, and have your finance and legal teams conduct due diligence. Speak with references to understand their experience with the system, challenges faced, support quality, and why they chose the product.

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GBMP Consulting Group's 21st Annual Northeast Lean Conference is Coming Soon – “Transforming Together: Paving a Unified Path to Excellence”

Manchester, NH – [8/18/2025] – The GBMP Consulting Group is excited to announce the 21st Annual Northeast Lean Conference, to be held October 27–28, 2025, at The DoubleTree by Hilton in Manchester, New Hampshire.

Under the theme “Transforming Together: Paving a Unified Path to Excellence,” this premier event welcomes 500 passionate Lean practitioners and business professionals committed to advancing continuous improvement through Lean Manufacturing and the Toyota Production System (TPS).

The conference offers a practical and immersive learning format, featuring:

- Inspiring keynotes, plenary sessions, and breakouts
- Interactive problem-solving discussions
- Benchmarking and robust networking opportunities

- A rich blend of educational content tailored to Lean practitioners at all experience levels

And featuring keynote presentations by:

- **Derek Volk** – Author & CEO, Volk Packaging, Biddeford ME “Go for Third: Everything I Know About Business I Learned from Coaching Girls’ Softball”
- **Miles Arnone** – CEO, Re:Build Manufacturing, Framingham MA “16 Principles to a Resilient & Innovative Culture”

This event stands out for its emphasis on collaboration—as attendees come together in an intimate, community-driven setting to share best practices, exchange innovative ideas, and forge meaningful connections.

Registration is now. Visit <https://www.gbmp.org/ne-lean-conference> to view the complete agenda with session abstracts and speaker bios and register your team today! Groups save 15%!

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Enable Launches the Tariff Price Planner, Helping Businesses Respond Instantly to Tariff Volatility

New tool models tariff impact in real-time and enacts instant price adjustments so organizations can react to ongoing tariff changes

Enable, the leading AI-driven rebate and pricing management platform, today announced the launch of its Tariff Price Planner, a new application designed to help businesses regain control in an unpredictable world of shifting trade policies. As the frequency of tariff changes increases, the tool allows companies to instantly understand the cost impact and respond with data-driven pricing strategies to protect margins.

Enable's Tariff Price Planner lets businesses model the impact of tariff scenarios in real time, eliminating the uncertainty that comes from ongoing changes to trading terms. By offering clear visibility of landed costs and the ability to scenario plan different pricing strategies, businesses avoid reactive decisions or delayed responses. The Tariff Price Planner gives companies the power to adjust prices in real time and act with confidence.

Users simply enter their pricing data and HTS codes to simulate how various strategies would affect their bottom line. By stress-testing scenarios before making changes, teams can better protect margin and avoid costly pricing missteps.

Key features include:

- Search tariffs by country and HTS code
- See product costs with and without tariffs
- Break down different tariff types and their cost impact
- Model full or partial offsetting and absorption strategies
- Assess price and margin impacts across SKUs, regions, or customer segments
- Plan current and future landed costs and customer pricing across time periods

The Tariff Price Planner connects directly to any ERP, enabling end-to-end execution of price changes across an organization's entire product catalogue.

Andrew Butt, Founder and CEO of Enable, says: "The complexity of the new world tariff scenarios is making it incredibly difficult for businesses to see overall net margin when multiple layers of tariffs are applied. We are committed to responding to the needs of businesses and bringing capabilities to the market that provide immediate value. With accurate visibility on the impact of tariffs, as well as the ability to see how prices can be adjusted, businesses can leverage pricing strategically to maintain margins and profitability."

The Tariff Price Planner is available as a standalone, cloud-hosted application.

For more information visit:

<https://www.enable.com/tariff-price-planner>

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