

tangle.

25 PRACTICAL AI USE CASES

AI that earns its keep on the shop floor.

How an AI-native ERP is changing manufacturing operations, one practical win at a time.

Where AI actually earns its keep

For most job shops, the interesting question about AI isn't how it works. It's where it actually earns its keep.

The honest answer is less exotic than the headlines. The best uses of AI on a shop floor are rarely dramatic; they're small, repeatable wins. A quote drafted in minutes instead of hours. A shortage caught before it stops a line. An answer found without three phone calls.

None of it is about handing decisions to a machine or thinning out your most experienced people. It clears the busywork that sits between them and the work only they can do.

What follows are 25 practical ways manufacturers are putting AI to work today, grouped by the teams that feel the benefit first.

WHAT'S INSIDE

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Turn every customer touchpoint into a fast, informed one.

02**Engineering** 5 use cases

Stop re-solving problems the shop has already solved.

03**Production** 5 use cases

See trouble coming while there is still time to act.

04**Purchasing & Inventory** 5 use cases

Buy smarter and free up the cash tied in stock.

05**Leadership & Operations** 5 use cases

Ask the business a question and get a straight answer.

DEPARTMENT 01 · 5 USE CASES

Sales & Customer Service

01

Find Customer History Instantly

A customer's entire history already sits in your system. The job is getting to it before the conversation moves on.

Rather than dig through orders, quotes and old email threads, just ask:

"Show me every job we've completed for this customer in the last three years."

The answer lands while you're still on the call.

BUSINESS VALUE Sharper conversations, backed by the full picture.

02

Draft Quotations Faster

A first-pass quote gets built from comparable jobs, your pricing history and your standard templates.

Your estimator does the part that needs judgement: check it, set the margin, send it.

BUSINESS VALUE More quotes out the door, without cutting corners.

03

Answer Customer Enquiries

Most customer calls come down to the same three questions:

- Where is my order?
- When will it ship?
- Has it started production?

Each one can be answered straight from live data, without a lap of the shop floor.

BUSINESS VALUE Less chasing for your team, faster answers for your customers.

04

Suggest Cross-Sell Opportunities

The pattern in what a customer has bought before points to the repeat work, complementary services and follow-on orders worth putting in front of them.

BUSINESS VALUE More revenue from the customers you already have.

05

Prepare Meeting Briefings

Walk into every customer meeting already briefed. A one-page summary pulls together:

- open quotes
- active jobs
- delivery performance
- outstanding invoices
- the last few conversations

BUSINESS VALUE A sales team that always looks on top of the account.

DEPARTMENT 02 · 5 USE CASES

Engineering

06

Find Similar Jobs

“Have we made something like this before?” might be the most expensive question in a job shop, because answering it usually means interrupting three people.

Put the question to your drawings, BOMs and job history instead:

“Have we made something like this before?”

BUSINESS VALUE Less reinventing, more reusing what already works.

07

Generate Initial BOM Suggestions

A starting bill of materials, drafted from similar past projects, gives engineering a head start rather than a blank page.

BUSINESS VALUE Every build begins halfway done.

08

Explain Engineering Changes

Revision history, summarized in plain language, with the changes that actually matter pulled to the top.

BUSINESS VALUE Production and engineering reading from the same page.

09

Search Technical Documentation

Ask a question in plain English and get the answer, instead of clicking through folders hoping the file is where someone left it.

BUSINESS VALUE Institutional knowledge that’s actually reachable.

10

Capture Tribal Knowledge

Your most experienced people carry years of hard-won know-how in their heads. Some of it belongs somewhere more permanent.

Processes, standards and the way things are really done can be captured as the work happens, not in a documentation project no one has time for.

BUSINESS VALUE The shop keeps its expertise, even when people move on.

DEPARTMENT 03 · 5 USE CASES

Production

11

Highlight Jobs at Risk

The jobs most likely to slip a delivery date get flagged from live progress, while there's still time to do something about them.

BUSINESS VALUE Problems surfaced early, when they're still cheap to fix.

12

Daily Production Briefing

Every morning starts with the state of play, not a scramble for it:

- overdue jobs
- bottlenecks
- shortages
- machine utilization
- the day's priorities

BUSINESS VALUE Production meetings that open with answers, not questions.

13

Recommend Scheduling Adjustments

Practical suggestions for easing bottlenecks and moving more work through the same floor.

BUSINESS VALUE More throughput from the capacity you already have.

14

Explain Production Delays

A delay is only useful once you know why it happened. The likely cause arrives with the flag, not a day later.

BUSINESS VALUE Root cause first, firefighting second.

15

Generate Shift Handover Notes

A clean, honest handover for the next shift, written in the time it used to take to find a pen.

BUSINESS VALUE Nothing important lost between shifts.

DEPARTMENT 04 · 5 USE CASES

Purchasing & Inventory

16

Identify Material Risks

Shortages get called out before they reach the floor, not when a job grinds to a halt.

BUSINESS VALUE Fewer nasty surprises at the worst possible moment.

17

Draft Purchase Orders

Purchase orders drafted straight from what production actually needs, ready for a quick review rather than a from-scratch build.

BUSINESS VALUE Buying that keeps pace with the floor.

18

Recommend Suppliers

For any given part, a shortlist of the right suppliers, weighed on the things that matter:

- price
- lead time
- delivery performance
- your history with them

BUSINESS VALUE Better-informed buying on every order.

19

Summarize Supplier Performance

No report to build, no spreadsheet to wrangle. Just ask:

“Which suppliers have caused the most delays this quarter?”

BUSINESS VALUE Supplier conversations backed by evidence.

20

Reduce Excess Inventory

Slow-moving stock and the cash tied up in it get surfaced, along with the smarter ways to hold it.

BUSINESS VALUE Working capital back where it belongs.

DEPARTMENT 05 · 5 USE CASES

Leadership & Operations

21

Ask Questions About Your Business

Most reports are just a proxy for a question you actually want answered. Skip the proxy:

“Why has on-time delivery slipped this month?”

You get the trend and the story behind it, in plain language.

BUSINESS VALUE Decisions at the speed of the question.

22

Create Executive Dashboards

The right view for each role, assembled on demand, so everyone sees the numbers that bear on their own job.

BUSINESS VALUE Visibility without a BI project.

23

Summarize Business Performance

A weekly read on how the business is running, written for the leadership team and waiting in the inbox.

BUSINESS VALUE The pulse of the business, without the reporting overhead.

24

Recommend Process Improvements

The repetitive, low-value tasks quietly eating your team's week get spotted and put forward as candidates to automate.

BUSINESS VALUE Continuous improvement that never runs out of ideas.

25

Build Workflows Using Natural Language

Describe the rule the way you'd explain it to a colleague:

"When a quote goes over £50,000, send it to the Sales Director for sign-off and let Finance know."

The workflow is built from the sentence. No ticket to IT, no place in the queue.

BUSINESS VALUE The people who know the process can finally shape it.

The Bigger Picture

The AI worth having doesn't live in a separate app you have to remember to open.

It works inside the system your team is already in all day, on top of the live operating data that runs the business.

That is the thinking behind Tangle: an ERP built AI-native from the ground up, rather than one with a chatbot bolted to the side.

Its native AI engineer, Milo, lets your people ask questions, automate the routine, build workflows and reach institutional knowledge in plain language. Less a glimpse of the future, more a tool that pays for itself on a Tuesday.

See it on your own workflow.

Book a demo at tangle.io/demo