

Tech-Clarity

making the value of technology clear

**Issue in Focus:
Product and Program
Management
Goes Mobile**

***Compressing Project Cycle Time
and Time to Market
with Mobile PLM***

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***This summary is an abbreviated version of the report and does not contain the full content. A link to download the full report is available on the Tech-Clarity website, www.tech-clarity.com.**

If you have difficulty obtaining a copy of the report, please contact the author at jim.brown@tech-clarity.com.

Introducing the Issue

Manufacturers use Product Lifecycle Management (PLM) solutions to effectively control product, project, and programs across their enterprises and supply chains. These applications provide significant value to product and program managers, including control of NPD processes and projects, better access to information, and improved decision making. PLM helps companies manage the complexity of today's projects and programs, including coordinating cross-functional teams that may be dispersed across different sites, time zones, and even company boundaries. This results in better planning and execution of projects, faster time to market, and reduced project risk.

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Unfortunately, there are significant barriers that keep mobile employees from contributing to projects with PLM when they travel. The challenges include inability to easily access information and being disconnected from processes. These barriers result in lag times in project execution and decision making that slow down project and program delivery. They may also contribute to people moving forward based on assumptions that will result in project rework or quality problems.

The issue is that traditional devices that run PLM are simply not designed for mobility. Employees on the road or away from their desk may use smartphones to keep in touch via e-mail, but these devices lack the size and screen to be useful for most PLM applications. Laptops are helpful, but require users to be settled with a flat surface and their hands free. They are really designed for *portability* as opposed to *mobility*. Beyond devices, feature-rich project and program management software built for a desktop is not designed with mobile users in mind. Simply making desktop or web applications available on a mobile web browser can prove to be frustrating and cumbersome, resulting in people waiting for a more convenient time to contribute or handling issues outside of the system.

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Product and program managers can't afford delays. They need mobile workers to decide, approve, and contribute to their projects and programs in real-time. Manufacturers can leverage the rise of tablets like the iPad to allow project leaders and team members alike to make decisions and keep their projects moving forward, regardless of their physical location and access to a PC.

Conclusion

Mobile PLM offers the opportunity to compress project cycle times and ultimately time to market by eliminating delays. Keeping people in touch with processes and data helps keep projects and programs moving forward despite the complexity of travel and distributed people. In addition to improving the timeliness of projects, it can also improve the quality of the results by improving communications and collaboration with a team that at any given time probably has at least one member on the road.

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Projects are dynamic and project teams have to stay in touch with each other and their responsibilities. They need to keep up to date on information, issues, status, and other critical information found in today's PLM systems. New mobile PLM applications offer the ability to move the value of program management mobile, helping companies make smarter decisions that lead to better program results and better products.

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Recommendations

Based on industry experience and research for this report, Tech-Clarity offers the following recommendations:

- Expand PLM information assets and processes to mobile scenarios
- Take advantage of mobile PLM to reduce down time and lags in decision-making by reducing barriers to information and processes
- Adopt devices that fit into the user's work life and lifestyle so they will carry and use them
- Use mobile PLM applications to extend the reach of PLM to users in transit or away from their office
- Look for PLM applications that have the right project and program management capabilities and are specifically designed for mobile devices

Take advantage of mobile PLM to reduce down time and lags in decision-making by reducing barriers to information and processes.

About the Author

Jim Brown is the President of Tech-Clarity, an independent research and consulting firm specializing in analyzing the true business value of software technology and services. Jim has over 20 years of experience in software for the manufacturing industries, with a broad background including roles in industry, management consulting, the software industry, and research. His experience spans enterprise applications including PLM, ERP, quality management, service, manufacturing, and others. Jim is passionate about improving product innovation, product development, and engineering performance through the use of software technology and social computing techniques.

Jim is an experienced researcher, author, and public speaker and enjoys the opportunity to speak at conferences or anywhere that he can engage with people that are passionate about improving business performance through software technology.

Jim can be reached at jim.brown@tech-clarity.com, you can find him on Twitter at [@jim_techclarity](https://twitter.com/jim_techclarity), or you can read his blog at www.tech-clarity.com/clarityonplm.