

# Carol Ptak, Expert in Demand Driven MRP: "Find your professional association and get involved!"

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**Carol Ptak has created an international business network via APICS and her positions at IBM and Peoplesoft. For her, it was the key to a successful career; this network allowed her to consolidate and enrich her knowledge, make memorable encounters and achieve her goal of "transforming the world of manufacturing."** "This pioneer, who has written seven books on MRP, ERP and TOC, resumed her crusade, together with Chad Smith, to promote a revolutionary new vision of manufacturing engineering and control (flying flows): the Demand Driven MRP.

Carol Ptak's biology studies did not predestine her to become an expert of flow control management. After starting with a supplier of organic material for schools where she experimented with just-in-time techniques, she established just-in-time techniques at a supplier of sterilizers for hospitals, and this at a time when the MRP (Material Requirements Planning) and push driven flow control were common practice.

## **APICS to boost her career**

Carol was advised to find a professional association where she could gain new knowledge and which would help boost her career. She became a member of APICS (American Production & Inventory Control Society). From this

point on her career skyrocketed, during this time she gained more professionalism by achieving her certification in CPIM (Certified in Production & Inventory Management) in 1988 and then the CFPIM (F for Fellow). At the age of 33, she moved to Seattle to become Production Director of an aeronautics



company with 127 people reporting to her. With nine other members of her team, also trained by APICS, she established for the first time an organization combining Lean, MRP and TOC (Theory of Constraints) for a new outsourced production of Boeing. "During the first seven months we increased the turnover of stock by 42 times per year and generated more cash than had been invested: Boeing paid us after 10 days whereas we paid our suppliers after 60 days" says Carol Ptak. After this she published her first article with APICS under the headline "Yes you can! " In

1996, she created her own company and wrote her first book entitled "MRP and beyond" proving her credibility on the subject and by doing so, winning clients such as Microsoft and IBM.

## **Demand Driven MRP: a revolutionary vision**

In 1999, being now well known, she was named president of APICS and wrote a 2nd book: "ERP Tools Techniques and Applications for Integrating the Supply Chain." With Eli Goldratt, author of "The Goal" and Eli Scragenheim she co-wrote her third book "Necessary but not Sufficient" denouncing money invested in vain in technology and ERP. In 2002, she released a second edition of her book on ERP. Carol was appointed as ERP Analyst by IBM, with the task of comparing the investments of the Big Blue versus the best of the 132 ERP vendors identified.

As she became aware of the rapid rise of Peoplesoft, she was offered the position of Vice President at this company. Aware of the challenge, she abandons her comfortable existence to accomplish the mission she has set herself "to transform the world of manufacturing." She continued here until the take-over of Peoplesoft by Oracle. She published her fifth book with Dean Gilliam: "Quantum Leap." She accepted the position as Visiting Professor

and Executive in Residence at the University Pacific Lutheran, and then in 2007 she involved Chad Smith in her new work in order to do her PHD:

"innovative piece that connects all the others: DDMRP. MRP, DRP, TOC, Lean and Six Sigma are complementary tools that must be used wisely. Once your mind has adapted to this new vision of DDMRP you understand why the rules of these tools need to change" reveals Carol Ptak, co-author

of the third edition of "Orlicky's Material Requirements Planning" .

#### **Knowing how to mobilize**

What was most difficult during her career was the energy that was needed. "You must take time for yourself and time to regenerate, she says, otherwise, you risk a burn out!" For her "there is no doubt that we are in a man's world, "she advises women "not to apologize for being

female, mobilize and be visible and just be the best that you can be. To conclude: I think the greatest strength of women is their ability to create links. Find your professional association and get involved.

*Interview: CATHY POLGE*