katana

The Ultimate Guide for Manufacturers Selling on Shopify

A note from the authors

We've built the first **Smart Manufacturing Software** as a result of our own frustration as manufacturers, trying to find a suitable tool for Shopify order and inventory management.

All the online tools available on the market were either too complicated to use, ridiculously expensive, or had a clunky interface. We knew there had to be a better way and that's how Katana was born.

We've now compressed our 15+ years of experience of manufacturing to reveal the fundamentals every manufacturer selling on Shopify should know. Considering most of the resources out there are aimed at dropshippers, we thought a guide for our beloved modern manufacturers was well overdue.

So, whether you're a proven veteran or complete newbie grasping for Shopify store success, read on for the ultimate guide for you!

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Understanding Shopify for the Modern Manufacturer

Shopify What? Shopify Who?

Shopify is a web-based application where you can set up your own online store without oodles of technical knowledge.

The idea is that they give you a bunch of templates and features to use as a base without needing a tech-savvy (and inevitably expensive) web developer by your side.

You can then manage your store, visuals, payments, products and shipping by just filling in the blanks. And even more brilliantly, any changes can be made through the dashboard from your computer or mobile phone, providing you have internet access. But the bottom line here is that you can have yourself a fully functional web store up and running in less than an hour.

Awesome.

How's it Different for the Modern Manufacturer?

The fact is that most Shopify stores are dropshippers. That means that they sell products from 3rd party vendors directly to customers without ever even touching the stock. Basically, dropshippers don't make their own products, whereas manufacturers do. So, how does that make Shopify different for manufacturers?

Well the number one thing to keep in mind is that the success of a manufacturer's store is closely tied to their customer's heart strings.

It might sound cheesy, but it's vital that the story of your products and business gets across to your visitors. For people to click that all important buy button, they first need to trust that you care about your product and that you are aiming to provide them with some real-life value.

For drop shippers all of this isn't so vital, simply because they don't have the uniqueness of their own products to sell. Their attention is on high quantity sales, competitively priced products and providing piles of useful informational content instead. As a manufacturer you need to focus on quality, not quantity.

Setting Up Shop

If you already have your Shopify store set up, then you can skip ahead to the next chapter. Otherwise, let's take a quick dive into how to get set up and how much it's going to cost you.

First up let's look at the three main plans available for you:

Basic Shopify	Shopify	Advanced Shopify
29$	**79$**	**299$**
per month	per month	per month
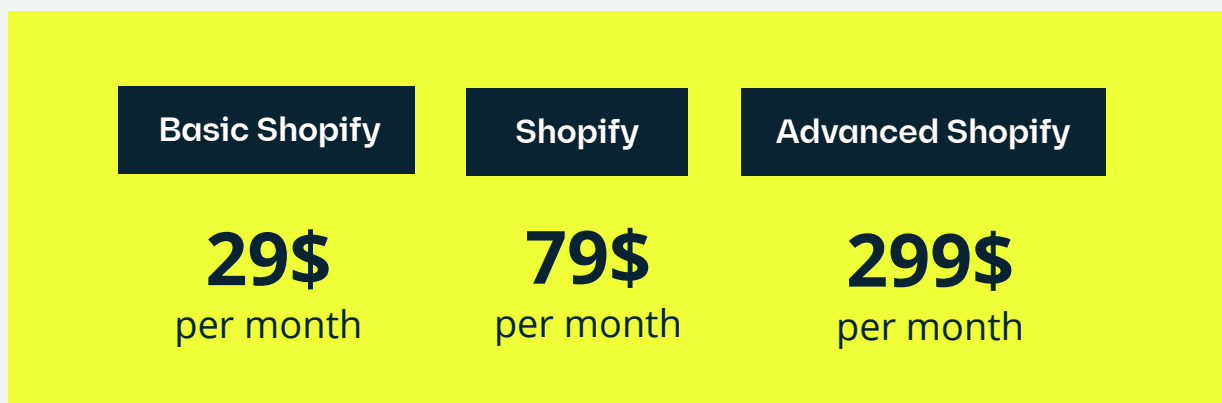
Quite a difference in price there, right?

That is true, but the good news is that all of them will give you an online store, customer support, unlimited space for products and the other foundations you need. The differences come in the details.

For example, the Basic package only gives you two staff accounts. Staff accounts allow others to gain access to your store dashboard with limited access to sensitive information such as sales records. That means that if you have a bigger operation and more people involved then you might need to go for the larger packages. The best advice to offer here is that you trial Shopify for yourself to get a feel for the application. The free trial lasts for 14 days, which is enough to set up your store and see which plan is right for you.

Quick Tips to Hit the Ground Running

Setting up your shop with Shopify is pretty much a doddle. Get onto their homepage and they'll take your hand and walk you through the whole process.

It's mostly just filling in the blanks. But regardless **here are some tips to ensure that it goes as smoothly as possible:**

Pick a strong password so that you and your customers information is always secure. It's even better if you further and enable two-step verification in your store settings.

Follow SEO best practices when writing out your product descriptions first time around. This means it's a lot more likely for new customers to find your store when they're Googling.

Run a test order to make sure everything is in order. Check out our post on setting up your Shopify store to find out more.

Start out with a free theme and see what features you are going to need before moving to paid themes with advanced options. You might not even end up needing them!

Purchase a solid domain from Shopify that is easy to remember. Or you can transfer your domain if you already have one, providing you have had it for 60 days already.

Start with the basic pricing plan and scale up. It's easy to do at any point, so why pay extra for something you don't end up using?

What Makes a Good Shopify store Great?

You can have all the passion and energy in the world to make your store a grand success. But the truth is that you will get nowhere if you don't **have a target to aim at.** In this case, that means looking at how the successful stores are building themselves, absorbing like a sponge and then doing it even better.

We've trawled through the best of the best and boiled down their successes to the magic three.

This is what you need to really stand out:

> Clear branding

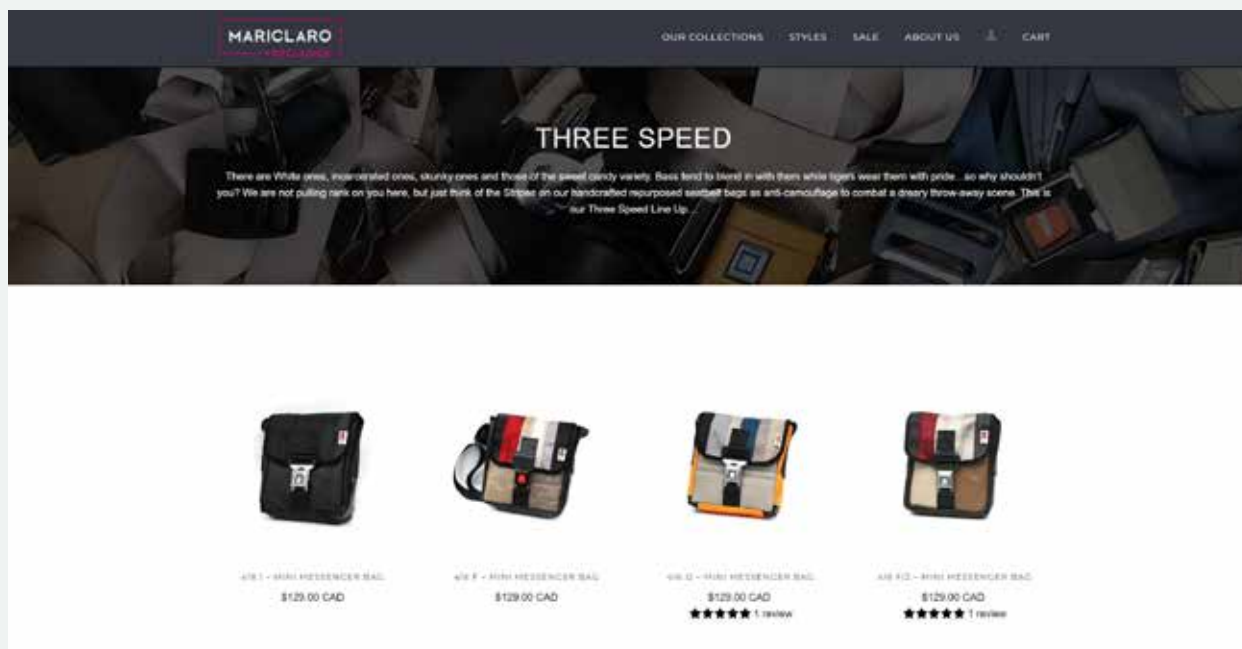> Easy to navigate store

> Sexy aesthetics

Clear Branding

Sharp, clear cut branding means making sure you **get your story across on** a moment's glance. What are your values? Why do you make what you do? How is it different from the others? All of these should be answered right there on the front page and with your products too.

Check out Mariclaro for example, one of our picks for best Shopify stores.

You have it all there – bags and accessories made from repurposed car interiors and aviation materials. The logo gives the impression of recycling, there's a banner that describes their eco-friendly process and then the actual products themselves which are clearly, brilliantly unique.

Easy to Navigate Store

Being easy to navigate means having the right Shopify theme for your store. Consider how your store is going to **work for you and your customers,** not the other way around. After all, the whole point of getting on Shopify is to make things easy, right?

So, if you do fashion for example, you're going to want a theme that works with your collections. Each one having its own category and page, so that **your visitors can easily navigate to your products.**

If you sell luxury high value single items, then you need to go for a theme that's going to be **media orientated.**

Showing off your products with images and videos, and then making it easy for the customer to purchase. Possibly with a quick buy option. Check out the **Blockshop** theme, one of our picks for the **top Shopify themes** out there. Simple, grid style for your visuals and an easy to understand interface. Not much more you can ask for, provided you have the pretty images to back it up.

Sexy Aesthetics

Sadly, picking a brilliant theme is simply not enough for your Shopify store to keep visitors browsing. More so than that you need **eye-catching visuals and aesthetics,** especially considering how short our attention spans have got these days.

You've got to build on your theme to **highlight your products** and show them off. That means solid images, videos and information that **connects with your visitor** and reminds them why they need to buy your product. What it doesn't mean is that you always need to go for super stylized looks. **Sometimes, the simpler the better.**

Brilliant Bicycles do exactly that. The logo, font, images and minimal use of text all build to the same digestible aesthetic. Sleek, cool and metropolitan.

Growing your Business

So, you're all set up and the traffic is trickling in, slowly but surely. But how do you take your Shopify store to the next level?

Well that's not such a simple question to answer.

Every business is going to have its own **unique profile of customers** with a different set of expectations and desires.

But what you can do is try to **connect with your customers** as much as possible to ensure that they find you first, and that once they do, they decide to stay.

Here are five critical frames of reference to boost your chances of growth:

> Inventory management

> Quality customer support

> Valuable content

> Social media presence

> Promotions

Inventory Management

The last thing you want to be spending time on when growing your business is fiddling around with tedious spreadsheets and stock checks.

That's why it's vital that you get the right software to help you move on from Excel and start making better use of your time growing your business.

Thankfully there has been a recent development which can help you **keep your attention in the places that matter.**

Katana is a **Shopify order management system**, which has been specifically designed for the modern manufacturer's needs, **so that you can:**

Have your entire order flow from purchasing to production to sales in one place

Keep track of stock in real time from anywhere in the world

Know which raw materials need to be purchased with a smart auto-booking system

Katana is created for the modern manufacturer's eye.
That means visual cues such as the color-coded chart which will let you know how far along your orders are, and whether you need to be making material purchases any time soon.

Learn everything you need to know about Shopify inventory management for modern manufacturers.

Read now

Quality Customer Support

Nowadays there is an expectation that the cost of your products also infers a greater responsibility on behalf of the seller. That means that **customers always expect help and support** from you, especially if there is something wrong with their purchase.

If they don't feel cared about, then they'll very quickly turn their backs on you and potentially put other people off too.

On the bright side, getting this right can help **build a loyal customer base** that acts as a megaphone for your brand without you even knowing about it.

We recommend you that you offer email and social media support at a minimum, but even telephone and live chat if possible. There are great apps that can help you with this, and we'll get to that later.

Just remember that it's important here to **set expectations** for your customers and **stick with it.** Don't offer 24/7 support if no one's going to be answering at midnight. Customers would much prefer upfront honesty.

Perfect case of better to **under promise and over deliver –** not the other way around.

Valuable Content

People always trust the experts. By bringing your **expertise and knowledge** surrounding your products and the world they inhabit is going to go a long way to boosting sales. **Use your imagination and put yourself in the shoes of your customer.** What would be of use for them? What would they like to know more about? Or see more of? Then you can fit your ideas into the medium you see fit.

Here's a few starting points:

> How-to videos

> Blogs posts

> Infographics

> FAQs

> Tutorials and walkthroughs

But the list is only limited by yourself, so let your creative juices flow here! "Press", a healthy foods business, even does book reviews for their customers. Might seem like the long way around to capturing hearts, but this stuff really does matter!
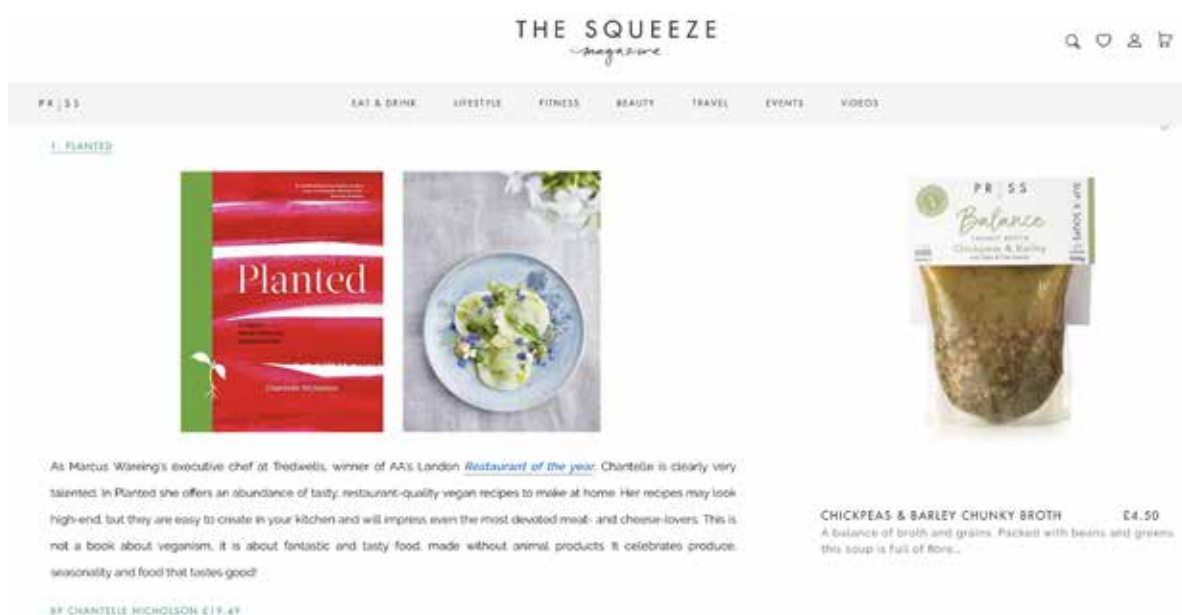
Social Media Presence

It shouldn't come as a great surprise that having a solid and engaging social media presence can do wonders for your Shopify store.

Especially considering there are so many apps and buttons you can implement to make sharing and commenting effortless for your visitors. We won't go into exactly which platforms you should make use of, because honestly that's going to be highly dependent on your target customers

Instead here are five tips for making the most of your social media marketing:

Use the right hashtags - considering this world is largely organized with hashtags it's vital you make sure to use the right ones, so spend some time doing the research;

Jump on the trend bandwagons – get on board with trending events that are relevant to your business because most of the buzz is already there for you;

Share your Shopify content on social media – there's no point creating value if only half of your customers get to see all the wonder you're creating;

Enable Instagram shopping – surefire way to boost sales and create a unified branding network at the same time; and

Run an influencer campaign – target small influencers with a loyal following and get great bang for your buck!

Packages and Promotions

Who doesn't love a good bargain?

Using promotions is an age-old guaranteed way of **growing sales and customers.** Sometimes the drive of price just trumps everything. But you can do one step better by coming up with **product bundles** which make sense for your customer.

That could be subscription boxes if you are always coming up with new designs, or customizable packages if your products have optional features.

You could even share giveaway bundles and contests on social media if you really want to draw in the crowds. Look at how brilliantly game console companies have used preordering packages to sell millions before a single one has been taken home.

Check out how to **get your Shopify store ready for the holiday season** for more ideas on promotions!

Shopify Tools

There is a wide array of tools at your disposal which you can utilize as a Shopify store owner. A lot of them are premium apps which you can plug into very easily from the app store.

But Shopify have also created **an array of free tools** available for their sellers. Not all are useful for manufacturers, which is why we made our selection of the top ten Shopify tools.

Here are a few of them:

> Hatchful logo maker

> Kit Marketing Automation

> Burst Photo database

> Business card maker

> Slogan Maker

All of these have been cherry picked to have the greatest impact whilst requiring the least input from you!

Shopify Apps

Shopify allows you to integrate with a whole bunch of apps to boost customer engagement, do social media marketing, make promotions etc. A lot of them are on a monthly payment basis, but **the value they can provide is huge.**

Plus, there's often trial periods so you can try them out for free.

They can help you with:

> Upselling

> Social media marketing

> Shopping cart improvements

> Managing tickets and events

> Offering product reviews

There's honestly so many more ways these apps can help you. Check out our ultimate list of **most popular Shopify apps** to get a full rundown of what's out there.

But the most important of all of these is yet to come...
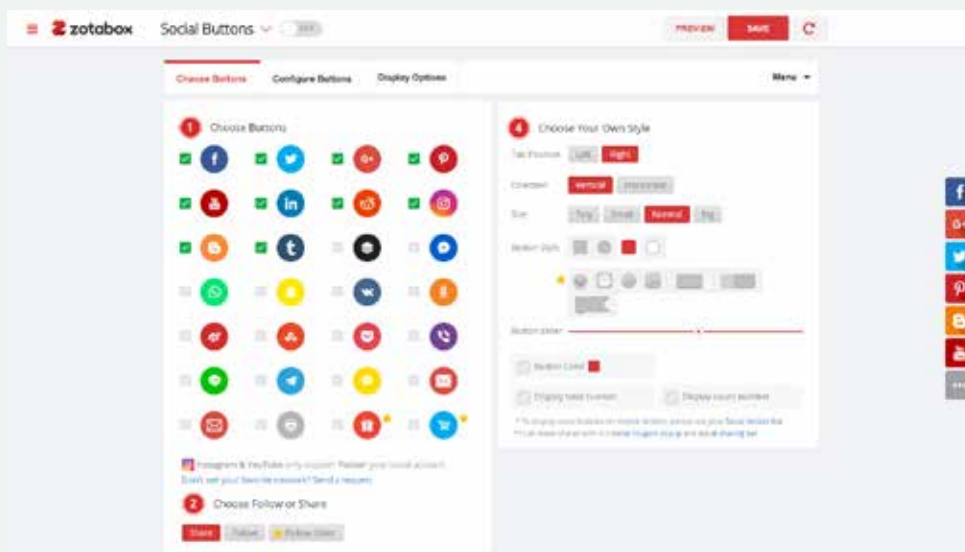
Zotobox is one of our favorites considering how important social media marketing is. The app allows you to add social messaging options and QR codes like Snapchat, Whatsapp, Messenger, Viber, Line and Telegram.

Smart Manufacturing Software in Action

We already mentioned how important proper inventory management is when it comes to growing your online business. The last thing you want to be doing is wasting time trawling back and forth between spreadsheets.

That's why the number one tool for makers is **Smart Manufacturing Software**. It integrates with your store so that you can manage all your orders, manufacturing, purchasing and inventory from a single dashboard.

But the benefits run a lot deeper than that, so let's have a quick dive.

Shopify Order Fulfillment

By having your entire order flow from purchasing to sales in one place, **it's easy to make quick decisions and changes**. With **Shopify inventory integration**, all your sales are synced to Katana, so your inventory doesn't need to be managed in more than one place.

Every time an order comes in on Shopify, your inventory and production line will be adjusted accordingly without any extra input needed on your behalf. You will immediately see whether you have the necessary products in stock or raw materials available to make the products ordered by the customer.

Plus, everything has been **color-coded and laid out with the modern manufacturer's eye in mind**, so it's easy to see how far along your orders are and spot when something is off.
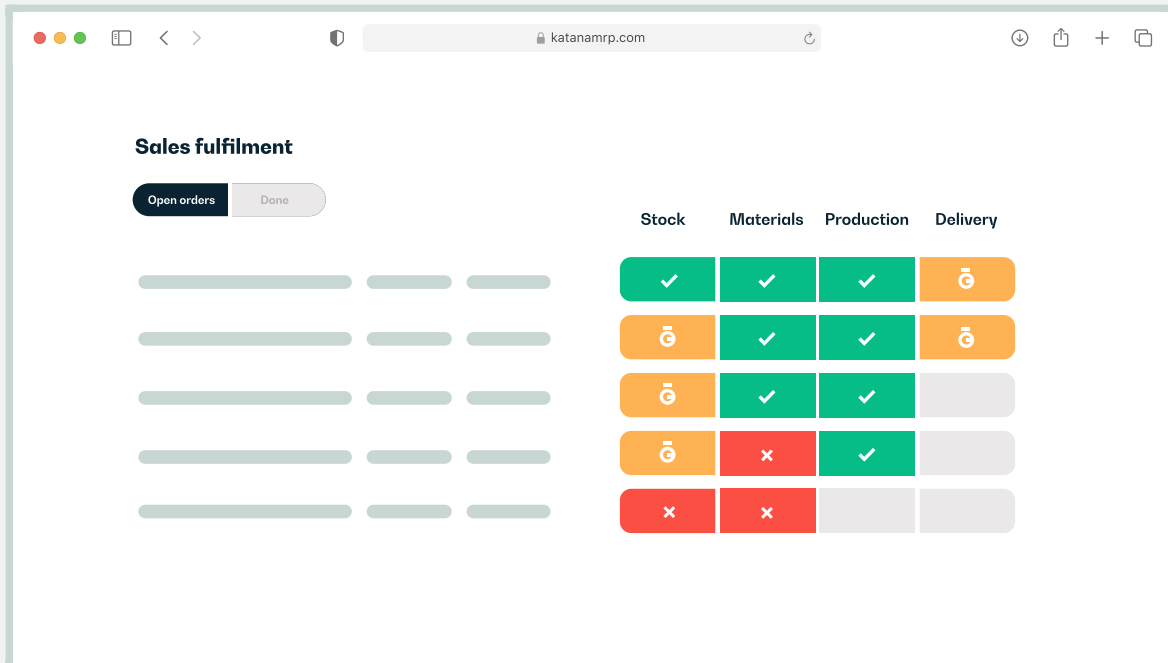
Real-time Inventory Management

One of the main problems that manufacturers come across when fulfilling their sales orders and when scheduling their production is **the constant need to check inventory** - whether that means going into the stock room or trawling through spreadsheets to see what finished goods and raw materials are available.

Katana will do all the hard work for you by **keeping an up-to-date inventory**, which shifts every time a sales or manufacturing order comes in.

There's no need to be modifying data every time an order comes in, because **the system does that for you.**

Auto-booking
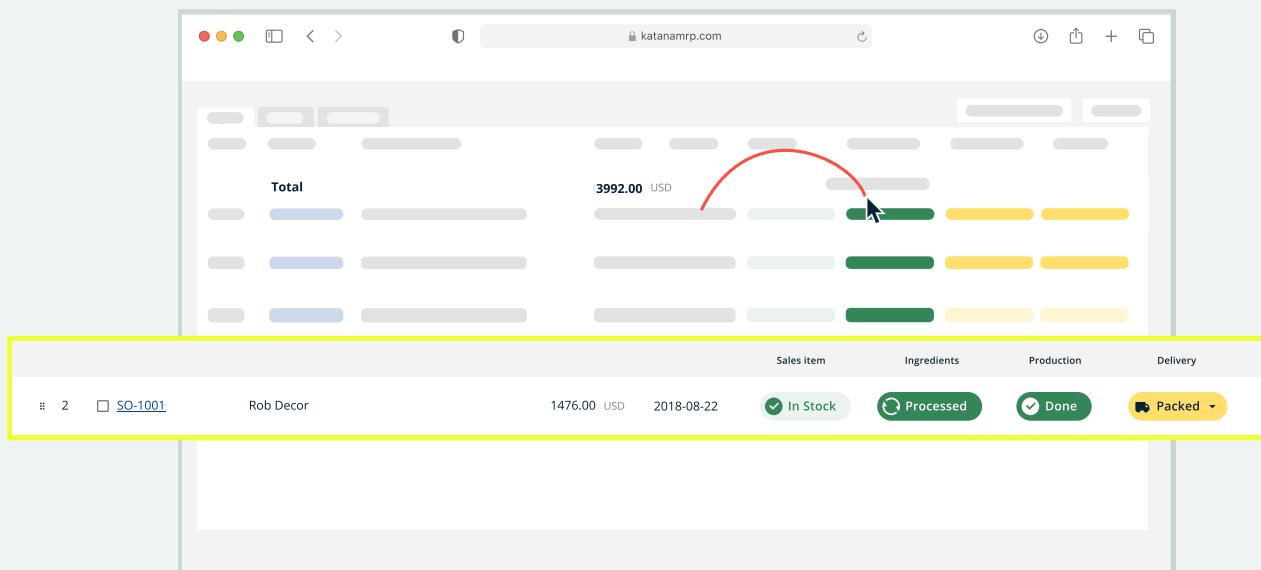
One of the difficulties with manufacturing is that products can share the same materials as each other. This can make keeping stock difficult because you always need to keep track of where your materials are being used.

Katana however, will keep track of all these so called "committed" materials so that you never run short. On top of that, **you can prioritize your orders with a simple drag and drop.** That means that if you have an order you want to get done faster (maybe the customer is a little bit of a VIP), then you can just pull the order up the line.

The software will **automatically book your available material stock** to higher priority orders. This means that you can easily see what the effects are going to be on all other production orders, in a color-coded visual chart. Katana will **highlight any resulting delay** that could risk getting the customer orders shipped on time.

Setting Reorder Points

Katana allows you to **set reorder points** for each of your items, so that you always know when to purchase more materials. You can easily see under the column "Missing/Excess" how close you are to the optimal level of 0. If it's red you know you're in the negative and should be filling up on that item.

Missing/Excess = In Stock - Committed + Expected - Reorder Point

But that's just a few of the many benefits that Smart Manufacturing Software can bring you. If you want to know more on how Katana works, we've put together an **explanatory video** you simply can't miss.

Taking the Next Step

Ultimately, beyond all this Shopify chit-chat, the fact remains that **the brilliance of your product is what's going to bring you long-lasting success.** Don't lose sight of that.

[Katana Smart Manufacturing Software](#) is there to make sure you aren't distracted by the little things and you can keep your focus on that bigger picture. It unifies every facet of your order flow from purchasing, to manufacturing, to online sales, with a friendly, visual interface.

That way you can implement all that's been covered in this e-book, by molding it to your Shopify store's needs, without any pesky distractions.

And that means being able to spend time on what you really want to be doing – **working on your products and growing your business.**
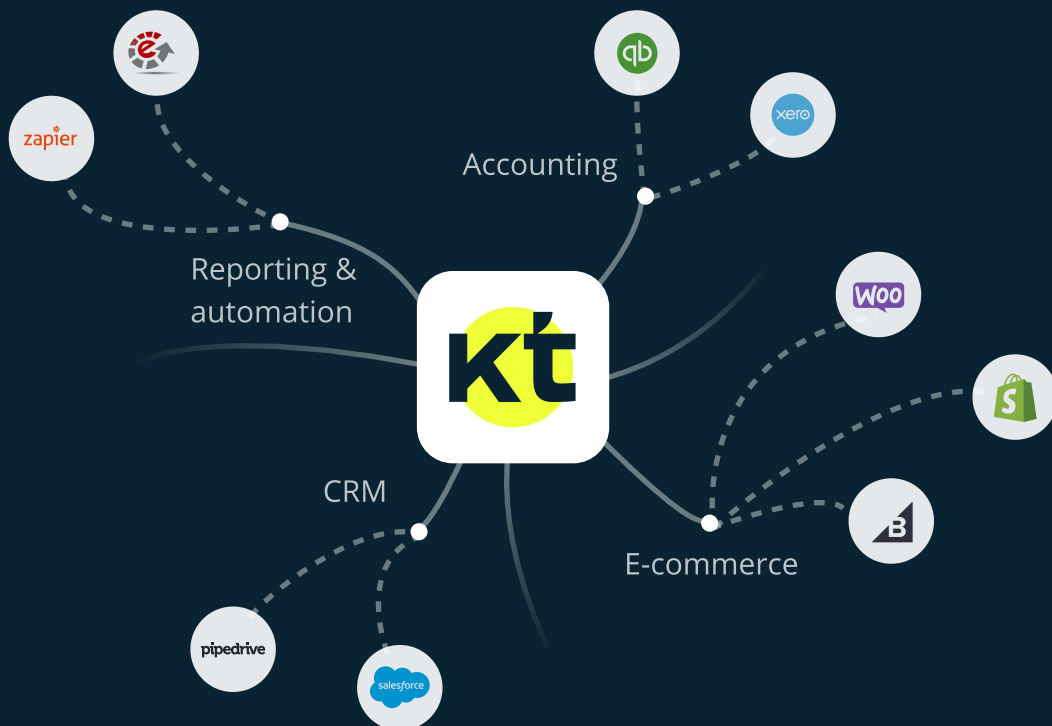
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Get in the driver's seat of your product-making business with Katana the Smart Manufacturing Software.
Are you ready to scale your business?

Start your 14-day free trial

About Katana | www.katanamrp.com

Katana is the #1 modern manufacturing & inventory software for scaling businesses. Automate your workflows with Katana's visual interface and smart auto-booking engine, which allow you to prioritize orders and see the availability of raw materials & finished goods in real-time. Easily create bills of materials for your products and their variants, gain multichannel inventory visibility and floor-level control. Seamless integrations with Shopify, WooCommerce, QuickBooks, Xero, etc.

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