

BUYING GUIDE FOR JOB SHOP SCHEDULING SOFTWARE

TOP 9 TIPS FOR SMB OWNERS



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INTRODUCTION

Why do I need job shop scheduling software for my shop? If this question has ever raised on your department it's probably because some of your colleagues might be swamped trying to follow all the instructions on a cramped white board or an extremely long, full of specifications, Excel sheet. One of them might have heard about a clean and visually easy to understand solution called visual job shop scheduling software that can put all of your headaches to an ease.

Visual scheduling software has been existing for some years now and fortunately, has brought many success stories. On this eBook we aim to break down a few things you should take into consideration before you decide for a particular scheduler. You should be able not to prioritize what's on your schedule but to schedule your priorities, and for that you need to know what they are and identify what you need in order to make that happen.

We at NETRONIC developed our **just plan it** visual scheduling software by taking those needs into consideration. Our focus is on small medium sized manufacturers who face problems such as scheduling both

machines and manpower to the maximum productivity, while keeping up with the deadlines and still creating high quality products that meet different clients' specifications and navigate through production variables.

Any of this sound familiar? If it does and you are still using white boards and Excel sheets, you might be making your life more complicated than it needs to be. Visual job shop scheduling software, like **just plan it**, is designed to easily see and help meet deliveries, eliminate bottlenecks and adjust to variables such as moved deadlines, changes in orders or machine labor breakdowns. To win business, you must be able to provide accurate estimates and quotations, especially in an environment in which every job has unique requirements.

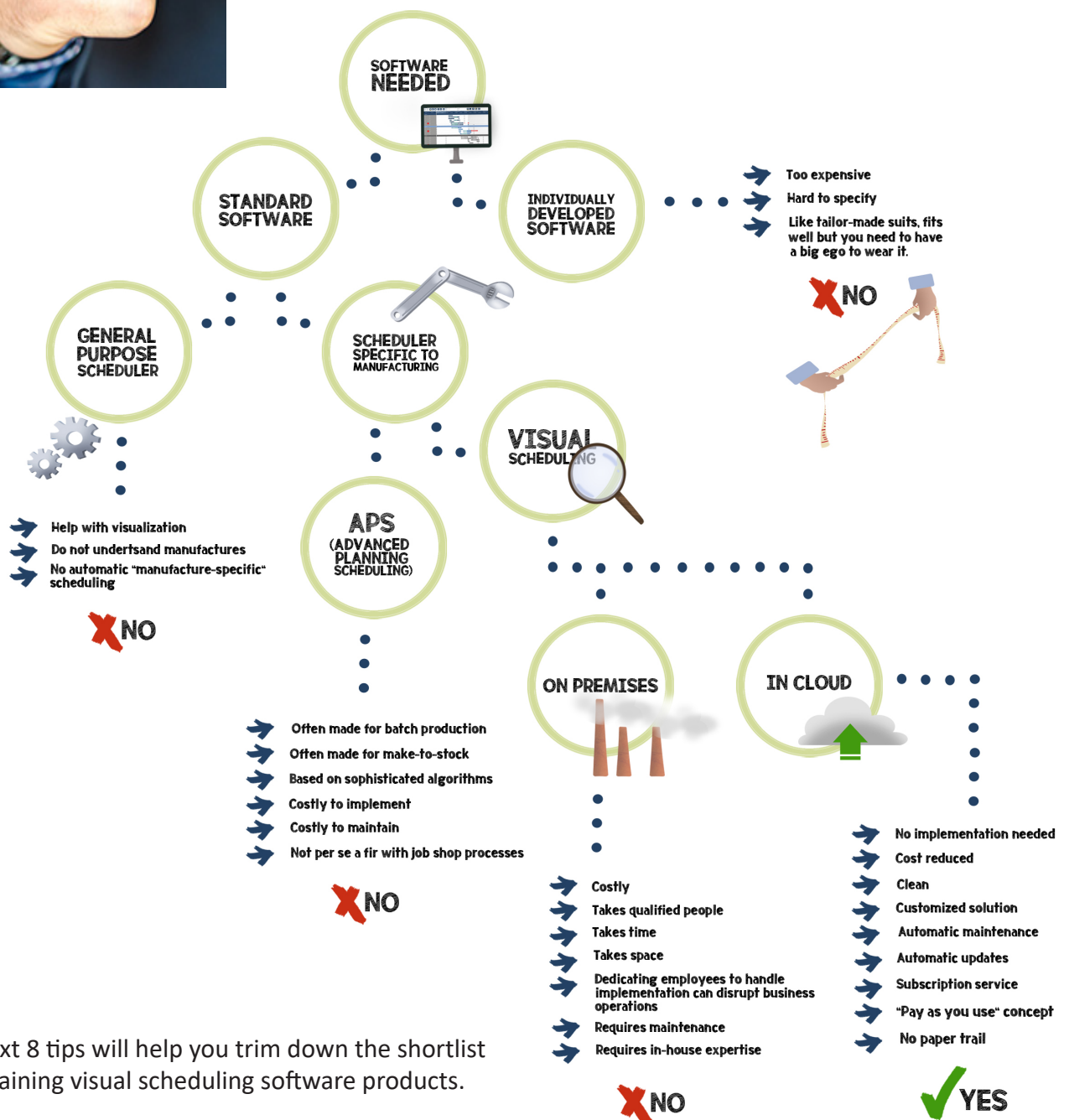
In order to take your business to a whole new level you might want to take a step ahead and start using visual scheduling software, but *where to start?* As choosing the right visual scheduler for your floor might seem like an ordeal, we are bringing you a few tips on what you should look for when deciding for a scheduler.

TIP #1:



HOW DO YOU KNOW IT IS RIGHT FOR YOU?

If you are a job shop and want to schedule with software, our first tip is: Look for a standard software that is specific to manufactures following a very visual approach and that you can get from the cloud. This will help you get a first shortlist.



The next 8 tips will help you trim down the shortlist of remaining visual scheduling software products.



TIP #2:

IS IT EASY TO USE?

First thing to check: is there a free trial that you are allowed to use on your own? If the vendor insists on some “hand-holding” and “getting started” services, this most likely tells you that the product is not that easy to use.

just plan it checks that premise and we offer free trials for our customers to check it out. The result? Users quickly get familiar with the product.

If you are deciding for a visual scheduler a good tip would be to try the demo version and test how long it takes you to understand how the system works and how could it potentially adjust to your work environment. A system that is difficult to use will require longer training and will not be suitable for the new employee profile

that is currently and slowly consolidating. SMBs find themselves shifting to an employee trend in which freelancers and part-time workers play an increasing role. Companies will have less time to train them, as they will be hired based on production requirements. Therefore, scheduling production software should be intuitive and inclusive.

At this stage you are not only wondering if the product is a good fit but you want to actually see it for yourself, so we highly recommend you take a step further in your journey and test the software with your real shop data.

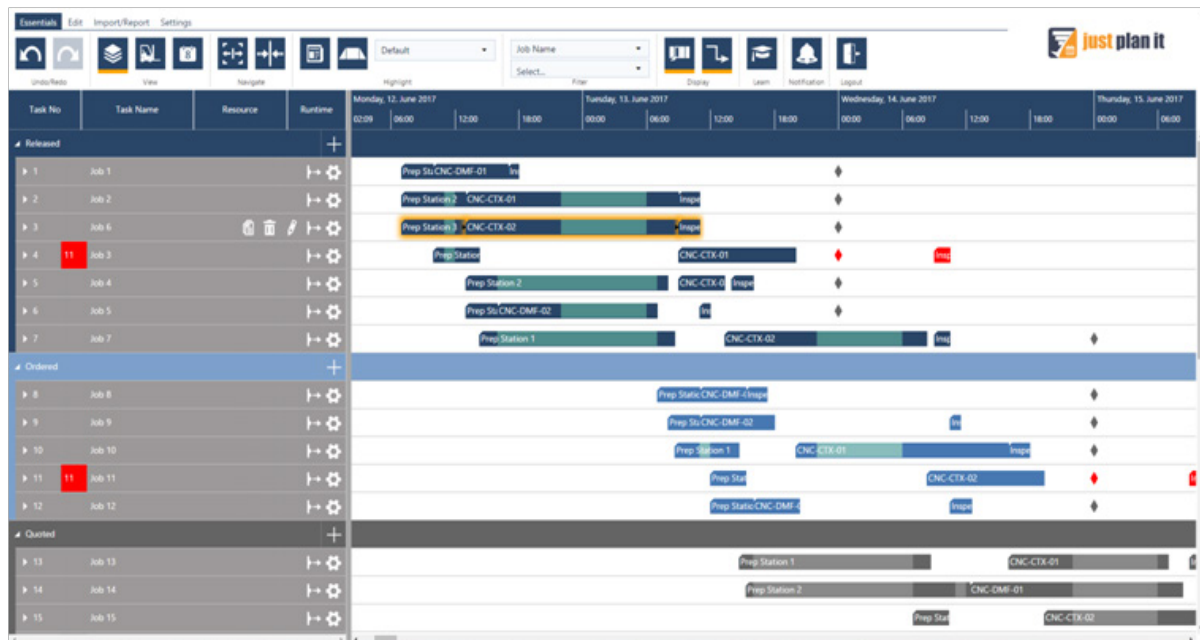
Can you easily update, understand and schedule your job shop data? This is what you should be looking for next:

-Update: Does it integrate with Excel? Can you

upload new data and update existing jobs? An intuitive interface allows uploading Excel spreadsheets directly into the program. In addition, it should also provide clear dialogs for a fast creation of new jobs and tasks in. If that is provided, the users will find themselves facing a visual representation of his shop floor schedule.

-Understand: Here is an example with the **just plan it** software, which is designed and displayed like an app. The Gantt chart based visual scheduling approach empowers the planner to easily manage the production schedule. It will inform on the latest enhancements through notifications, it is color coded to make it visually understandable in just one glance and it gives you the possibility to choose what you want to see on your board.

**“Can you easily
update, understand
and schedule?”**



So what should be looked for is a scheduler that allows multiple views, from task number to Job View, Resource View and Calendar View, the software should help visually understand the interdependencies as shown in a Gantt chart. The easy editing dialogs along with multiple color schemes and various filter options can help to visually organize a smart route of action.

-Schedule: Plan based on your need for action.

Does the software allow you to schedule in depth, assigning a time frame to each job and task? How easy is it to do so? Does it have the option to drag and drop? Does it provide different scheduling modes? **just plan it** offers three different modes adjustable to every need: Automatic scheduling, manual scheduling and hybrid scheduling – with the latter two allowing to apply ASAP and JIT strategies both to the entire schedule and to single orders.



TIP #3:

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE TO IMPLEMENT?

Getting visual scheduling software up and running shouldn't take long. However, it takes qualified knowledge. We know most small business manufacturers don't have resources to dedicate to a full-time implementation as it would not only be costly but also the time spent may disrupt business operations. That would not be the case with **just plan it**, as it requires minimum implementation time. **just plan it** is a subscription web service, it's already up and running and there is no installation of any software or hardware

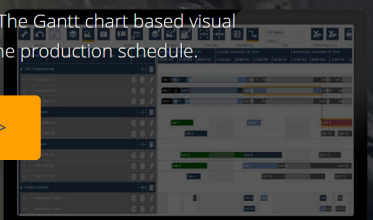
needed. You would only need internet connection to subscribe and create an account.

Fast and simple. Cloud-based scheduling software programs tailored for small manufacturers do not include complex algorithms. The focus lies on planning and visibility. Hence, no deep scheduling/production optimization skills are required by the users.

Easy time and resource scheduling for SMB manufacturers

just plan it enables manufacturers to schedule like planners think. The Gantt chart based visual scheduling approach empowers the planner to easily manage the production schedule.

[CREATE YOUR FREE TRIAL ACCOUNT NOW >>](#)





TIP #4:

CAN YOU REMOTELY ACCESS INFORMATION?

Does your visual scheduler allow you to access real-time, accurate information on what is going on your job-shop floor? Business owners and senior managers need to see the big picture in order to decide what actions to take. Both shop owners and employees should be able to have access and control of the schedule from any remote location via smartphones and tablets. An easy-to-use mobile app not only portrays hi-tech image but can be a competitive advantage. Getting the information right at the time when you need it can allow you to get ahead of the production schedule and highlight any problem that may occur.

The **just plan it** service is provided via a website, you don't need to be in the office to have access to information as all users can log in from a variety of mobile devices. Operational data is accessible from all over the world. It provides different visualization options, from summary information to a drill-down detail everywhere in the system. A highly competitive software will allow you to remotely manage business by exception, notify changes and alert you when an exception occurs.



TIP #5:

HOW EASY IS IT TO SCHEDULE AND MANAGE JOBS AND HOW POWERFUL IS THE SCHEDULER?



Understanding your visual schedule at a glance is vital in order to deliver information when a customer calls to get an update on their order. It is important to have the information available without having to go to your shop floor. A competitive scheduler should allow you to keep up-to-date with the latest changes, for example, when a boss order comes in and you need to fit it in an already full schedule. With the right tools, you should have no problem. Our tip, therefore is to check how powerful the scheduler is

and if it provides different scheduling strategies. We will develop this idea with the example that follows, using our **just plan it** software to illustrate the different strategies.

First of all you should consider which different scheduling methods the software provides and if you can implement them with just one click even if it is only to see the impact on the overall schedule. Different scheduling methods could be ASAP (As Soon As Possible) or JIT (Just in Time)

as developed in **just plan it**. When multiple jobs are competing for the same resource, schedulers have to decide which scheduling method is more relevant for the overall schedule. ASAP strategy is recommended for orders with low standardization of productivity, predictability and batch size. Scheduled starting from the release date and produced forward, ASAP allows buffer time

in case of unforeseen incidents, also resulting in high inventory. JIT strategy, on the other hand, doesn't allow buffer time but achieves low inventory. JIT is recommended for jobs with high standardization of productivity, predictability and batch size and it is scheduled from the due date and worked backwards.

ASAP strategy

Task #	Task Name	Resource	Runtime	October 2017		November 2017			
				Wk 42	Wk 43	Wk 44	Wk 45	Wk 46	Wk 47
Released									
1	Job 1			Planning Start	Multi-f Multi				
2	Job 2				Tornos				
3	Job 4				Tornos				

JIT strategy

Task #	Task Name	Resource	Runtime	October 2017		November 2017			
				Wk 42	Wk 43	Wk 44	Wk 45	Wk 46	Wk 47
Released									
1	Job 1			Planning Start	Multi-f Multi				
2	Job 2				Torn				
3	Job 4				Tornos				

just plan it enables the user to schedule manually, automatically and hybrid, which is a combination of both.

In the **manual mode**, all orders are treated as having the same priority so that plan modifications never directly affect any other jobs despite the selected one. This means that, no matter whether the planner moves a task or changes resource capacities, the tasks of other jobs will never be moved (automatically). The only automation happening is that the successors/predecessors within the selected job get moved as well.

Automatic scheduling is based on an algorithm that is applied each time the schedule gets modified. The automatic scheduling takes into account the following parameters to calculate an efficient schedule:

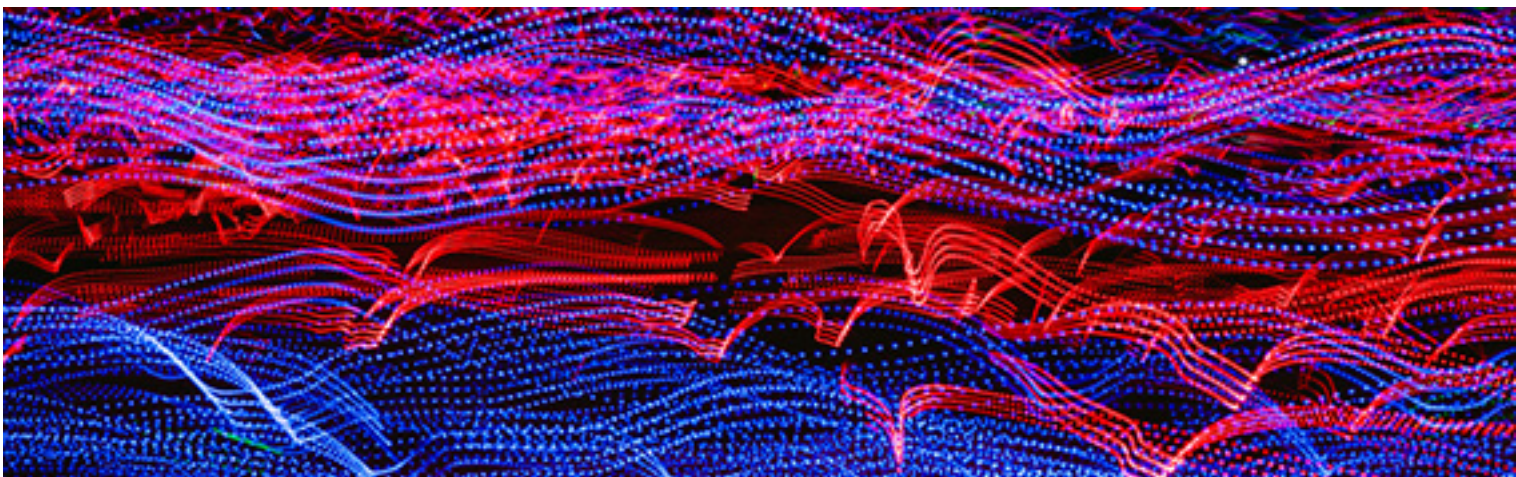
- Priorities of jobs
- Successor/predecessor of tasks within a job (routings)
- The resource calendar and their availability
- The release date of a job
- The due date of a job
- "Start not earlier than" or "do not finish later than" restrictions on task level

- Resource restrictions on task level
- The scheduling strategy (ASAP or JIT) applied for this job

The **hybrid scheduling mode** combines the advantages of both alternatives. In some cases, it might be useful to change the global scheduling mode only for one or more jobs so that the planner will be able to manage these important jobs manually, thus making sure that they happen exactly when he wants them to happen and to use the scheduling engine to automatically plan the remaining jobs in an efficient way.

Thus, the hybrid scheduling mode combines the comfort of leaving the planning work completely to an automatic scheduling engine with the ability of taking full control by manually overriding all of the engine's rules.

Our recommendation, therefore, is that you take into consideration if the system provides multiple scheduling methods, the possibility to simulate orders for further information, visual display of resource capacity and integrated shop floor data collection before you decide for a specific visual scheduling software. Viewing job status is only useful if the data collected on the shop floor is current and accurate; and if it is paperless, the cleaner, environmental friendlier and storage space saver it will be.





TIP #6:

HOW FAST CAN IT HELP ANSWERING A RFQ (Request-for-quote)?

One of the ultimate goals of a scheduler should not only be able to smartly schedule your job shop floor but also be able to provide fast and precise answers. When you receive a request-for-quote (RFQ), you should pretty painlessly be able to estimate costs, time and prices as accurate as possible in order to provide customers with reliable information that can ultimately translate into business opportunities. Ideally you should be able to provide a faster and more reliable answer than your competitors. A faster answer gives the impression

that you run an effective shop and that you are interested in getting into serious business.

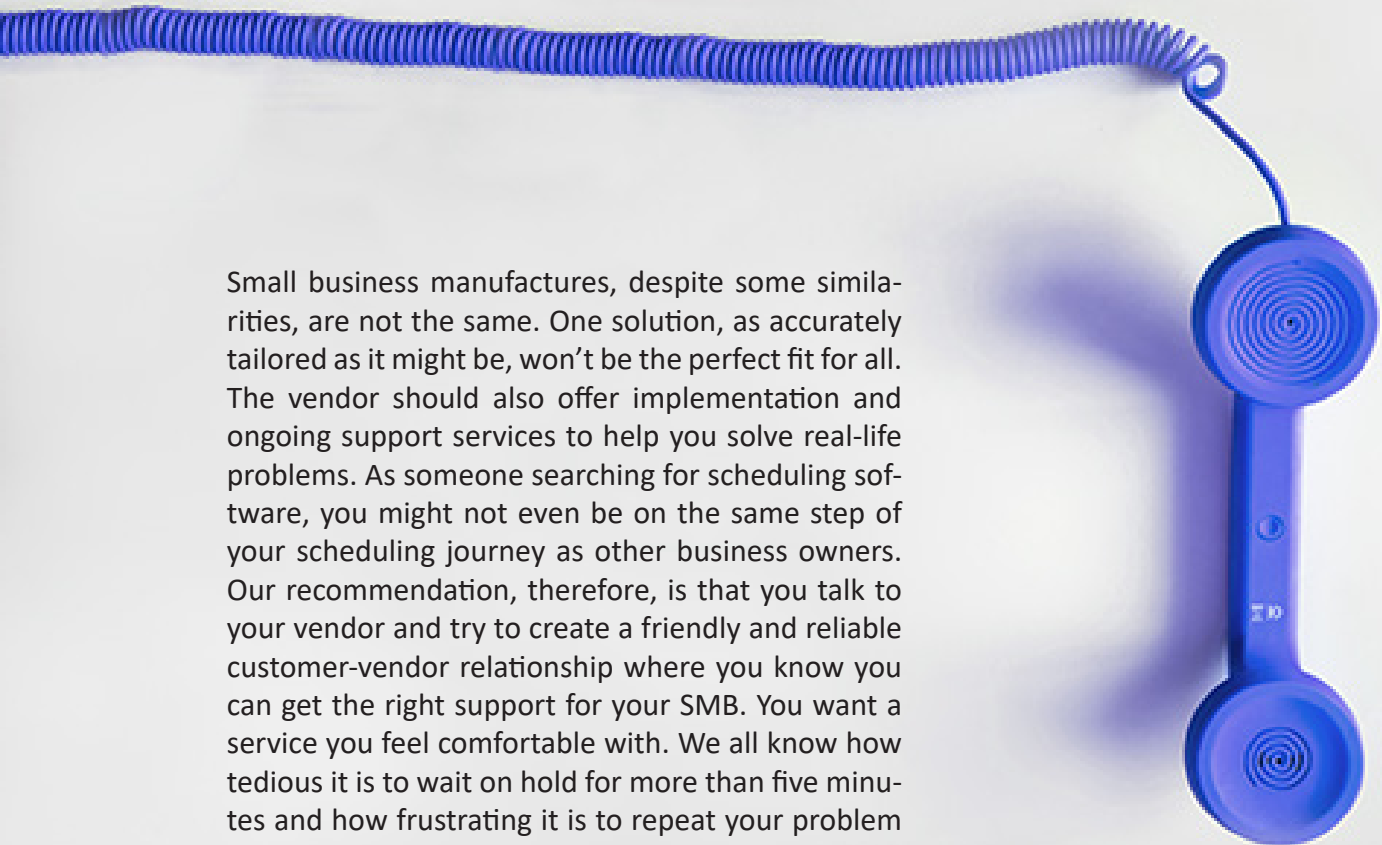
A proper scheduler should be strong enough to make calculations based on the real capacity of your job shop; jobs, priorities, other delivery dates, impact on other jobs... A competent scheduler must be able to factor your resources accurately and allow you to simulate a potential order in order to answer your soon-to-be customer's RFQ.

TIP #7:

CAN YOU RELY ON CUSTOMER SUPPORT?

Small business manufactures, despite some similarities, are not the same. One solution, as accurately tailored as it might be, won't be the perfect fit for all. The vendor should also offer implementation and ongoing support services to help you solve real-life problems. As someone searching for scheduling software, you might not even be on the same step of your scheduling journey as other business owners. Our recommendation, therefore, is that you talk to your vendor and try to create a friendly and reliable customer-vendor relationship where you know you can get the right support for your SMB. You want a service you feel comfortable with. We all know how tedious it is to wait on hold for more than five minutes and how frustrating it is to repeat your problem as the customer support filters you through extension after extension till you talk to a manager.

One of the top ten things **just plan it** users pointed out they like the most is our customer and technical support. Our aim in **just plan it** is to make all facets of testing and using our software approachable and personal. We intend not only to design user friendly, easy to use software, but also to provide helpful and reliable support. We believe talking directly to our users and taking care of your questions creates





a strong line of trust that we truly appreciate. So what can we do for you? Firstly it should be pointed out that your experience with our technical support will differ depending on where you are in your “**just plan it** journey”. We will break it down into three steps: On research, On trial and Customer. Once your journey’s stage is defined, we can offer two different type of support approached: personal support such as personalized emails, go-to-meetings and webinars, and self-service support such as video and written content.

On research:

When you find yourself on the first step of your just plan it journey, your main concern is if the product is a good fit. If you do not want to personally reach out to us yet, we’ll offer a plethora of completely free content such as

- Short overview videos
- Recorded webinars (both beginner and advanced level)
- Written documentation
- The blog with product-related news

If you want to quickly and efficiently clarify a few things, you can chat with us with the chat box that you can access on the lower right hand side of our site. When chatting, you still do not have to reveal who you are. Of course, we are also happy to answer your questions by email: just drop us a line to **support@just-plan-it.com**. Last but not least, we are happy to give you a custom demo already during your research phase. In that case, please let us know by filling out the request demo form.

If you conclude that our visual scheduling software can be a potential fit, you will most likely jump onto the next step: the free trial.

On trial:

Once you have decided to run with the free trail, the conversation focuses on your resources and data; how do you define a resource, how do you apply your own environment situation into the program. At this stage we are happy to schedule a go-to-meeting if possible to make the experience more personal and look into your data. If a meeting is not possible, we are always avail-

lable at the other side of the line. We also offer custom demos and free webinars to introduce you to our software and answer what questions may rise on the way. You can also always contact us through the chat box integrated into the website. Our support team is always quick to get back to you.

In addition to the resources mentioned above, we have some resources dedicated to our trial users:

- [The learn dashboard](#) (as part of our software)
- [Ebook "7 steps for a successful trial"](#)
- [Excel template](#) to upload your data into **just plan it**

Last but not least, trial users typically work with a dedicated contact person and can send them their questions directly.

Customer:

At this stage you have decided that **just plan it** is a go but you still have some ideas that could help your job shop scheduling and you decide to run it by us. Your questions at this point circle on requests for extensions. Your dedicated contact person will still accompany you while using the software, and you can discuss and share your feature ideas with us. Sooner or later, they'll make their way into our roadmap, and will be announced in our product-centric blog once available.

In addition to this, we highly recommend that you join us for our advanced-level webinars, or watch the recorded ones. They are meant to help customers achieve more with just plan it.

So, there are a plethora of tools and ways that we apply to provide scheduling support to you. All of this comes completely free-of-charge and we highly encourage you to make good use of it.



TIP #8:

DOES IT HAVE GOOD REFERENCES?



Reference checking is a key stage of the evaluation. The software vendor should be able to point you to companies that have used the product and whose opinion is relevant to your company. If the reference company would buy the software again, then the odds are that the product might actually work.

Sites such as [Capterra](#) can help provide references. These kind of sites are ideal to search for software reviews, ratings, infographics, and the

most comprehensive list of the top business software products available. Software can help you save time and solve problems, but sometimes it's hard to figure out the solution that's right for you. That's where these sites come in handy.

Here are a few reviews on our just plan it software that can be found on Capterra. With some success stories behind it, could there be a better way to talk about the software than with the users themselves?

[Review This Product!](#)

Sort by: Most Recent



'Easy and flexible handling: "just plan it" meets our requirements 100%'

Oct 23, 2017

Yves Hagedorn
Managing Director
Aconity3D GmbH
Used the software for: 6-12 months
Reviewer Source
Source: Capterra

5/5

★★★★★
Overall

★★★★★ 5/5
Ease of Use

★★★★★ 5/5
Features & Functionality

★★★★★ 5/5
Customer Support

★★★★★ 5/5
Value for Money

Pros: We have been closely seeking for an adequate software to schedule our plant construction orders and job shops. Adequate means: easy to connect with our ERP, easy to use and without any further customization, agile in applying and giving support in short notice rescheduling. We are very happy that we found just plan it: it meets our requirements 100%.

Vendor Response

by NETRONIC Software on October 24, 2017

Hi Yves, thank you very much for taking time and reviewing just plan it. This is a great endorsement and we are committed further enhancing the software,



'My first thought of seeing this product was ... WOW'

Oct 16, 2017

Verified Reviewer

11-50 employees

Used the software for: Less than 6 months

Reviewer Source

Source: Capterra

5/5

★★★★★
Overall

★★★★★ 5/5
Ease of Use

★★★★★ 5/5
Features & Functionality

★★★★☆ 4/5
Customer Support

★★★★★ 5/5
Value for Money



Pros: I have seen a lot of products that are designed for scheduling in a manufacturing environment; but few that are well designed for the small job shop type business. Most are designed for very complex manufacturing environments with dedicated scheduling resources. This tool achieved the promise that every other system tried to achieve but failed.

Cons: The simplicity of the software is also its weakness - because the product would be limited to smaller manufacturing companies. However for the purpose that I see it being used for, this isn't so much a Con as a limitation that won't impact us.

Vendor Response

by NETRONIC Software on October 17, 2017

Hi, thanks a lot for openly sharing your thoughts on just plan it. You are right - we are purposely built for job shops and small make-to-order companies. Hence, we have some gaps to serve large-scale make-to-stock manufacturers and continuous flow production companies. However, this is on purpose ... and hence we can live well with this weakness.



'The support from customer reps and the team was excellent they were very responsive to our needs.'

Oct 13, 2017

Kaleb James
Managing Director
Stafford Engineering
Mechanical or Industrial Engineering, 51-200 employees
Used the software for: Less than 6 months
Reviewer Source
Source: Capterra

4/5

★★★★☆
Overall

★★★★☆ 4/5
Ease of Use

★★★★★ 5/5
Features & Functionality

★★★★★ 5/5
Customer Support

★★★★★ 5/5
Value for Money



Pros: The interface is very intuitive and the development cycle is rapid, Netronic are obviously committed to building a product that ticks plenty of boxes.

Cons: With a very large volume of data the workings of the scheduling algorithms were tested and the wait time was considerable for us.

Overall: Working with the team on developing Just PlanIt to suit our ERP system made me consider very carefully what was and wasn't important in our own business.

Vendor Response

by NETRONIC Software on October 16, 2017

Hello Kaleb, Thank you very much for your commitment and for taking time to provide feedback. Glad that you like the scheduling (and support) experience that we provide.



'Just Plan it is a simple yet powerful scheduling software.'

Oct 13, 2017

Shane Leong

Procurement Mgr

Wesglow Industries S/B

Plastics, 51-200 employees

Used the software for: Less than 6 months

Reviewer Source

Source: Capterra

5/5

★★★★★
Overall

★★★★★ 5/5

Ease of Use

★★★★★ 5/5

Customer Support

★★★★☆ 4/5

Features & Functionality

★★★★★ 5/5

Value for Money



Pros: It is easy to use and required minimum implementation time. Most importantly, the customer/technical support unit are always ready to answer any question with speed. Regularly update and improve the software features and functionality.

With a strong sense of customer satisfaction and willingness to make an adjustment to the software, Just Plan It is only heading one way from a good software to a great software. Kudos.

Cons: Web based software, the stability and speed of Internet connection is very important to experience the agility of the software.

Overall: Less time to come out with a production schedule. Have an overview of all the sales order received and knowing the resource require well in advance. Most important, able to obtained and relate the estimated time of delivery to customers.

Vendor Response

by NETRONIC Software on October 27, 2017

Hello Shane, Thank you very much for taking time and review just plan it. It is a pleasure to work with you, and also to support you getting the most out of JPI. We already started working on some of the features that you recommended to us (e.g. "send-ahead"): stay tuned for some news to come.



'Intuitive and a down-to-earth solution for gaining control and saving administration time'

May 01, 2017

Bent Korsgaard

Product Manager

NAVEKSA A/S

Used the software for: Less than 6 months

Source: Capterra

4/5

★★★★☆
Overall

★★★★☆ 4/5

Ease of Use

★★★★☆ 4/5

Customer Support

★★★★☆ 4/5

Features & Functionality

★★★★☆ 4/5

Value for Money

Pros: You have more or several tasks to be planned and executed consisting of connected and sequenced activities using different work resources (man, machines, others)

You also have an idea of the duration of each of the individual activities, and you also know what available time resources you have.

Also you do not have to manage a complexity which calls for a project, implementing ERP-systems and the like.

In a structured and clever way you want to stay in control without overloading your head, using notepads, using different home-grown excel-sheets, fire-fighting, follow-up chasing and other.

You will probably find the answer to your wishes investigating JJust-Plan-It. A fast implemented, intuitive and down-to-earth solution for gaining control and saving your administration time.

Cons: No cons. This tool is based on sound practice-oriented principles. But of course you must set the scene for the tool to operate. That is defining your available resources and continuously feed the system with your tasks, task relations and task progress updates. This continued feeding can be automated. But this is a different story.

I have given 4 stars across all subjects. I could have given it 5 stars across all subjects. But you must always leave room for vendor improvements.

Overall: ...

Vendor Response

by NETRONIC Software on May 02, 2017

Hello Bent, We are excited about your feedback, and about your commitment for our product. We appreciate that you leave room for vendor improvement and we are very committed filling this room :) It is good to have users challenging us. Easy and happy scheduling. Your just plan it team



TIP #9:

LEARN WHO YOUR VENDOR IS

Getting to know your vendor is key and research on the company will provide a better insight on who you are doing business with and the philosophy behind the creation of the product. You want to ensure that the vendor understands your business and has a base of companies with similar characteristics, processes and problems, which will ensure that consultants from the software vendor have the right experience to meet your needs.

just plan it is a product from NETRONIC, a company that offers a myriad of Gantt chart software, tools for developers, add-ins for Microsoft Dynamics NAV, cloud-based time and resource scheduling for SMB manufactures and the capability to build any custom Gantt scheduling solution. (See netronic.com). NETRONIC has studied, dissected and researched deeply in order to do our job thoroughly and provide the exact support you need. Our

experts are ready to tend to your needs, answer any questions and help you.

You are buying not only our software but our expertise, service and support, as we have a deep understanding of your industry and business issues. Not only will our sales team be able to establish an in depth conversation but also will the implementation consultants and senior management. At NETRONIC we understand the issues job-shops, machine-shops and make-to-order manufacturers are facing today. We stay on top of our game. We believe in communication and staying up-to date. We believe that talking directly to our users and taking care of your questions creates a strong line of trust that we, on the other side of the deal, also truly appreciate. We intend not only to design user friendly, easy-to-use software but also provide helpful and reliable support. We are good listeners. We listen to your needs and answer them by building the best software possible.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



CLARA CABRERA

Clara works as content Marketing intern in the just plan it team at NETRONIC. With a solid background in Fine Arts and creative writing, she brings new perspectives to the team.