SCALE
SMARTER

Multi-Site MES Rollouts That Actually Work

A practical guide to rolling out MES across multiple facilities – without losing your sanity, schedule or bottom line.

inflexion point

A NOTE FROM OUR EXPERT

For almost 20 years, I've helped lead MES rollouts across some of the world's largest operations. I've seen everything — from dashboard pilots that ballooned into two-year dev marathons, to implementations that quietly transformed company performance.

Here's the truth: rolling out MES at one site is tough. Scaling it across ten? That's the real test. Each facility, team, and piece of equipment is different. When the pressure's on to standardize, streamline, and report in real-time — MES can be your biggest obstacle or the key to making it all work.

This guide is for those who want the latter.

We've compiled lessons from real-world MES projects — what worked, what didn't, and what to watch for. No fluff. No pitch. Just practical takeaways from teams that have been there.

Whether you're kicking off your MES journey or untangling a rough rollout, I hope this helps you move forward with more clarity and fewer bruises.

Let's make MES work for you.

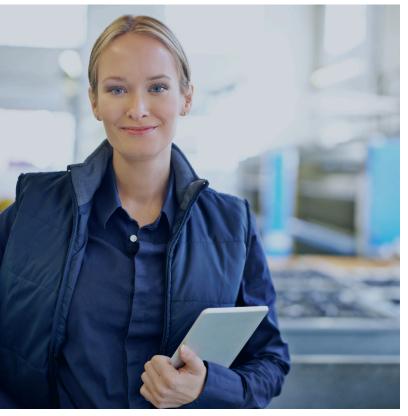**DAVE RAY**
Senior Solutions Architect,
InflexionPoint

inflexion point

Strategy, Then Software

MES is not just a system.
It's a shift in how your business thinks.

Before you choose a platform, pick a problem – a real, high-impact one that touches product, people and process.

Pre-Rollout Checklist

- ☑ Define your business drivers.
- ☑ Map out current pain points.
- ☑ Align your teams.
- ☑ Create a realistic roadmap.
- ☑ Start with a measurable win.

Start with Business Impact

Forget features and dashboards—MES delivers real ROI by enabling capabilities like:

- Consistent quality across shifts/SKUs
- Faster batch release & QA signoff
- Real-time packaging visibility
- Audit-ready compliance (HACCP, allergens)
- Less waste, better yields
- Teams that trust their data

Measure What Matters - Early

Define KPIs before rollout—never after. Choose 2–3 that align with key business drivers and share them across leadership and the floor.

Some key MES-impact metrics:
- OEE (Overall Equipment Effectiveness)
- Right-First-Time Rate
- Schedule Adherence
- Batch Cycle Time
- EBR Review Time

inflexion point

Pilot with Purpose
Don't Just Start Small – Start Smart.

A smart pilot isn't about picking the safest line. It's about solving a real problem, learning fast, and setting the stage for scale.

Choose an Impactful Pilot Area

Your pilot should create visible value and surface insights, not just check a box.

Look for areas that:
- Have a clear, measurable issue
- Involve both people and automation
- Support high-volume or high-complexity products
- Are tied to performance pain points (e.g. hold-and-release delays)

Pick the Right Site...
Not the Easiest One

When choosing your pilot site, look for:
- Engaged plant leadership
- A team that's open to tech and change
- Solid infrastructure — or at least a path to fix it
- A process tied to a high-volume or high-complexity product
- A place where success will get noticed

Build It Like You'll Scale It

- ☑ Use naming conventions that apply across plants
- ☑ Document lessons learned from day one
- ☑ Build flexible workflows for local variations
- ☑ Plan reporting roll-ups and cross-site comparisons

inflexion point

Build for Repeatability

One of the biggest mistakes in multi-site MES rollouts? Treating each site like a blank slate. Yes, every facility has its quirks — but the goal isn't to design 12 custom systems. It's to create a smart foundation you can scale.

Modular Beats Monolithic

Build your MES framework like a toolbox, not a monolith. Develop core standards that apply everywhere, then layer on site-specific variations where needed. A good structure allows flexibility without chaos.

Think:

- Standard forms, with fields that can flex
- Common KPIs, with local targets
- Unified codebase, but site-specific configuration

Standardize Things That Make Sense

- ✅ Architecture
- ✅ Tag naming conventions
- ✅ Role-based user permissions
- ✅ Dashboards & Reports
- ✅ Electronic Forms and Workflows

Repeatable Doesn't Mean Rigid

This isn't about forcing every site to operate identically. It's about giving your teams a shared language, a set of tools that work, and the freedom to improve within a scalable structure.

Get it right once — and you can get it right everywhere, faster.

inflexion point

IT + OT = Your A Team

MES isn't just an OT project or an IT initiative — it's both. It connects everything from the plant floor to the front office. Leave one team out, and you risk delays, gaps, and a whole lot of finger-pointing. Bring both sides in from the start — and get them working together.

What OT Needs from IT (and Vice Versa)

IT owns infrastructure. OT knows the equipment. You need both perspectives to avoid critical missteps. Some key shared concerns:

- Network architecture and system availability
- Cybersecurity policies and access control
- Cloud vs. on-prem hosting strategies
- Remote access needs for integrators and support
- Data retention, backups, and disaster recovery

Plan for More Than Just Production

MES environments typically include:
- Development – to build and test changes
- Test – for validation and user acceptance
- Production – the live environment
- Training – for onboarding and simulation

Each of these needs infrastructure, access, and support. Skipping this planning early on leads to costly rework — or worse, a fragile production system you're too afraid to touch.

inflexion point

People First, Always
(Tech Won't Stick Without Buy In)

Even the best MES rollout will stall if the people using it don't trust it, understand it, or see value in it. MES isn't just a system change — it's a shift in how people work. That means change management has to be part of your rollout plan from day one.

Get operators, supervisors, and QA involved early. They're not just end users — they're the ones who'll make or break your success.

Build Your Bench of Champions

Every site has go-to people — respected, experienced team members who others naturally follow. Find those folks and bring them in early. Get their feedback. Show them what's coming. Ask for their input, and mean it.

Why it works:
- They advocate for the project even when leadership isn't in the room
- They give real-world feedback that makes the system better
- They help troubleshoot adoption issues and build trust on the floor

Don't just train users — build internal advocates.

Train for Ownership, Not Just Access

MES changes how people work — especially in compliance-heavy plants. Training should include:
- Role-based training plans
- Walkthroughs of real production scenarios
- Open feedback loops post-go-live
- Follow-up sessions to reinforce and expand knowledge

The more confident your users are, the more value you'll get from the system.

inflexion point

Make Metrics Make Sense

Don't Just Collect Data - Use It

MES brings data to the surface. But collecting numbers isn't the goal — using them to drive better decisions is. Start with the metrics that actually matter to your business — and make sure they're visible to the people who can act on them.

Pick the Right KPIs for the Right Roles

Your QA lead doesn't need the same view as your packaging supervisor. Tailor dashboards and alerts so people see what matters to them.

Some high-impact MES metrics include:

- OEE
- Yield
- Downtime Reasons
- Schedule Adherence
- Right-First-Time Rate

Don't overwhelm teams with dashboards full of noise. Start small, focus on relevance, and build from there.

Put Metrics Where They Matter

If the only place your KPIs live is a corporate report, they're not going to change behavior. Make them real. That might mean:

- Live dashboards in packaging and processing areas
- Mobile alerts when a line drops below target
- Shift huddles that review yesterday's numbers
- Leaderboards that gamify improvement

MES can give you the data — but it's how and where you surface it that makes it matter.

inflexion point

Standardize the Smart Way

Global Framework – Local Flexibility

Rolling out MES across multiple sites doesn't mean enforcing cookie-cutter operations. The best systems strike a balance — standard where it matters, flexible where it counts. Your goal isn't rigid uniformity; it's a shared language for continuous improvement.

What to Standardize (and Why)

Not everything needs to be locked down. But some elements benefit everyone when they're consistent:

- Naming conventions for tags, assets, and equipment
- Core workflows (batch release, downtime logging, quality checks)
- KPI definitions (so performance can be compared apples-to-apples)
- Security roles and access policies
- Template dashboards and reports

This kind of foundation makes it easier to train, scale, and evolve over time.

Avoid the "One Size Fits None" Trap

It's tempting to build a massive global template and expect every plant to use it as is. That rarely works. Instead:

- ☑ Create core modules with room for configuration
- ☑ Let facilities adapt to site specific needs without losing structure
- ☑ Build governance into your rollout – so the changes are tracked, shared, and evaluated

inflexion point

You've Got the Playbook.
Now Let's Put It To Work.

Scaling MES across your sites isn't easy – but it's doable with the right strategy, structure, and support. Whether you're just getting started or trying to turn the ship mid-rollout, we're here to help you scale smarter.

At InflexionPoint, we help teams roll out MES with confidence.

- **Want a second set of eyes on your roadmap?**
  We'll help you stress-test your strategy and highlight the blind spots before they become bottlenecks.

- **Need help translating your pilot into a multi-site plan?**
  We'll work with you to scale what works, skip what doesn't, and build a repeatable rollout model.

- **Looking to avoid hidden traps we've seen in 50+ facilities?**
  We'll share hard-won lessons from the field so you can move faster, with fewer surpises.

inflexion point