

WHICH CONSTRAINTS SHOULD NOT FOLLOW YOU INTO 2027?

Executive Briefings

Key Takeaways

- **Not every operational problem deserves a project; focus on constraints whose cost is significant enough to matter.**
- **Prioritize recurring friction that affects throughput, quality, resilience, customer commitments, capacity, or margin.**
- **Choose the constraint before choosing the solution so improvement remains anchored in business results.**

Estimated Reading Time: 4 minutes

Every manufacturing operation carries some friction.

The question is how much of it you are willing to carry for another year.

By now, you know where 2026 demanded more time, intervention, coordination, or workarounds than it should have. You know which problems were temporary — and which kept returning.

Looking back identified them.

Now comes the harder part: choosing which ones should not follow you into 2027.

Not Every Problem Deserves a Project

Contract manufacturers rarely lack opportunities for improvement.

There are processes that could be faster. Systems that could communicate better. Manual tasks that could be automated. Information that could be easier to find. Equipment, applications, and workflows that could be modernized.

Trying to address everything at once, however, can turn improvement into disruption.

The better question isn't, ***"What could we change?"***

It's, ***"What is costing us enough that we should?"***

That cost may appear in different ways:

- Lost production time or unnecessary labor
- Delayed or incomplete information
- Repeated manual intervention
- Quality problems or avoidable rework
- Difficulty responding to changing customer requirements
- Dependencies that make the operation less resilient

A constraint that repeatedly affects throughput, quality, predictability, customer commitments, or margin deserves a different level of attention than one that is merely inconvenient.

Know When Friction Becomes a Constraint

Some inefficiency is simply part of running a complex manufacturing operation.

The important distinction is whether the organization is absorbing that friction comfortably — or whether the cost of accommodating it is beginning to grow.

A manual process that once required a few minutes may now consume hours as production volume increases. A disconnected system that employees have learned to work around may become more consequential as customer requirements become more demanding. A dependency on one experienced employee may seem manageable until that person is unavailable. Limited visibility may be tolerable during normal operations but costly when schedules change quickly.

None of those conditions necessarily announces itself as a crisis.

That's what makes them easy to carry forward.

Leaders should look for the point where accommodation becomes limitation: when a workaround begins affecting capacity, when missing information delays decisions, when complexity makes the operation harder to scale, or when recurring intervention begins consuming management attention that belongs elsewhere.

That is when friction stops being merely inconvenient and starts becoming a business constraint.

Make the Tradeoffs Visible

Choosing what to address also means choosing what not to address.

That can be uncomfortable.

A longstanding workaround may still work. An aging system may still perform its essential function. A manual process may be inefficient without materially affecting the business.

Those conditions may eventually require attention — but “eventually” does not automatically mean 2027.

Leadership's responsibility is to distinguish between what is old and what is costly, between what is frustrating and what is limiting, and between what would be nice to improve and what the operation genuinely needs to improve.

That distinction protects resources for the changes that matter most.

It also creates a clearer basis for saying ***not yet***.

Deferring an improvement is not the same as ignoring it. When leaders understand its operational impact, they can make a deliberate decision to accept that constraint for another year — and direct limited resources toward something more consequential.

That, too, is prioritization.

Closing Thought

The strongest improvement priorities often begin with a simple leadership decision:

We are no longer willing to operate this way.

Not because a new technology is available.

Not because modernization appears on a strategic plan.

Because the organization has enough evidence to know that a recurring constraint is consuming time, capacity,

resilience, or attention that should be used elsewhere.

That is a business decision first.

Technology may eventually become part of the solution. But choosing the constraint before choosing the solution keeps the conversation anchored where it belongs: in the operation and its results.

As 2027 approaches, don't begin by asking what you want to add.

Begin by deciding what you no longer want to carry.

Finish strong by choosing what 2026 should leave behind. Start stronger by focusing 2027 on the constraints that matter most.

Start the Conversation

- Every successful modernization initiative begins with a shared understanding of where you are today and where you want to go next.
- If your leadership team is evaluating modernization priorities, Anchor Bridge Innovations would welcome the opportunity to start that conversation.