Are You Too Small for Robotics?

Answer These 5 Questions to Find Out

1. ?
2. ?
3. ?
4. ?
5. ?
If you're a small or mid-sized manufacturer, or are facing the challenges of low-volume, high-mix production, you may be wondering if robots are right for you.

But if you’ve resigned yourself to manual production just because you’re not a big national manufacturer, then maybe you’re not asking the right questions. Our short workbook will guide you through the most important considerations for robotics in small and mid-sized manufacturing.

Make Sure You're Asking the Right Questions

1. Do I Need to Automate?
2. What Are My Robot Options?
3. Can I Afford to Automate?
4. What Processes Can I Automate?
5. Are Cobots Right for Me?
Question #1: Do I Need to Automate?

Start by putting aside any pre-existing ideas about the cost or complexity of robotics. Now take an impartial look at whether your business challenges can be addressed by automating manufacturing processes.

If you answered yes to one or more of these issues, then automation is definitely worth considering.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible business challenges:</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competition is stiff and I need new ways to cut costs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I need to improve product quality</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I need to reduce waste—in time, materials, or both</td>
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<tr>
<td>I need more flexibility to adapt to changing product demand</td>
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<tr>
<td>I’m struggling to fill positions for repetitive manual jobs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Temporary workers aren’t reliable or take too much time to learn our processes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Repetitive or dangerous processes are impacting my workers’ health and safety</td>
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<tr>
<td>I need to grow my business without overextending</td>
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</table>
Question #2: What Are My Robot Options?

Robotics for manufacturing typically falls into one of two categories: industrial robots and collaborative robots (or cobots). Check off the elements that most closely meet your needs.

**Industrial Robots**
- I have space for large, fixed equipment
- I need high-volume, high-speed, extremely accurate production
- I need to automate dangerous or high-speed processes that require a safety cage to protect workers
- I don’t need flexibility to change processes or product line automation
- I have programming and integration expertise in-house

**Collaborative Robots**
- I have limited space on my production floor
- My processes and volume requirements can be accomplished at about the same speed as a human worker
- I need to automate processes that take place alongside human workers
- I need flexibility to automate a variety of processes with minimal downtime for changes
- Robot must be easy to teach and use with little or no experience

For many small and mid-sized manufacturers, cobots offer an ideal option.
Question #3: Can I Afford to Automate?

While the upfront cost of both types of robot is similar, what’s below the surface defines how much your total automation solution will cost. Calculate how fast your investment will pay for itself by comparing total annual expenses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Estimated Cost</th>
<th></th>
<th>Estimated Cost</th>
<th></th>
<th>Estimated Cost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Robot</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Cobot</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Manual</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardware cost</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>Hardware Cost</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>Worker Salary</td>
<td>$</td>
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<tr>
<td>3-Phase Power Infrastructure</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>Plugs into 110V Outlet</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration / Programming</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>Free Online Training</td>
<td>$0</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End-of-Arm Tooling</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>End-of-Arm Tooling</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>Downtime</td>
<td>$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fencing &amp; Guarding</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Overtime</td>
<td>$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Light Curtain</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Material Waste</td>
<td>$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Safety Scanner</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Product Scrap</td>
<td>$</td>
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<tr>
<td>Software License</td>
<td>$</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintenance / Repair Services</td>
<td>$</td>
<td>Onsite Maintenance</td>
<td>$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong> Robot Cost</td>
<td>$</td>
<td><strong>Total Cobot Cost</strong></td>
<td>$</td>
<td><strong>Total Manual Labor Cost</strong></td>
<td>$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cobots can automate many different applications. They’re small and lightweight, so they can be easily moved around your shop floor to different processes. They’re easy to program, and you can save programs to reuse.

Cobots are ultra-flexible tools that can perform a similar range of applications as the human arm. But the cobot has a wider range of motion, doesn’t get tired, and can perform dangerous tasks without risk of injury.

Check which processes you could automate:

- Pick and place
- Packaging and palletizing
- Polishing
- Analysis and testing
- Repetitive, manual processes
- Injection molding
- Quality inspection
- Machine tending
- Mounting
- Jobs that don’t need human dexterity, critical thinking, or on-the-spot decisions
- CNC loading/unloading
- Assembly
- Screw-driving
- Gluing and dispensing
- Dangerous or injury-prone jobs

Click here to see cobots in action in a wide range of applications.
Question #5: Are Cobots Right for Me?

I need a robot that...

- Is affordable, with minimal extra costs
- Will fit on my shop floor without bulky safety fencing
- Is easy for existing employees to set up and teach
- Can be quickly moved to new processes or product lines
- Can replace human workers in high-turnover, hard-to-fill positions
- Can fulfill undesirable jobs in today's tight labor market
- Lets me move employees from low- to high-value activities
- Will pay for itself within months—not years
- Will provide savings I can reinvest into new products and channels
- Will support new processes and more advanced applications in the future

Ultimately, the best way to find out if cobots are right for you is to contact a distributor and schedule a demonstration.
Universal Robots was co-founded in 2005 by the company’s CTO, Esben Østergaard, who wanted to make robot technology accessible to all by developing small, user-friendly, reasonably priced, flexible industrial robots that are safe to work with. Since the first robot was launched in 2008, the company has experienced considerable growth with the user-friendly robots now sold in more than 50 countries worldwide. The company, which is a part of Teradyne Inc., is headquartered in Odense, Denmark, and has subsidiaries and regional offices in the USA, Spain, Germany, Italy, Czech Republic, China, Singapore, India, Japan, Taiwan and South Korea. For more information, please visit www.universal-robots.com

You’re Not Too Small for Cobots!

Cobots are an ideal option for small and mid-sized manufacturers of almost any type. Find out more about how you can grow your business, improve productivity and quality, and provide better and safer working conditions for your employees. Contact a distributor to get a Universal Robots cobot demonstration today.

Request a cobot demo

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