Fundamental Characteristics of Industrial Variant Specification Systems

This paper focuses on the operational task of creating customised variants of industrial specifications (e.g. drawings, routings and bill-of-materials). Rooted in a lack of existing literature on the subject the paper describes the nature of variant specification systems. It introduces some fundamental concepts related to this task, which are relevant to understand for academia and practitioners working with the subject. This is done through a description of variant specification tasks and typical aspects of system solutions. To support the description of variant specification tasks and systems a set of situational variables (e.g. frequency of orders [low ↔ high]), a set of functionality variables (e.g. lead time [low ↔ high]) and a set of structure variables (e.g. level of IT-automation [manual ↔ IT-automated]) are proposed. Finally, the presented concepts are illustrated through two examples. In general the paper discusses an important focus area within mass customization and build-to-order production: the nature of industrial variant specification systems.

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