10 questions to ask your ERP vendors during the selection process

Manufacturing

Making the right software selection

To keep up with evolving business practices and constantly changing markets, manufacturers like you need an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system that ideally meets your requirements today—and will continue to do so for years to come.

Whether you've been struggling with spreadsheets and manual systems, or getting by with an outdated ERP, modernizing is more important now than ever. Taking the time to make the right decisions will pay off. A modern ERP will lower your risk of bottlenecks and system slowdowns, as well as deter your employees from attempting workarounds and continually needing IT support for basics, like reports.

Choosing the appropriate solution requires research. Whether you're launching a new business unit, upgrading your current ERP, or planning a hybrid approach, your solution must match your manufacturing industry-specific needs as well as your enterprise requirements.

Deployment methods must be considered, too. On-premises solutions often take longer to implement than cloud-based solutions.

Multi-tenant cloud deployment, on the other hand, can provide the greatest value as costs are shared among others.

Here are some questions you can ask ERP vendors as you gather facts about the solutions under consideration, along with tips for what you should look for:

1. **How quickly can my business be up and running on your software?**
   Multi-tenant (MT) cloud solutions are typically the fastest to deploy since you can take advantage of workflows, reporting forms, and processes that are already built in. MT cloud solutions can typically be deployed in weeks. Be sure to ask about tools that will help you accelerate the migration of your existing data to the new solution.

2. **How can I configure my business's unique needs without heavy reliance on coding and customizing the software?**
   Be sure your solution has extensibility built-in, allowing you to personalize screens and forms, without requiring modifications that will hinder future upgrades.

3. **What features and capabilities can we access via mobile devices?**
   Deskless workers and remote employees are probably a large portion of your workforce. Insist on a solution that's responsive to the device being used and can support shop floor as well as field access of critical data—without sacrificing security.

4. **How does the system architecture integrate with third-party applications?**
   Flexibility is critical today. You may have legacy solutions you want to continue to access. Perhaps you plan to use specialized third-party applications. Be sure the ERP you select has architecture that easily integrates with other solutions.

5. **How does your software enable seamless collaboration between internal and external stakeholders?**
   Partnerships with external stakeholders are important for product innovation and engineer-to-order products. Make sure appropriate safeguards are in place for collaborative communication—while protecting intellectual property and security.

6. **What services are available to support implementation and deployment?**
   Timely, stress-free deployment requires professionals who are experts in the process. Change management programs and training for your workforce will also help support a smooth transition. Ask about implementation accelerators that will help migrate data, too.

7. **How will the artificial intelligence (AI) capabilities you provide help my operations?**
   For AI to be effective, you need the ability to capture large volumes of data, along with access to a data lake in the cloud for storage. You also need reporting tools that are easy to use. Look for low-code and no-code options for creating custom reporting.

8. **What industry-specific capabilities does your software provide?**
   The manufacturing industry has specialized terms and processes, unique ways of measuring success, and very distinct testing/compliance requirements. Be sure to select a solution that accommodates these unique features—without requiring modifications that will complicate future upgrades.

9. **How will your cloud platform keep my data safe?**
   Security is a complex and important issue. When you work with premier names in cloud hosting and security, you can be confident in your day-to-day security as well as backups.

10. **Which industry-specific security standards do you comply with?**
    This is the time to delve into the details of the ERP you're considering. Ask the difficult questions about security standards and refrain from compromising on this topic.

Do you have more questions about modern ERP solutions and the value of cloud deployment? Visit **Infor.com** to learn more about cloud platforms and solutions tailored for specific industries.

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