



What to look for in a modern ERP platform

To stay competitive, SME manufacturers need Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software. A modern ERP improves all your processes, from purchasing and production to sales and customer management. This guide helps you understand what functionalities you need to run a successful business. This requires a clear methodical approach with clear goals and actions.

Core capabilities of an ERP system

Many manufacturers struggle with legacy software that holds the business back because different systems cannot talk to each other. Your ERP can fix this by connecting your entire operation.

The software should:

- **Link your departments:** Transfer information automatically between teams without manual data entry.
- **Update in real time:** Ensure everyone works from the exact same live information, eliminating the need to double-check figures by phone or email.
- **Be easy to use:** Simple interfaces mean staff adapt to the software quickly rather than resisting it.

Warning signs of an outdated system

If your current software suffers from any of the following, it is likely time for an upgrade:

- **Information delays:** Siloed data that forces you to rely on past figures rather than live updates.
- **Too much paperwork:** Staff spending time on manual tasks that could easily be automated.
- **Poor connectivity:** Difficulty linking your internal systems with external suppliers or partners.
- **Low staff adoption:** Employees avoiding the system because it is frustrating or overcomplicated.

The benefits of a cloud-based system

For small and medium-sized manufacturers, hosting your ERP in the cloud offers several practical advantages:

- **Lower IT overheads:** Reduces the need for expensive in-house servers and dedicated IT maintenance teams.
- **Stronger security:** Built-in compliance and protection for sensitive commercial data
- **Remote access:** Staff can log in securely from laptops, tablets, or smartphones, whether on the shop floor, at home, or visiting clients.
- **Automatic updates:** The software stays up to date with the latest features without disrupting your daily operations.

Centralised and integrated modules are also a plus because they allow you to:

- Automate and streamline processes.
- Standardise business operations.
- Provide transparency and insights for better decision-making.
- Make production more efficient
- Access accurate real-time data.
- Achieve cost-efficient and just-in-time inventory management.
- Resolve bottlenecks and increase efficiency.
- Improve on-time deliveries.

ERP database

A central database in which all modules share and communicate data is the core of ERP. This ensures that everyone works with the same up-to-date information, without manual verification via phone or email.

Essential modules for manufacturers

Your business has specific demands, meaning you need a system that adapts to your workflow without requiring expensive, bespoke coding. Look for a solution that includes these core functions:

Production scheduling and shop floor control:

Visual tools to help you manage machine capacity, track work-in-progress, monitor downtime, and prioritise jobs on the fly.

Material Requirements Planning (MRP):

Tools for demand forecasting, managing bills of materials (BOMs), calculating lead times, and keeping inventory lean.

Quote-to-cash

Tracks the entire customer journey from the initial quote through to order fulfillment, invoicing, and payment collection.

Warehouse and stock management

Tracks stock levels, work orders, and raw materials across multiple sites to prevent shortages and reduce storage costs.

Integrated finance

Combines your general ledger, payroll, assets, and accounts payable/receivable into the main platform for straightforward financial reporting.

Quality control

Automates inspections, tracks defects, and helps you maintain industry compliance standards.

CRM and sales tracking

Keeps customer details, communication history, and marketing campaigns in one place to help improve service and retention.

Product configurator

Allows sales or production teams to easily customise product specifications based on specific customer orders.

Project management

Helps plan, execute, and track long-term projects, ensuring resources are allocated efficiently.

Finding the right software partner

The company supplying your ERP is just as important as the software itself. Look for a partner who:

- Understands your specific manufacturing processes and business goals.
- Has a proven track record working with machine shops or production lines.
- Offers practical advice on industry trends and process improvements, rather than just selling software licences.

**Do you have any questions about the issues covered in this guide?
Get in touch with us today.**

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