Buyer's Questionnaire

Choosing the Right ERP for Manufacturers Selling Direct-to-Consumer

As manufacturers expand into Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) channels, many discover their systems can't keep up. Orders outpace manual workflows, inventory data becomes unreliable, and customer satisfaction suffers as a result. For most, the breaking point is realizing that their ERP and online store don't communicate—prompting the search for a unified solution that connects production, financials, and eCommerce in real-time.

Use this questionnaire to evaluate ERP solutions through the eyes of your business's operational and technical teams.

Manufacturing & Production Management

Why it matters: D2C manufacturers need ERP systems that bridge the gap between online sales and the production floor.

Questions to ask:

- Does the ERP include Material Requirements Planning (MRP) and Bill of Materials (BOM) functionality?
- Can it link online orders directly to production schedules?
- Does it track raw materials, work-in-progress, and finished goods in real time?
- Are production, purchasing, and inventory data integrated to avoid shortages or overproduction?
- Can the ERP manage both make-to-order and make-to-stock workflows?

Look for: Automated scheduling, production cost tracking, and supply chain visibility that aligns sales with manufacturing capacity.

Inventory & Order Management

Why it matters: Visibility across sales channels prevents overselling, stockouts, and costly fulfillment errors.

Questions to ask:

- Can the ERP display a single version of the truth for inventory across all channels?
- Does it support lot or serial tracking for traceability?
- Can it automatically allocate inventory to incoming orders based on priority or channel?
- How does it handle returns and restocking across D2C and B2B sales?
- Are real-time dashboards available for order status and fulfillment metrics?

Look for: Centralized stock control, configurable order routing, and low-stock alerts that help avoid overselling.

Financial Management & Reporting

Why it matters: As your company grows, processes become more complex. Without integrated financials and reporting, profitability and compliance suffer.

Questions to ask:

- Does the ERP include multi-currency and multi-entity accounting for global operations?
- Can you consolidate financials automatically across channels and subsidiaries?
- Are sales, production, and finance data unified in a single ledger?
- Does the system support real-time dashboards for profitability, cost analysis, and cash flow?
- How does it handle landed cost tracking and tax automation across multiple jurisdictions?

Look for: Consolidated financial visibility and automation of revenue recognition, inventory valuation, and period-end closing.

Scalability & Flexibility

Why it matters: What works at 50 orders a day can break at 500. Choose an ERP that can grow with your business.

Questions to ask:

- Is the ERP cloud-based with modular features that can scale as you add products, channels, or locations?
- Does it integrate easily with third-party logistics (3PLs), CRM, inventory management, and marketing platforms?
- Can you configure workflows without heavy custom coding?
- What's the vendor's roadmap for AI, analytics, and automation features?
- Are performance benchmarks available for high-volume D2C environments?

Look for: Proven scalability, API extensibility, and upgrade paths that don't require costly re-implementation.

User Experience & Accessibility

Why it matters: ERP success depends on adoption across departments—from finance to fulfillment.

Questions to ask:

- Is the interface intuitive and accessible on desktop, tablet, and mobile?
- Can different users (finance, operations, IT, production) access role-based dashboards and permissions?
- How steep is the learning curve for new users?
- Are training and support resources included in licensing and implementation, or are they billed separately?

Look for: Clean UI, workflow automation, and embedded help tools that encourage consistent use.

eCommerce Integration Capabilities

Why it matters: Integration between your ERP and online platforms is the foundation of modern manufacturing-to-consumer operations. Without it, you'll face errors due to manual entry, delayed fulfillment, and lost sales.

Questions to ask ERP Vendors:

- Does the ERP offer native or certified connectors for popular platforms?
- Is data synchronization real-time and bi-directional (orders, inventory, pricing, and customer data)?
- Can the system manage multi-storefront and multi-channel sales in one interface, or are separate interfaces required for each?
- Does integration extend to shipping, fulfillment, and returns workflows?
- Is the eCommerce connector maintained by the ERP vendor or a third-party tool?

Look for: Automatic order import into your financials, real-time inventory stock updates, and a unified view of inventory across all sales channels.

Implementation, Support, & Vendor Reliability

Why it matters: Even the best software can fail without strong implementation and support.

Questions to ask:

- Does the vendor (or partner) have experience with D2C manufacturers specifically?
- What's the average implementation timeline for companies my size?
- Are data migration and integration testing included?
- What level of post-go-live support is provided—standard, premium, or dedicated?
- Can they share reference clients or case studies in similar industries?

Look for: Vendors with proven expertise in manufacturing and eCommerce integration, not just general ERP deployments.

Cost, ROI, & Total Value

Why it matters: ERP is a strategic investment that should reduce manual work, errors, and operational costs.

Questions to ask ERP Vendors:

- What's the true total cost of ownership (TCO) for software, implementation, connectors, maintenance, and user training?
- What tangible ROI can similar manufacturers demonstrate, such as time saved, order accuracy, and faster fulfillment?
- Does the vendor offer transparent pricing for integrations and upgrades?
- Can you scale users and modules gradually without penalty?

Look for: Systems that deliver measurable efficiency gains and lower the cost per order through automation.

5 Red Flags to Avoid

1. **Generic ERPs** that claim to "support eCommerce" but require custom code for platforms like Shopify, BigCommerce, or Magento.

2. **Add-on chaos** that can occur when integrations rely on fragile third-party plug-ins.

3. **Accounting-only platforms** marketed as ERP.

4. **Heavy customization is required** before go-live, making upgrades painful.

5. **Decisions made by one department** without cross-functional input.

Next Steps

- Use this checklist in your vendor evaluations or RFP process.

- Request demos that mirror your actual workflows:

  (Shopify order > ERP > production > fulfillment > accounting).

- Prioritize systems proven in manufacturing and D2C integration, not just generic retail.

Ready to find your fit?

Download the **D2C Manufacturer's ERP Evaluation Template** to review with your short-listed vendors.

Download Template