

AI-Ready ERP Buyer's Guide



Buying ERP in the AI Era

Buying ERP has always been a big decision. It is a long-term investment that touches nearly every part of a manufacturing business: scheduling, inventory, labor, quality, accounting, customer service and the shop floor.

Now manufacturers have another question to ask: **Will this ERP system support AI in a useful, practical way?**

AI-ready ERP starts with the system already running your business. To deliver value, AI needs access to the way your shop quotes jobs, schedules production, manages inventory, tracks labor, ships orders and accrues cost. That information lives in ERP.

This guide helps manufacturers evaluate ERP through an AI-ready lens. Use it to define the problems ERP needs to solve, review the data and workflows AI will need, compare automation and visibility features and ask better vendor questions before making a long-term ERP decision.



1. Define What You Want ERP to Improve

Before comparing vendors, get clear on your biggest business problems: Do you need to get parts through the shop faster? Improve on-time delivery? Understand job costs? Get inventory under control? Reduce paper? See real-time KPIs?

AI can only help if it is pointed at real shop floor problems. If your team is buried in manual data entry, disconnected spreadsheets or reports that take too long to build, those are strong areas to evaluate for automation and AI support.

Questions to Ask Internally

- Where do we lose the most time?
- Which decisions are hardest to make with our current data?
- What still depends on paper, spreadsheets or tribal knowledge?
- Which reports or dashboards would help us act faster?
- What manual tasks could AI or automation reduce?

AI-READY ERP WORKS BEST WHEN IT SOLVES REAL MANUFACTURING PROBLEMS.



2. Look for Clean, Connected Data

Every useful AI answer starts with the information your ERP captures across the shop. That data comes from quotes, jobs, routings, bills of material, labor, inventory, purchasing, quality, shipping and financials. When that information lives in separate systems, spreadsheets or paper processes, AI has very little context.

Buyers should look for ERP that connects departments through one source of truth. Shop floor activity should update job status and costs. Inventory should update as materials move. Quality records should connect to jobs, materials and operations. Financials should reflect what is happening in production.

What to Look For

- Real-time shop floor data collection
- Connected inventory, production, quality and accounting
- Accurate job costing
- Centralized reporting
- Drill-down access to source records
- Fewer duplicate entries and manual updates

Vendor Questions

- How does your ERP keep data connected across departments?
- Can users drill from reports into jobs, purchase orders or records?
- Does AI use live ERP data or exported reports?
- How is data accuracy maintained after go-live?

3. Evaluate Automation That Removes Manual Work

Every time someone rekeys data, searches for paperwork, updates a spreadsheet or waits on a manual approval, the business loses time. Buyers should look for ERP that can automate, route and track repetitive work inside the same system where the work already happens.

Automation should support work orders, inventory updates, shop floor labor, production reporting, document processing, approvals and dashboards. Global Shop Solutions Genii AI tools use ERP data, workflows and logic to automate data entry, capture action items, build dashboards and help users find answers faster.

What to Look For

- Automated data entry and cleaning
- Workflow and approval automation
- AI-supported document processing
- Dashboard and report creation
- Task assignment and follow-up
- Tools that live inside ERP

Vendor Questions

- Which manual tasks can the system automate?
- Can automation be built around our workflows?
- Can users create dashboards or reports without starting from scratch?
- Are AI tools part of ERP or handled through a separate platform?

THE BEST AI REMOVES REPETITIVE WORK THAT SLOWS PEOPLE DOWN.

4. Demand Real-Time Visibility

You need to know what is happening now, not next week or next month when someone finishes a report. ERP buyers should evaluate whether each ERP system gives leaders, supervisors and operators real-time visibility into late jobs, material shortages, labor performance, WIP, inventory, quality issues, machine utilization, job profitability and shipping activity.

AI-ready visibility should go beyond static reporting. Users should be able to ask questions, drill into source records, monitor exceptions and see what needs attention before small issues become bigger problems.

Vendor Questions

- Can dashboards be tailored by role or department?
- Can users ask questions and drill into the source record?
- Can the system flag risks, outliers or unassigned work?
- Can reports be automated or scheduled?
- Can users see current shop floor activity without waiting on manual updates?

GOOD REPORTING SHOWS WHAT HAPPENED. AI-READY ERP HELPS TEAMS SEE WHAT NEEDS ATTENTION NEXT.

5. Build the Right Buying Team

ERP selection should not happen in a vacuum.

Your buying team, or ERP taskforce, should include the people who understand how work really gets done: operations, accounting, production, inventory, purchasing, quality, sales, IT and leadership. That team helps set goals, evaluate providers, plan implementation, communicate benefits, schedule training and hold people accountable.

For AI-ready ERP, this taskforce should also evaluate how each system supports data quality, future automation, dashboards, AI tools and practical use across departments.

Team Questions

- Who owns the ERP evaluation?
- Which departments need a voice?
- Who understands current workarounds?
- Who will own data cleanup?
- Who will evaluate AI and automation capabilities?
- Who will help train users after go-live?



6. Use an AI-Ready ERP Scorecard

When evaluating AI-ready ERP, buyers need a consistent way to compare vendors. The system should have the manufacturing depth to run the business, the connected data AI needs and the built-in tools to automate work, surface risks and help users find answers faster.

How to Score Each Vendor

During your evaluation, use the following 1–5 scale to rate each vendor in the categories on the next page.

1 = Not available. The vendor does not offer this capability, or it would require major customization or a third-party workaround.


2 = Limited. The capability exists, but it is basic, hard to use or disconnected from core ERP data.

3 = Adequate. The capability meets standard needs, but may require extra setup, manual effort or additional tools.

4 = Strong. The capability is built into the ERP system, easy to use and supports daily manufacturing workflows.

5 = Excellent. The capability is fully integrated, manufacturing-specific, easy for users to apply and supports AI-ready automation, visibility or decision-making.

Grade Each Vendor

CATEGORY	SCORE
Manufacturing-Specific ERP Functionality	
AI Tools Built Inside ERP	
Real-Time Shop Floor Visibility	
Inventory and Job Costing Accuracy	
Quality and Traceability	
Automated Workflows	
Clean and Connected Data	
Plain-Language ERP Search	
Risk and Outlier Monitoring	
Dashboard/Report Creation	
Implementation and Training Support	
	TOTAL 

Add up each vendor's total score. The highest score does not automatically mean the best fit, but it should help you see which ERP systems are truly built to support AI-ready manufacturing.

For a more in-depth evaluation roadmap, use [The Ultimate Guide to Buying ERP Software](#) as a companion resource.

Choose ERP Built for the AI Era

The best AI-ready ERP choice is the one that helps your team solve today's shop floor problems while preparing for the way manufacturing work is changing.

Use the questions in this guide to compare vendors with the same criteria.

- What problems do you need ERP to solve?
- Does the ERP vendor use AI to clean and connect your data?
- Can the system reduce manual work?
- Will your team have real-time visibility?
- Do the right people have a voice in the buying process?
- Can each vendor support AI inside real manufacturing workflows?

Strong answers point to a stronger ERP foundation: reliable data, connected workflows, practical automation, clear reporting and AI tools that work inside the system your team uses every day.

Global Shop Solutions brings those pieces together with ERP software built specifically for manufacturers and Genii AI tools that use ERP data, workflows and logic to help teams work faster, spot issues earlier and make better decisions.



Ready to Evaluate AI-Ready ERP?

[Schedule a demo](#) with Global Shop Solutions to see how ERP and [Genii AI](#) can help simplify your manufacturing.

