

A worker in a yellow hard hat and safety vest is using a tablet in a factory setting. The background shows industrial machinery and a blue geometric overlay on the left side of the image.

Manufacturing Software Buyer's Guide

A Complete Guide to Top Software
for Manufacturers

Brought to you by:

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What Is Manufacturing Software?

“Manufacturing software” is an umbrella term for any software that streamlines procurement, production, and distribution processes. Some manufacturing solutions are designed for specific production types, like discrete or process manufacturing, while others include specialized features for industries like food and beverage, industrial machinery, automotive, and rubbers and plastics.

Investing in manufacturing software helps manufacturers...

Improve...

- Operational efficiency
- Business insights
- Inventory accuracy

Reduce...

- Waste
- Manual work
- Overspending

Manage...

- Production scaling
- Customer acquisition
- Sales and distribution

Types of Manufacturing Solutions

Manufacturing solutions vary based on features, intended users, and many other qualities. The most popular manufacturing solutions can be broken down into six categories:

Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)

ERP software integrates inventory, production, purchasing and finance. Many modern ERPs also include MRP and supply chain capabilities to simplify your tech stack.

Common Features:

- Inventory management
- Quality control
- Supply chain management
- Finance management
- Sales and order management

Top Solutions:

- Acumatica Manufacturing Edition
- Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central
- Oracle NetSuite

Manufacturing Execution System (MES)

MES solutions are specialized platforms that track and manage the production process as raw materials are converted into finished goods. These solutions monitor multiple production lines at once to ensure optimal operations, which frees up time for production managers to focus on other responsibilities.

Common Features:

- Process management
- Quality control
- Product and part tracking
- Resource management
- Labor and personnel management

Top Solutions:

- MasterControl Manufacturing Excellence
- Epicor Kinetic
- AMFG





Material Requirements Planning (MRP)

An MRP is a manufacturing planning solution that automatically sources and procures raw materials for production. MRPs reference historical data to forecast future demand and place vendor orders, ensuring production schedules are maintained and delivery deadlines are met.

Common Features:

- Purchase planning
- Master production scheduling
- Demand forecasting
- Bill of materials management
- Inventory management

Top Solutions:

- Oracle Netsuite
- Odoo Inventory
- Fishbowl Inventory

Supply Chain Management (SCM)

SCM software manages the flow of resources from procurement to distribution. These solutions analyze past production data to forecast future production needs and are designed to adapt as vendor offerings and pricing fluctuate, helping materials move efficiently and reliably through every stage of the supply chain.

Common Features:

- Inventory management
- Demand forecasting
- Warehouse management
- Production management
- Logistics management

Top Solutions:

- Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central
- Oracle NetSuite
- Odoo



Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

CRM solutions are customer-focused platforms to manage sales, marketing, and customer service. While these solutions are not inherently manufacturing platforms, they round out production capabilities with dedicated tools to ensure that finished products meet—or exceed—customer expectations.

Common Features:

- Pipeline management
- Lead tracking
- Multi-channel marketing automation
- Email automation
- Case management

Top Solutions:

- Microsoft Dynamics 365 CRM
- HubSpot CRM
- Salesforce CRM

Accounting for Manufacturing

Accounting software for manufacturing handles inventory and regulatory compliance while managing quotes, budgets, and other key financial data. These solutions cut down on manual data entry to reduce errors and save time for accountants and other finance team members.

Common Features:

- GL, AP, and AR management
- Multi-currency and multi-location accounting
- Inventory management
- Cost control
- Automated invoicing

Top Solutions:

- Sage 50 Cloud
- Xero Accounting
- Intuit QuickBooks



Picking the Right Manufacturing Software

So which manufacturing solution—or solutions—does your business need? Even with the features and capabilities laid out in front of you, it can be difficult to pinpoint what's needed to address your exact needs.

Step 01: Identifying Pain Points

The first step to picking the right manufacturing software is identifying bottlenecks and pain points within your current processes. Your new software should directly address these factors to encourage business growth.

Common pain points include...

- Limited or disorganized historical data
- Frequent stockouts or overstocking
- Increasing manual labor requirements
- Disconnected software integrations
- Low customer satisfaction

Step 02: Determining Blind Spots

Once you've pinpointed your top pain points, consider growth inhibitors that may not be as obvious. These are your blind spots, and your new software should address these alongside your pain points.

Common blind spots include...

- Visibility into future demand
- Understanding of customer satisfaction
- Comparison of vendor pricing
- Insights into product quality and compliance
- Access to real-time business data

Step 03: Picking a Solution Type

With your list of pain points and blind spots in hand, it's time to figure out which solution or solutions your manufacturing company needs. With so many software options available for manufacturers, it may seem beneficial to look for one solution that suits most of an organization's needs. While one solution can bring a slew of benefits, manufacturing software performs best when multiple systems are used in tandem to streamline all the factors that influence production. One of the most comprehensive combinations is an integrated tech stack with an ERP, MES, and MRP.





Step 04: Comparing Software Options

This step is where the distinctions between solutions begin to blur. For instance, every SCM will offer inventory and production management features—so how do you pick the best fit? Instead of scrutinizing the features available in each manufacturing solution, you should focus on the differentiators that are most meaningful to your business, such as:

- **Industry Functionality:** What unique features or regulations should the software include?
- **Existing Software:** What tools do you already use that this new software should integrate with?
- **Customization Needs:** Will you be fine with out-of-the-box features, or do you require extensive tailoring?
- **Budget:** What is a comfortable range for your monthly subscription cost?

Step 05: Connecting with a Software Partner

Once you've found a few solutions that could resolve your pain points and blind spots, it's time to connect with an experienced manufacturing software partner. They'll ensure that your selections are truly the best fit for your organization and assist with implementation, customization, and ongoing software support.

When looking for a manufacturing implementation partner, run through the following questions to ensure you're making the best long-term decision:

- Does this partner listen to and understand our unique business needs?
- Does this partner have a high success rate of manufacturing software implementations?
- Does this partner have concrete examples of customer success stories?
- Does this partner offer fair, competitive pricing for our basic and advanced software needs?
- Does this partner offer long-term, personalized support?
- Will this partner be there for me whenever I need them?

How Much Does Manufacturing Software Cost?

Every manufacturing solution is priced differently, with individual providers offering different licensing tiers based on prepackaged features. Estimating your expected manufacturing software cost becomes more complicated when you add in other considerations like user count, add-on features, customizations, and integrations.

Typically, manufacturing software is priced per user and follow a SaaS, or “software as a service,” model. SaaS subscriptions are paid monthly, though some software providers offer a discount for companies that make annual payments instead.

If you want more details on pricing, including a cost estimate for manufacturing ERPs like Acumatica and Business Central, check out our calculators by visiting <https://cargas.com/software/acumatica/pricing>



Next Steps

If you're evaluating manufacturing software, don't go at it alone.

For over 35 years, Cargas has helped manufacturers successfully implement ERP, CRM, and accounting systems — with a 99% implementation success rate.

Our team specializes in:

- 1 Manufacturing ERP strategy
- 2 System integration and customization
- 3 Long-term support and optimization
- 4 Third-party manufacturing integrations
- 5 We don't just implement software — we build long-term technology partnerships.

Schedule Your Free Manufacturing Software Consultation Today.

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