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Buying Guide: Operations Management Software

How to purchase CMMS and EAM Tools

In the past, it used to just be about finding a solid Computerized Maintenance Management System (CMMS). Now, to create truly automated maintenance and operations, you must think about the larger organization and how all your systems work together in an automated ecosystem. The only solution that matches this flexibility is SaaS. But the transition can put a strain on your resources and disrupt your day-to-day.

Your transition to SaaS can be smooth, secure and cost-efficient every step of the way. To ensure you're considering all your options and looking forward to a more cost-effective future, we've compiled a list of the questions you should ask as you're evaluating your software options.

6 questions to ask when purchasing maintenance software:

1. Which companies offer the full range of software solutions?
2. What capabilities does the software have?
3. What is the real cost?
4. What is the implementation process?
5. What kind of support are you getting?
6. How forward-focused and credible is the company?

1. Which companies offer the full range of software solutions?

Start your search by finding companies that offer the holistic software solution you need. If you're an operations manager, this might mean consulting with others in your organization to find out their requirements and needs. An integrated solution from one vendor can often save a company a great deal of time and money. While it may seem this could slow you down, the long-term time savings may make it worth it. Plus, showing your executives that you're thinking about the business more globally is a great career move.

CMMS systems are designed to manage a single location or provide limited multi-site support, while Enterprise Management Systems (EAM) systems offer comprehensive features for managing multiple sites and businesses. An EAM system allows operators to see the full picture of their assets and make smarter data-driven decisions about repair, longevity and life cycle.

Comparatively, a CMMS only tracks an asset after it's been purchased and installed. Selecting a full range of software solutions with the right partner puts you in control of your asset management — and gives you all the analytics needed to make informed decisions across your organization.

Why this matters to executives

Combining CMMS and EAM creates long-term cost savings and provides the numbers needed to plan ahead and stretch budget dollars with more viable operational assets.

2. What capabilities does the software have?

There are a number of different CMMS and EAM software providers out there, but they can vary wildly in their capabilities. You want to look for a provider that your team, department and organization can grow alongside..

An all-in-one solution is always better than a one-off option. Ask your provider if the software has functionality around not just maintenance management but also:

- Enterprise asset management
- Inventory tracking
- Capital Planning
- Compliance and safety documentation and protocols
- Extensive analytics and reporting
- Energy management
- Event management

Both EAM and CMMS are used to optimize asset, maintenance, work order and inventory management through software and the cloud. The difference is that an EAM system looks more holistically at asset management across an organization.

In addition to maintenance, work order and inventory tasks, EAM systems also manage:

- Asset register and data collection
- Inspections and survey data
- Contract management
- Asset valuation

If you find a full-range software system that can expand as your business and efficiencies do, then you will benefit from having one system of record and intelligence to guide your operations. This also makes the learning curve much easier for your team since you can add to your current system.

3. What is the real cost?

When purchasing software, there are sometime hidden costs associated with your choices that vendors won't always disclose upfront. Keep asking questions and understanding the costs, and you'll end up with a solution that really meets your organization's needs and fits your budget.

Cloud vs on-premises

Cloud-based software is hosted on the vendor's servers, whereas on-premises software is installed on your servers. There's no upfront hardware cost for cloud-based, the maintenance costs are minimal and it's easy to scale up and down. This option comes with a monthly or annual fee that is often higher than that of an on-premises solution, but overall, cloud-based solutions are easier to get up and running and often cost less in the long run.

On-premises software has no or low monthly fees, but it typically comes with higher costs upfront. You also have more local control, but that requires an IT professional to manage which means additional expenses.

Implementation

The success of any software purchase depends heavily on implementing it correctly. On-premises software often requires specialized technical expertise during set up while a cloud-based solution requires little to none. This can drastically reduce the time spent on implementation and dollars spent.

The main difference between cloud and on-premises software is in the implementation process. With cloud, maintenance software data is stored in the vendor's data center and accessible through the internet. On-premises software is installed on the company's server, which is only accessible on-site.

Staff costs and training

Will you need additional skilled people to run the software? Will you need to send your staff to training sessions? Is there an additional cost for training? Service providers often charge you based on the number of users of the software. This means you will need to calculate how many users — both current and future — to estimate these costs.

With this in mind, cloud-based solutions can be an excellent choice as they eliminate the need for on-site servers and prevent you from spending money on IT support and maintenance.

Upgrades and support

Will you need to pay for future software upgrades? Do you have to pay extra for a dedicated support person or team? Some systems require you to store all your facility and asset information on on-site servers. These so-called "desktop" solutions come with unpredictable expenses.

First, you have to shell out funds to buy the necessary servers and devices. Additionally, you will encounter costs to power and maintain essential hardware. This means you have to tackle IT updates, upgrades, repairs and replacements all on your own, which can pile on unforeseen expenses. You'll also be responsible for on-premise data security, whereas a software provider takes responsibility for the security of cloud-based solutions.

Why this matters to executives

With a CMMS, organizations can expect:

- **35-40%** improvement in the reliability of your equipment
- **28.3%** increase in productivity
- **20.1%** reduction in equipment downtime

4. What is the implementation process?

Once a team decides to adopt a solution, it's time to tackle the implementation process. While desktop software systems can often take some time and considerable effort to get up and running, cloud-based systems can be substantially easier and less time consuming to implement.

Consider the steps you need to take when setting up and maintaining an on-site (or on-premise) system:

- You have to either wait for the software license and/or download installation files from their website.
- You need to verify that the software is compatible with your computer, operating system and network.
- You may need the assistance of your IT staff.
- If your computer gets updated, you may no longer be compatible with the software.
- Access to the software is limited to that specific computer.
- If the vendor makes an update, you have to perform upgrades yourself — which leads right back to the original chores. You are rarely on the latest version, and it's difficult to manually keep up.

Questions to ask your software provider:

- How long does a typical implementation take?
- How many clients have they successfully implemented?
- Do they have a documented process for implementation?

Knowing this upfront can help you feel secure in your vendor's ability to prioritize your success and ensure you have a smooth implementation.

5. What kind of support will you receive?

When you're depending on a software system to store all of your operation's data and daily work, you need reliable, knowledgeable professionals providing you support. If something were to go awry or you just need to learn something new, you want to know that you can reach your service provider for backup as soon as possible to ensure minimal downtime.

It is very important to assess the support services offered by each software company you are investigating. Given that a new software will be uncharted territory for your staff, you should look for a service provider that will train your team, guaranteeing that your organization has a handle on all of the functions available through your new system.

Each CMMS/EAM service provider offers a different way of getting support — some have online tutorials (which can be useful, but limit the ability of your staff to ask questions and cannot present multiple ways to learn a task), others send representatives to your facilities to walk you through these tools in person (highly effective but time-consuming).

A good option can be online interactive training, as these sessions can be slotted into a free hour instead of monopolizing an entire workday.

After you've learned the ropes of your new software solution, you may still run into bumps down the road. If you have problems or questions, you should be able to contact your service provider in a convenient manner — whether that be by phone, through email or via chat.

Why good customer support matters

Research shows that **workplace stress** due to factors such as lack of training and organizational support leads to an **increase of almost 50% in voluntary turnover.**[1]

6. How forward-focused and credible is the company?

You need to evaluate your proposed software provider to make sure they are a safe bet. When you're looking to put your workflow and operations data into the hands of a third party, you want to be sure that the company is trustworthy and dependable.

You should look for a company that is:

- → Established and knowledgeable in the industry with a long-standing market presence
- → Innovative and always improving their products
- → Trustworthy with many good reviews and client success stories
- → Focused on your organization's success

It's important that a company is growing and moving into full enterprise asset management. This is a more future-proofed way to manage physical assets by understanding the full lifecycle of each asset within your operational ecosystem. When paired with strategic asset management software, you get to see the full asset lifecycle come to life.

Overall, strategic asset management software helps:

- → Stretch asset lifecycle by understanding age, condition and longevity
- → Predict asset breakdowns and needs sooner with data and analytics on the full lifecycle
- → Provide data for better capital planning, so it's easier to predict needs and allocate resources

When operators have more data on their asset inventory, state, history and predicted failures, they can make better, quicker decisions that lead to higher asset performance.

Lastly, the company you choose for your operation's asset management needs to prioritize data security. The benefits of the cloud are abundant — as long as the system is protected. Service providers should make regular updates to their software and incorporate new features that will keep your organization's information safe, and back up your data so nothing disappears.

By pairing with a provider that stays on top of data security, you can adopt a CMMS that is both effective and safe.

Learn more about our data security practices →

Why this matters to executives

Choosing a software partner that will support you into the future means fewer costly vendor switches and time-consuming business interruptions. Looking to the future protects your business for the long term.

Choosing the right partner is essential for long-term success.

At Brightly Software, a Siemens company, we are dedicated to supporting your organization's journey with innovative solutions that empower smarter decision-making, improve compliance, and enhance operational efficiency.

With our award-winning, cloud-based applications and industry-leading expertise, we make your transition to enterprise asset management seamless, secure, and cost-effective at every step.

Our 25 years of data insights can unlock the full potential of your asset management & operations analytics, helping you make faster, more informed decisions that meet your short- and long-term goals.

Whether you're exploring a specific solution or learning more about life as a Brightly client, we're here to be your trusted partner. Let's work together to build smarter assets and sustainable communities for today and tomorrow.

About Brightly Software

Brightly Software, a Siemens company, enables organizations to manage the entire lifecycle of their assets, facilities and infrastructure. As the global leader in intelligent asset management solutions for more than 25 years, Brightly's sophisticated cloud-based platform is expertly designed to improve capital planning through smarter, data-driven decision making, empower technicians to predict, prioritize and manage preventative maintenance activities, and support organizations to achieve sustainability, compliance and efficiency goals. Combined with award-winning training, legendary support and managed services, more than 12,000 clients worldwide depend on Brightly to optimize their teams, operations and strategic planning initiatives. For more information, visit brightlysoftware.com

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