How Do I Evaluate PIM Solutions?

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Initiatives: Data Management Solutions

Digital commerce is driving organizations to optimize the creation, maintenance and publishing of product information. PIM solutions enable organizations to create a single system of record for all customer-facing product content. This research provides best practices for selecting the right PIM.

Quick Answer

How do I evaluate PIM (product information management) solutions?

- Identify PIM solution vendors
- Validate solutions that will fit your business requirements
- Evaluate candidate solutions using best practices
- Negotiate with vendors

More Detail

How to Evaluate PIM (Product Information Management) Solutions

Packaged PIM solutions provide product, commerce and marketing teams with the ability to create and maintain an approved shareable version of rich product content. PIM makes available a single, trusted source of product information for the purposes of multichannel commerce and data exchange. Both B2C and B2B organizations across multiple vertical markets and product categories can benefit from the introduction of a PIM. Business benefits include faster time to market, improved data quality, reduced costs and enhanced customer experiences.
## The PIM Evaluation Process

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<th>Identify</th>
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<td>Research vendors and their solutions.</td>
<td>Contact vendors.</td>
<td>Prepare for a “proof of concept” (POC).</td>
<td>Conduct commercial due diligence.</td>
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<td>Does the vendor have customers in your industry or similar?</td>
<td>Request a high-level solution demonstration.</td>
<td>Prepare a representative data set and 5-8 business use cases.</td>
<td>Contact vendor customer references</td>
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<td>Does the vendor have satisfactory geographic coverage?</td>
<td>Does the solution meet your business requirements?</td>
<td>Request that the vendor configure its solution for your data set and use cases.</td>
<td>Evaluate vendor’s commercial proposal and implementation plan.</td>
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<td>Does the vendor have experienced implementation partners?</td>
<td>Does the solution comply with your technical requirements?</td>
<td>Rate the vendors solution using a “scorecard.”</td>
<td>Does the solution deliver business value?</td>
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Source: Gartner
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Identify PIM solution vendors:


- Does the vendor have customers in your industry or a similar one? Visit the vendor's website and view its customer list. If it has clients of your approximate scale and in your industry, or adjacent industries, this is a good indicator of its relevancy and experience.

- Does the vendor have satisfactory geographic coverage? Does the vendor have customers, and a physical presence, in your region (if required) and other key regions of an international organization?

- Does the vendor have experienced implementation partners? If planning to use a third-party implementer, does the implementer have a proven record with a vendor's solution? See Market Guide for MDM External Service Providers.

- Result: A shortlist of candidate vendors.

Validate solutions will meet your business requirements:

- Contact vendors and request a high-level solution demonstration: Note that some vendors offer free trial access to their solutions.

- Does the solution meet your business requirements? Validate that a vendor's solution meets all current and future business requirements.

- Does the solution comply with your technical, operational and security requirements? Note that most PIM solutions are cloud-only, and SaaS offerings are often multitenant.

- Consider if an RFP is required, or whether a combination of RFI and POC will provide the evidence you need to choose. The PIM market is mature, so solutions are highly capable and well-proven. RFP's can be very time consuming and often fail to provide an effective way to compare vendors. Consider if an RFP is required.
Evaluate candidate solutions using best practices:

- Prepare for a proof of concept (POC): Rigorously evaluate PIM solutions and their compatibility on business processes by means of a POC. A POC is often a more effective way to compare vendors and their solutions.

- Prepare a representative dataset and five to eight business use cases: A dataset should include example data from multiple product categories. Business use cases should be simple. Together, the use cases should represent each key stage in creation, enrichment, approval and publishing of a product to channels.

- Request that the vendors configure their solutions for your dataset and use cases: This is something vendors are very used to doing. The POC should take no more than one day per vendor.

- Rate the vendor's solution using a "scorecard": To standardize vendor POC evaluation, prepare a standard scorecard. Ensure that all key stakeholders and representative business users are present.

Negotiate with vendors:

- Conduct commercial due diligence: Procurement should help complete commercial due diligence.

- Contact vendors' customer references: Ask each vendor to arrange two or three virtual meetings with reference customers. Try to speak to organizations in or adjacent to your industry. Create a questionnaire to make review more effective.

- Evaluate vendors' commercial proposals and implementation plans: Expect the solution to be licensed as a subscription. Estimate future growth of data, users and digital assets to estimate incremental cost increases. Follow the vendor's or system integrator's advice on implementation.

- Does the solution deliver business value? Look for business benefits, including faster time to market, improved data quality, reduced costs and enhanced customer experiences.
Prepare for implementation

- Catalog your first- and third-party data sources. Consider possible duplication and content gaps, and decide how to deal with them.
- Assess existing DAM and marketing content solutions for integration to the PIM.
- Understand your downstream channel requirements for integration (e.g., digital commerce, marketplaces, product data syndication) and how PIM will work with your channel management strategy.

Recommended by the Authors

Market Guide for Product Information Management Solutions

Failure to Address Product Data Syndication Properly Leads to Penalties

Scaling Digital Commerce Requires Product Content Life Cycle Optimization

Market Guide for MDM External Service Providers