



ERP Buyer's Guide

For Consumer Goods Importers and Distributors




Unlock the Power of an Industry Specific ERP

Consumer goods importers and distributors are master jugglers. From product development to forecasting and importing, to direct-to-consumer shipping to warehouse logistics and everything in between, there's a lot to manage.

This guide was created to make the process of searching for an ERP easier and we want to make sure that you have all the facts before making your decision.

We understand this purchase is a big decision. It has the potential to change everything about your consumer goods business. With this guide and the right ERP vendor, these improvements will make juggling all those tasks, roles and jobs easier.





Ready for
**What's
Next, Now™**

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All-In-One Solution

You can have it all. An ERP with all the features and functionalities can be built into a single solution. This not only alleviates many of the stresses involved in managing your data, but it enables you to manage your supply chain better.

You're able to:

- › Maintain data integrity (as the entire solution is running off the same information)
- › Work cross-functionally without having to learn a new system
- › Ensure consistent and straightforward authorizations and user permissions for seamless security and privacy
- › Maintain updates in real-time
- › Pull comprehensive financials, including profitability scorecards

Not only does an all-in-one ERP system create efficient operations and a high-efficiency supply chain, but there's also less room for human error. There's no more manual entry, hand-counting and reliance on memory to get the job done. If you have an integrated system where all your technologies talk to each other, all your information will be easier to find and easier to use.



Direct-to-Consumer Orders and Fulfillment

For importers and distributors, the emergence and growth of direct-to-consumer (DTC) shipping has increased order volume, elevated fulfillment requirements, and, most importantly, added complexity to the warehouse.

When it comes to direct-to-consumer shipping, it's essential to consider an ERP solution that's able to seamlessly integrate with the major shipping carriers you elect to use.

Suppose you were easily able to shop shipping rates to determine which carrier is more price-effective. You could complete address verifications, produce shipment labels automatically and track your processes in real-time—thus avoiding errors and setbacks. Imagine how much more efficient your warehouse could be.

To streamline online orders directly from your website, it's important to select an ERP system that supports your ecommerce platform—a solution that will capture online orders and fulfill them from the warehouse and prioritize them as needed.

With an all-in-one ERP, you're able to prioritize the orders as they come into your warehouse.

If an order comes through for next-day delivery, for example, the system can accept the order and prioritize it for the next wave of picking and packing ahead of other orders. This prioritization ensures you meet order processing time requirements for retailers while fulfilling DTC orders for end consumers efficiently.

Retailer Compliance

Tracking the compliance requirements from each of your retailers could be a full-time job in-and-of-itself. It's a complicated and complex process.

And the fees and fines associated with each of your retailers can pile up quickly if you're not able to understand why they've occurred and then—and most importantly—promptly rectify the problem. Otherwise, your bottom line is going to suffer.

An ERP with built-in chargeback management tools allows you to measure, track, dispute and recover retailer chargebacks. Because all your customer data is in a single source of truth, drilling down to track chargebacks allows you to thoroughly analyze and address the chargebacks that eat at your profitability.

An industry-built ERP can manage each retailer's requirements and ensure you're meeting order processing times. When it comes to the paperwork associated with each shipment—pack lists, compliance and small parcel labels, etc.—your ERP should be able to ensure that each of the order fulfillments is on-time and in-full (OTIF) and support quick turnaround times on orders.





Electronic Data Interchange (EDI)

EDI is the digital exchange of business documents between partners. Anything that was previously communicated by paper—invoices, purchase orders, etc.—is now shared electronically.

An ERP with built-in EDI capabilities gives you greater visibility into all of your customer activities and transactions.

There's inbound and outbound EDI for new orders, order confirmations, ship notices, and inventory status and availability, to name a few.

EDI compliance is a complex process, but having all of your data in one unified system makes it that much easier. It's flexible, less expensive and offers more visibility into all aspects of your retailer relationships.

Here's our single piece of EDI advice: partner with a vendor who is mindful of your business's ambitions. We'd encourage you to explore vendors who do most of the EDI heavy lifting so you don't have to dedicate essential resources to creating, testing, troubleshooting and maintaining your EDI services. Let the solution provider do that for you, so you can focus on continuing to cultivate your business.



Warehouse Logistics and Management

The warehouse is where the magic happens.

A robust ERP solution should support your current warehouse logistics processes while also having the flexibility and adaptability to evolve as your business grows.

With the right ERP, you can streamline and automate warehouse operations, such as receiving, putaway of goods, cross-docking and returns. You can operate with or without paper—though we do encourage you to explore paperless options. It tends to be the less expensive, more efficient option.

With the right software, you can configure your warehouse to best suit your business—define your bins, zones, locations, bulk and back- or front-stock locations.

By leveraging an ERP, you can fulfill orders quickly and get the product out of the door as efficiently as possible. When it comes to managing all aspects of your warehouse—cartonization, replenishment strategies, small parcel shipments, cycle recounting, and returns—an ERP can help you run your operations effectively and efficiently.

Forecasting and Inventory Planning

Knowing how to manage and plan the inventory you do (and don't) have can make or break your business in this industry. Successfully tracking inventory is the only way to ensure you'll have all that you need to meet your customers' demands.

Without an ERP, the process of tracking inventory is extremely manual. It's a lot of labor-intensive processes that are extremely susceptible to human error. By leveraging the powers within an ERP, not only are you able to pull data quickly, but you can also use the historical data to help you find trends and patterns within your inventory.

Without the tools to give you buying and purchasing recommendations, you could be over or under your customers' inventory needs. An ERP made specifically for distributors and importers ensures that you have the right inventory to meet demand. The data in the system would allow you to align those numbers and act quickly if something were to change. If a change occurs or an issue arises, an alert is generated so that you can act immediately.

With so many products and suppliers to manage, tracking those long-lead times is much easier with an ERP—you have all your data in one integrated solution. The robust forecasting tools leverage the long-lead-time information and vendor-specific requirements (like minimum order quantities) to create inventory plans and forecasting that meet retailer and customer demand. And with point-of-sale sell-through data, customer sales data comes directly from the retailers and helps determine overall trends.



Supplier Production Monitoring

After you place a purchase order with a factory, you have very limited visibility into the production process. For months, it's silent. It's a long and nerve-wracking process. You know this as well as anyone.

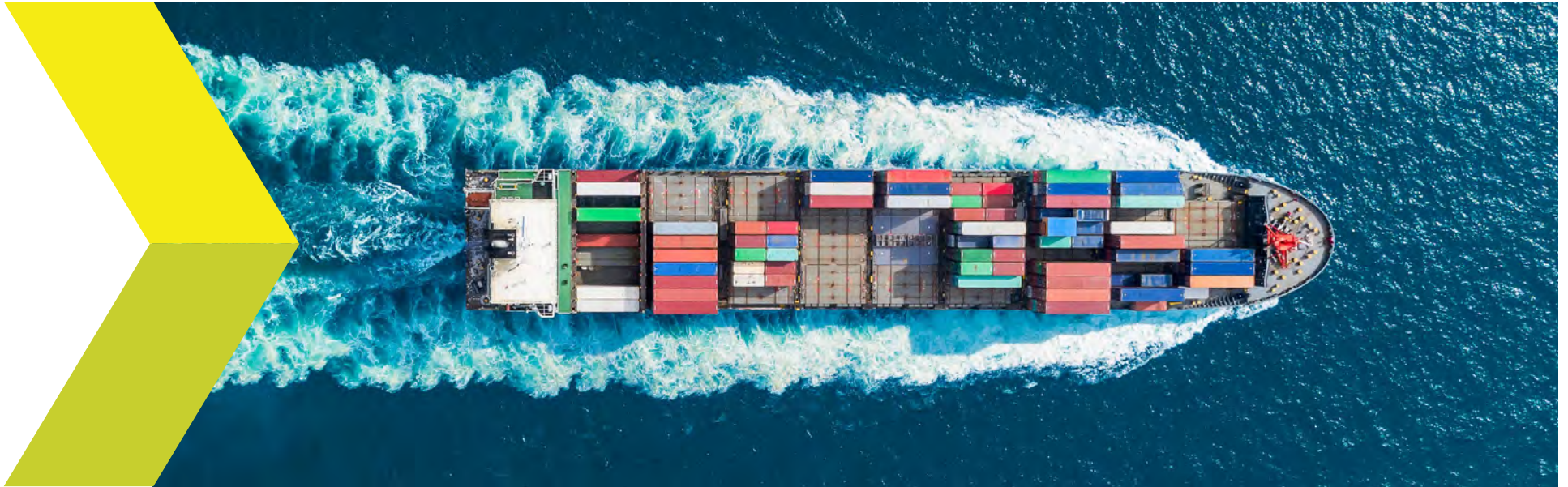
And between all the confirmations and inspections and certifications that need to happen, there's a lot that can fall through the cracks. Especially since the process of production monitoring can be extremely manual. Very rarely is there a prompt or reminder or general timeline of the various stages of product production.

But with a consumer goods ERP, you gain visibility into supplier production and can easily manage everything directly in the system. You can ensure that your overseas suppliers are conducting the proper tests, inspections, and confirmations of shipments.

And once you've put the data into the system, it becomes a repository. This means all the data you've captured is retained, and you don't have to store it or manage it on spreadsheets.

An ERP also allows you to set up alerts and reminders so that you can make sure the product arrives on time. By gaining visibility into supplier production, you're able to be proactive rather than reactive. You can alleviate issues that may arise or prevent them before they do. With strong production monitoring, you're positioning yourself for success.





Import Management

You need visibility over the products you're purchasing. It's as simple as that. It doesn't matter if they're two states over or half-way around the world.

With a consumer goods ERP, you can track inbound goods as they're produced, placed into their respective shipping containers, and brought to your facility or shipped directly to the consumer. With import management functionality, you can know where your goods are at any given moment in time. The right ERP will provide an electronic feed of data from the freight companies, eliminating any manual entry into the system.

With large retailers, it's vital that the import management functionality includes direct/drop shipping orders directly from the warehouse to the retailer. Large retailers often want full containers of goods, and rather than ship them to your warehouse only to unload, repack and ship to the retailer, you want to get the goods directly to the retailer. Having an ERP that allows for this is essential.

Without an industry-specific ERP, determining true landed costs can be very challenging. Your ERP should be able to capture all of the added import fees as the orders are shipped out to your facility.

With Aptean Distribution ERP, landed costs are built onto each shipment and container—our solution captures all fees, including carrier fees, rail company fees, broker fees, harbor maintenance fees and insurance fees. Not only are your calculations more accurate, but in using this software, you've totally eliminated the need for paper-based processes—it's all captured in the system.

Product Lifecycle Management

From when an idea pops into your head to the time it lands in a customer's hands, you want to follow your product from start to finish. Make sure that your product is how you imagined it every step of the way. For both established and new products alike.

To obtain this visibility, you want an ERP with product lifecycle management tools built into the system. To ensure product success, certain steps need to be executed for collaboration and communication across departments and functions—having the right ERP helps.

When it comes to product lifecycle management, your ERP should provide the workflow that helps facilitate all of the work needed to ensure the order is successful.

Your ERP should be a repository for information, as everyone—no matter the facility or department—has access to a record of all previous orders, all future orders, and all orders that are in the process of being completed. With this you completely eliminate the need for manual spreadsheets – making your job that much easier.



Electronic Payments

To remain viable, you need to make money.

Which means collecting payments from your customers, whether other businesses or end consumers, is the most crucial part of running a successful business.

So much hinges on timely payments. On accurate payments. And on maintaining those strong customer relationships to ensure future payment. It's stressful.

But what if you could remove the stress of getting paid?

Instead of working between disparate legacy systems, communicating through the accounting department or manually crunching the numbers, an industry-specific ERP solution with an integrated payment platform that allows you to accept digital payments from your customers and capture them automatically is precisely what you need.

When your customers pay you, you want to recognize that revenue as soon as possible.

Whether you're still dealing with the hassle of processing paper checks or using a digital solution that doesn't connect with your ERP solution, Aptean Pay is here to help.

Built especially for Aptean ERP users, this digital payment platform enables you to get paid faster and streamlines labor-intensive accounting tasks.

With Aptean Pay, you:

- **Get paid faster** – Customers can pay you as soon as they receive an online invoice.
- **Automate time-consuming processes** – Payment transactions are automatically captured in your ERP, automating accounts receivable reconciliation.
- **Improve financial reporting accuracy** – Since you can reconcile payment transactions in your ERP nearly instantly, you can pull more accurate, up-to-date financial reports.



Financials and Accounting

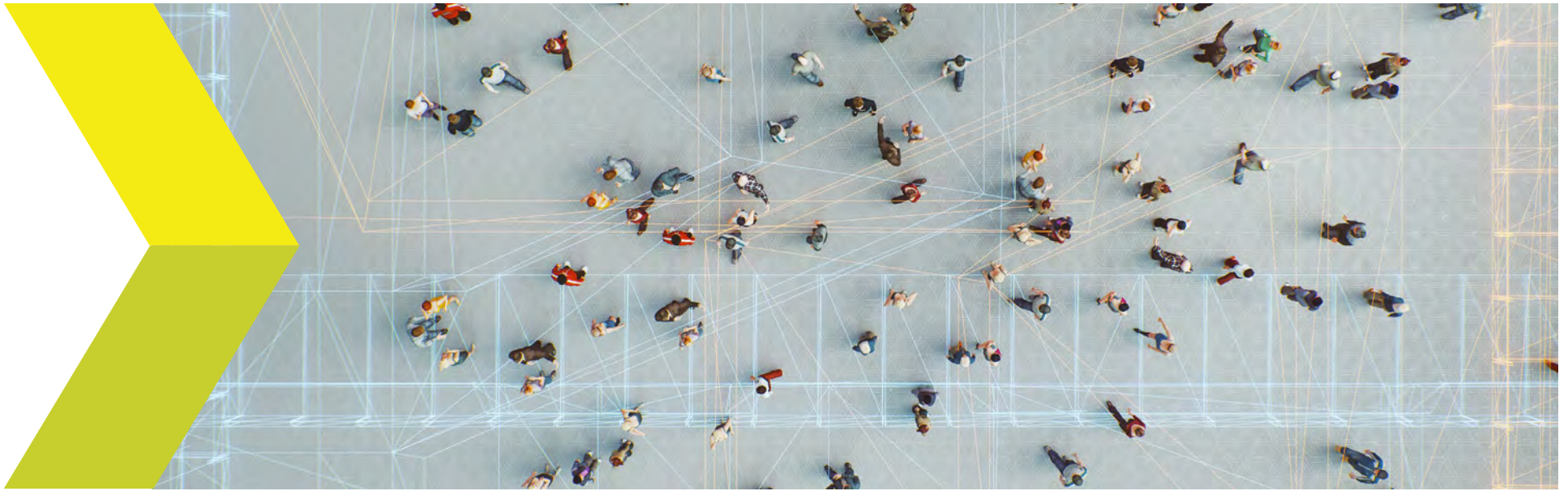
For importers and distributors, having all the financial tools built into an ERP alleviates some heavy pain points—manual processes, pulling data from disparate systems, using out-of-date information.

An all-in-one ERP system manages all of this for you.

Between credit and collections, accounts payable and receivable, reconciliation, bank integration, and everything in between, it's a lot of work. Plain and simple. But purchasing an industry-tailored ERP, such as Aptean Distribution ERP, means that your industry-specific challenges and needs are met.

The right ERP means you're not working on your own anymore. And you get the help and support you need. Our ERP can support your:

- › **General Ledger** – You can be multi-company capable with inter-company functionality. It's also multi-currency depending on where you're doing business. You can run financial reports for what you need, such as budget, statements and consolidation.
- › **Accounts Payable and Receivable** – You can record and track vendor deposits and prepayments, and with in-transit inventory, you can take possession of the goods and form a financial perspective.
- › **Banking Integration** – You can integrate your financial institutions into your solution. You can pay your vendors via their bank in an automated or electronic fashion.
- › **Receivables/Chargebacks** – You can receive and record customer payments and deductions (chargebacks) automatically. EDI documents are automatically uploaded into the system to avoid manual input.
- › **Credit and Collections** – You can leverage proactive credit and collections functionality to avoid payment problems down the line. You can check a potential customer's creditworthiness to determine if a new order should be processed. You can set up rules to help resolve this, such as if the customer has a past-due balance, if the request is within your parameters, etc. It's all possible.
- › **Reconciliation** – You can create a three-way checkpoint to match what you ordered with what you received with what you've been billed for to ensure total accuracy.
- › **Inventory Valuation and Receivables/Payables Aging** – You can run 'as of' reports to reconcile balances back to any 'as of' dates, allowing you to pull end-of-month reporting at any time.



Analytics and Insights for Improvement

We want you to take some time to stop and think. To slow down and reflect. To really consider challenges you regularly experience across your operations. Make a list of how you want to improve, where you want to scale, changes that are most important to you.

Then, consider a solution that offers the analytics and insights necessary for improvement.

With access to real-time data, you have the opportunity for real-time drill-downs. You have the opportunity to investigate the numbers, to see where they're coming from and fix the problems as they occur.

So, when you're shopping for your ERP, ask: Does this solution have out-of-box reporting capabilities? Does it allow for easy customization and configuration by the user?

Your business has unique demands and challenges, so you should have an ERP that's just as unique. An ERP that supports your growth and paves a pathway amid your challenges. A solution that provides the insights you need to support and improve your business practices.

From a profitability perspective, an ERP that has the capability of monitoring the profitability of each of your retailer partnerships—brick-and-mortar as well as ecommerce—allows you to constantly monitor the pulse of your business.

Conclusion

In this industry, knowing how to navigate supply chain efficiencies can make or break your consumer goods business. And an innovative approach can be the difference between failure and success.

From EDI to analytics and insights, you need an ERP that can do it all. An ERP to streamline operations and eliminate manual labor. Monitor inventory and create efficiencies.

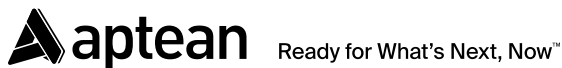
You need an ERP that can change the game. And when the stakes are high, you need Aptean. Our ERP software helps you manage your business's data, employees and workflow—making your operations more efficient and helping you grow your organization.





**Aptean's ERP
software isn't just
helpful for your
business—it's
transformative.**

Explore how, Now.



Aptean provides very specific industries with very specific ERP, supply chain management, and customer experience solutions. In today's fast-paced, highly competitive economy, organizations don't have time to waste forcing homegrown software, spreadsheets, and one-size-fits-all solutions to do things they were never designed to do. Aptean is on a mission to end those work-arounds – with industry-specific solutions instead of generic software, expert support instead of making you go it alone, and a steady influx of new ideas instead of the status quo.

For more information, visit **www.aptean.com**.