

# 5 crucial questions you need to answer before choosing a PIM system

- a simple roadmap to managing product data with success

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## A guide to a better decision - for you

Product Information Management – or PIM – deals with making cumbersome processes easier and giving you full control over product data throughout the entire life of the product and in all possible channels. A task which is difficult to understand and time consuming to handle without central management of product data.

It is about simplicity, but investing in PIM is still a complex decision. Mainly, because PIM affects many different parts of your business. Both in relation to data and the people who use it.

We have written this guide to help you reach the best possible basis for your decision before you invest in a PIM system. If you want to achieve full value out of your investment, finding a PIM system that matches your needs in all the key areas is critical

Based on our experience from hundreds of customers all over the world, we have selected 5 questions that are essential for a solid identification of needs. The questions provide you a qualified basis on which to evaluate different PIM solutions.





1.

Where do you use your product data?



## 1. Where do you use your product data?

Most companies invest in PIM, because they need to distribute their product data across many different channels, formats, and languages. Furthermore, it is almost impossible to ensure updated and consistent information across all channels in an efficient manner if you do not have a central place to store and maintain data.

Therefore, it is crucial that you have an overview of how your product data is to be used to help you ensure that your PIM system supports your needs in these areas.

### Where do you publish and distribute data?

- Website?
- Webshop?
- Catalogs – both digital and print?
- Mobile Apps?
- Amazon, eBay, or similar marketplaces?
- Data sheets?
- Customer-specific price lists?
- Data files for customers and dealers?
- Direct mail?
- E-mail marketing?
- Social media?
- Intranet?

An overview of the need for distribution of data provides you with an important indicator for how urgent the need for a PIM system is.

For example, if your business is based solely on your own webshop and you do not publish data in other places, then you perhaps do not need a PIM system. In this scenario, it may be possible to manage product data directly in the webshop and not place a burden on overall processes. But if you also need to make catalogs or sell your products on other platforms, then you have a case for a PIM system.

The simple rule of thumb is: The more channels, formats, and languages, the easier it is to justify a business case to acquire a PIM system.

### Think about tomorrow...

When you review your needs for distributing data, you should also keep an eye on the horizon. What does your business strategy look like? Could e-commerce become a reality within the coming years? Are you on your way into new markets – possibly in other languages?

The ability to change quickly is essential in a world where the markets develop faster and faster, so it is important that your PIM system can keep up with your development.



2.

Where do you receive product data from?



## 2. Where do you receive product data from?

Product information is often generated internally in the company, but it is important to identify whether you also receive information from external sources.

Manual processing of product information from external sources can be a time-consuming task, and therefore your new PIM system should be able to handle the external sources.

Here it is important to remember that product information is not only raw product data, but also images, translations, and meta data such as reviews, related descriptions, etc.

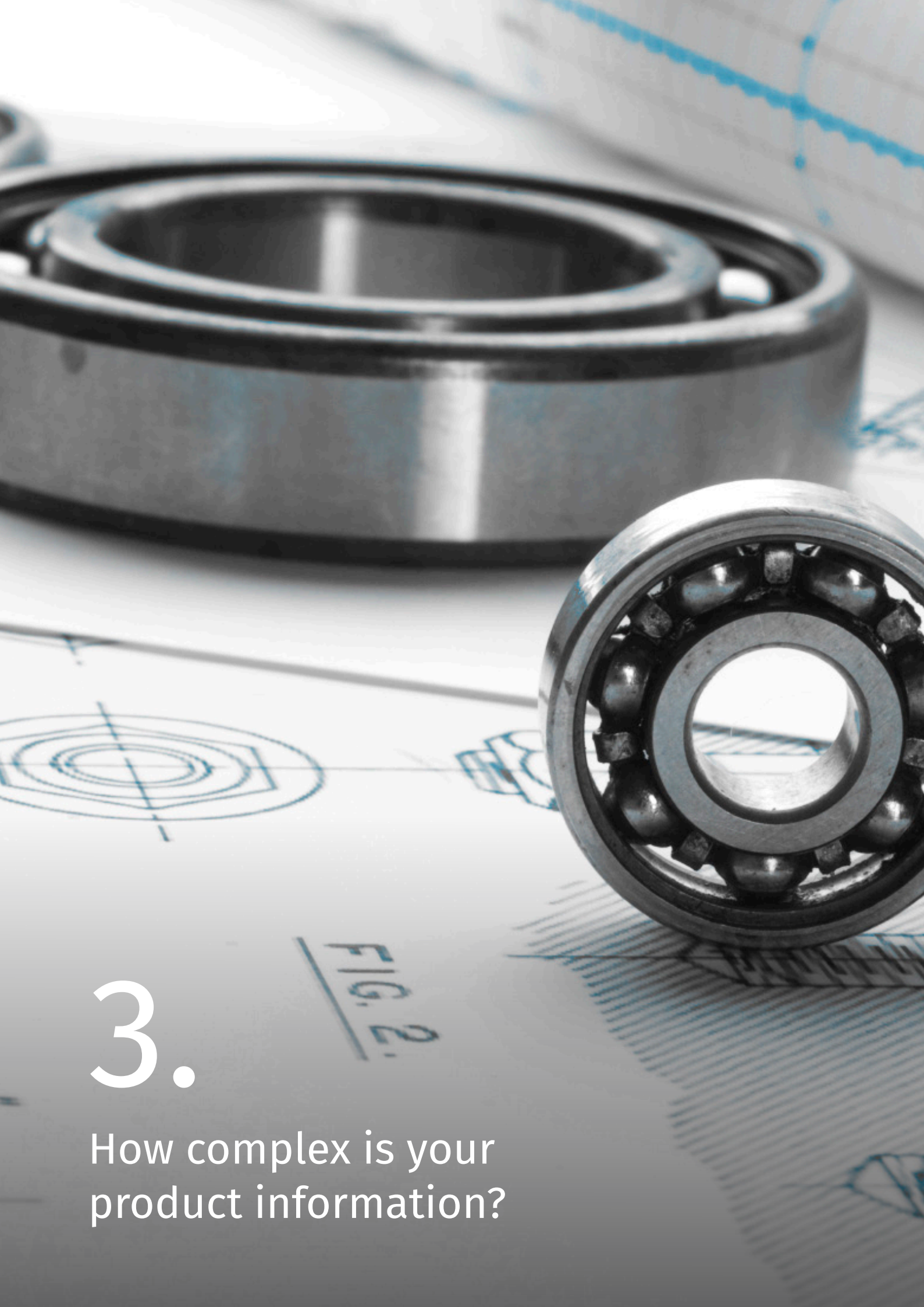
### Which external sources contribute with product information?

- Suppliers?
- Subcontractors?
- Photographers?
- Text writers?
- Translation agencies?
- Industry-specific portals?

### See PIM as a part of your digitalization

When you identify your product information and use scenarios, it is easy to focus on the specific task which a PIM system must solve – for example receiving product images from photographers. It is a good idea to have a look at it in a broader context and focus on how PIM can contribute to an increased digitalization of your company and its work processes.

Is there some manual work that you currently have in connection with product data which could benefit from being supported by a PIM system? And in the future, how can you use PIM to streamline your processes?



3.

How complex is your product information?





### 3. How complex is your product information?

The issue of the complexity of production information is rarely solved in a simple manner. In this section we will give you some pointers that can give you a picture of what your future PIM system should be able to handle.

It is not about the number of different products, but more about the type of product information you make use of and how they are structured in relation to one another.

#### What does your product information consist of?

- What data is registered on the products?
- Is there a difference between data which is registered on different types of products?
- How many languages do you work with?
- Is certain data shared by many products?
- Do you work with variants and/or configurable products?
- Do you use other types of data than product data – so-called meta data – as a part of your product information?

In particular, the latter meta data can be a challenge to handle. An example could be a wine importer. In addition to specific product information about the wine, the importer will also need to be able to display more detailed information about the grapes, the winery, the region, and similarly – information which will be used across several products and different marketing channels.

#### Is your data ready?

Many companies immediately reply yes, if they are asked whether the quality of their product data is in order. However, upon closer inspection, the reality often looks different.

Therefore, it is important to look carefully at the quality of the data before you implement PIM. The better the data you put in, the greater value you get out of the system.

#### Some of the questions you can ask yourself, are:

**Do we have the data we need?** If not, do we have the resources to produce or obtain it?

**Is the data consistent?** For example, is length always expressed in the same way or can it be “20mm”, “20 mm”, “20”, etc.?

**How complete is the data?** Do all products within a given category have the same data associated, or does it vary from product to product?

The answers will give you an impression of whether there is a need to improve the data quality before the introduction of PIM.



4.

What work processes must  
PIM support?



#### 4. What work processes must PIM support?

Implementing PIM in your organization will without a doubt mean that you will change some of your work processes – simply because you have obtained a tool that makes optimizing possible.

Yet there is good reason to map out how your more basic work processes look and what the interfaces are like between the different departments and their use of product information. Your PIM system must support your work processes in the best possible way – not least in relation to role management. Who should have access to do what? Should different departments each have their own rights? Should product data be able to be locked in certain stages? What should external contributors have access to?

The answers to these questions will place important demands on your future PIM system. To create an overview, you can use the following fundamental questions as a starting point.

##### How do you work with product data?

- Who should interact with product information?
- What should they do?
- How should they do it?
- When should they do it?

An important parameter to deal with in this context is the PIM system's way of displaying tasks which can and must be done. One can basically distinguish between whether a PIM system sets the scene for working sequentially or in a parallel manner with the handling of product information. That is, whether a task must be finished before the next can be started, or whether several users can perform various tasks at the same time in relation to product information. Therefore, it is worth considering what is best for your organization.

##### Is your organization ready for PIM?

To succeed with PIM requires a solid organizational anchoring – an anchoring, which rarely comes by itself. That is why it is a good idea to identify which departments must use the PIM system and involve the employees early in the process. The likelihood that the employees embrace the PIM system increases significantly if everyone is on board with which tasks the system must solve and the value of doing things in a new way.

At the same time, it is important that management makes it clear that the introduction of a PIM system is a priority task which will be allocated resources adequately.

```
for(i=0;i<a.length;&&(x=a[i])&&x.oSrc;i++) x
for(i=0;i<a.length;&&(x=a[i])&&x.oSrc;i++) x
if(!d.MM_p) d.MM_p=new Array();
preloadImages.arguments; for(i=0; i<a.length; i++)
d.MM_p[i]=new Image; d.MM_p[i].src=a[i];
if((p=n.indexOf("?"))>0&&parent.frames.length)
p=p+1].document; n=n.substring(0,p);
for (i=0;!x&&i<d.forms.length;i++) x=d.
forms.length;i++) x=MM_findObj(n,d.layers[i].
d.getElementById(n); return x;}
arguments; document.MM_sr=new Array; for(i=0;i<
arguments.length;i++){document.MM_sr[i]=x; if(!x.oSrc) x.oSrc=
```

# 5.

How close should the PIM system be integrated with ERP?



## 5. How close should the PIM system be integrated with ERP?

It goes without saying that a PIM system should work in conjunction with your ERP system.

However, there is a difference as to how different PIM systems integrate with ERP. In some cases, it is only the exchange of data from ERP to PIM, while others offer closer integration and data exchange in both directions between the two systems. Close integration provides a range of possibilities, which you must assess as to whether you will be able to get value out of.

### Which integration do you need between ERP and PIM?

- Should a product's life cycle start in ERP or in PIM?
- Should ERP data, such as prices and inventory status for example, be visible in PIM?
- Do you need to be able to maintain PIM data in ERP without opening PIM?
- Do you need to generate data sheets, or similar outputs, in ERP?

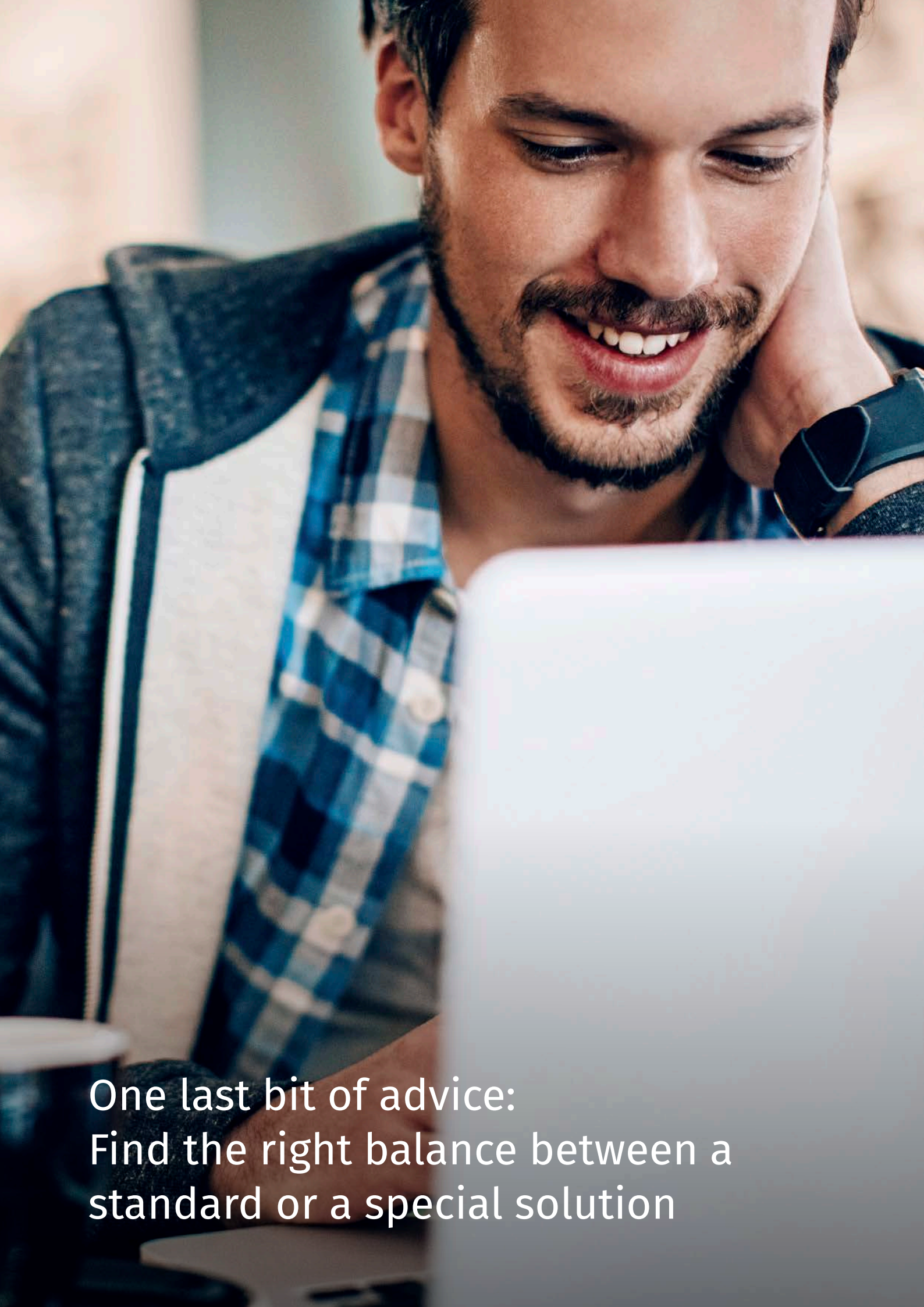
The first question is particularly important for many businesses. For example, many merchants take advantage of the possibility of letting the entire broad product portfolio reside in PIM, until a product is sold, after which it is transferred to ERP. Other companies need a "sandbox", where it is possible to work with products and enrich them with data early in the product's life cycle before the product is ready to be created in ERP.

However, one this is for sure - the more of the above questions you can answer yes to, the closer the integration between PIM and ERP you need.

### Think PIM before ERP

If you are in a situation where you will soon be replacing or upgrading your ERP, there are a number of reasons to get a PIM system in place before you implement the ERP system.

By getting your product data in place in a PIM system first, your ERP project will be more manageable. PIM implementations have a remarkable way of informing you on data that does not belong in ERP, thus you should expect fewer customizations inside your ERP. Among other things, it becomes a question of cleaning-up data so that non-current products are removed, while creating better data quality for the existing products.



One last bit of advice:  
Find the right balance between a  
standard or a special solution

## **One last bit of advice: Find the right balance between a standard or a special solution**

If you have answered the questions in the 5 previous sections, then you now have a strong basis for selecting a PIM system that suits your needs.

This guide is not intended to be an exhaustive list and there may of course be other themes that are relevant to consider for your organization.

One of the other issues you are guaranteed to have to consider is the extent to which you will have to customize the system to your needs – in other words the balance between a standard and a customized solution.

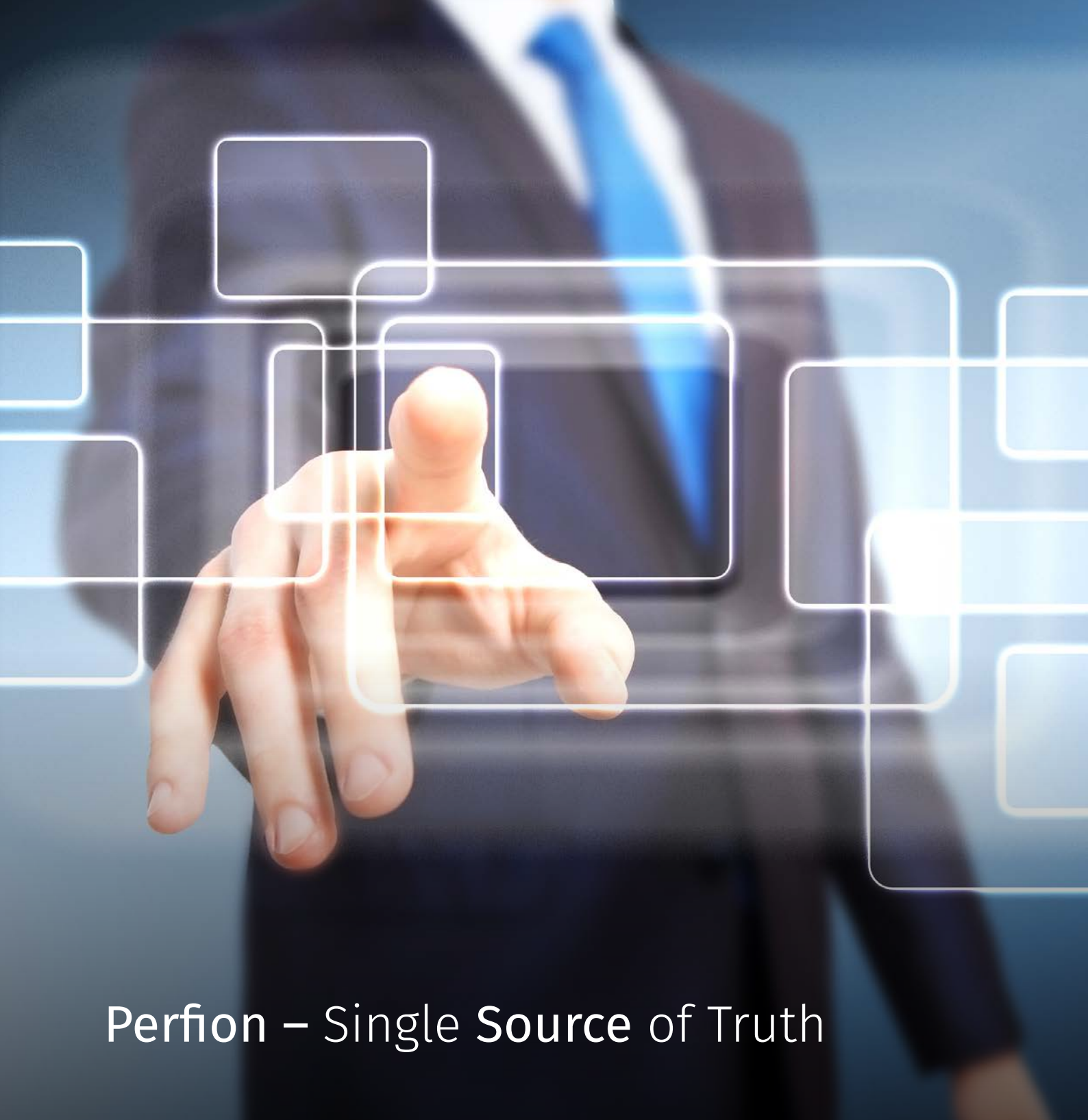
For good reason, most will start off with a standard solution, but if you have special needs, it may be necessary to customize the system.

You should be aware that the costs of implementation, maintenance, and operation increase in-line with customizations. While updates and new releases will be rolled out automatically to all customers on “the standard part” of a system, you alone will pay for corrections in the areas that have been customized specifically for you. While the upgrade of a standard solution is automatic, a customization will often mean that the system cannot immediately be upgraded – and, as often is the case, the the customized solution will need to be customized again.

The discussion on standard vs. customization is often both long and heated, but in reality it is not so crucial to identify the solution as one or the other. When it comes down to it, it is a question of finding the balance between what suits your specific needs and the simplest possible with regard to the system.

Or in other words: Be sure to select a standard solution which is so dynamic that you can make the necessary adjustments and that you can immediately support these adjustments in the future when the PIM system must be upgraded.





## Perfion – Single Source of Truth

PIM Perfion is one single source for all product information.

As the world's only 100 % standard solution for Product Information Management, Perfion PIM gives you the basis to optimize your business' processes so you can lower time-to-market, win new markets, and always deliver the information your customers need.

Perfion's open API makes it easy to integrate the solution with the IT systems you use today – everything from your ERP system to InDesign to your Office package.

Perfion PIM has been developed for businesses that communicate in many channels and in several languages and which have a complex product structure with a lot of product data. With Perfion, you have one single source for all of your texts, technical data, files, images, videos, etc. It gives you full control of all product data on all sales and marketing platforms.