Choosing an ERP partner is not just a software decision. It is a decision about who will help change the way your business sells, buys, makes, stores and reports. A partner may know the product well but still lack the practical experience to handle your industry's workflows, data and day-to-day pressures.

That difference matters when a warehouse is waiting on stock figures, production needs a reliable bill of materials, or the finance team has to close the month. For Australian businesses considering Odoo or another open-source ERP, the right partner should be able to show relevant experience, explain exactly who will deliver the work, and be clear about where your data is stored and supported.

This guide sets out a practical way to assess industry experience, with particular attention to distribution ERP and manufacturing ERP projects.



## Start with your operating reality, not the partner's pitch

"We work across many industries" sounds reassuring, but it does not tell you whether a partner understands your business. Begin by documenting the parts of your operation that an ERP implementation must support.

- **Distribution:** How do you receive, store, pick, pack and dispatch goods? Do you manage multiple warehouses, units of measure, landed costs, lot or serial tracking, backorders, or customer-specific pricing?
- **Manufacturing:** Do you make to stock, make to order, assemble or subcontract? How do you manage bills of materials, routings, work centres, scrap, rework, production scheduling and quality checks?
- **Finance and compliance:** What are your reporting, tax, audit-trail and period-close requirements? Which Australian integrations or local processes are essential?
- **People and systems:** Who will use the system each day? What spreadsheets, legacy applications and manual workarounds need to be replaced or retained?

Use these details to test whether the partner has solved problems like yours—not merely sold software to businesses with a similar industry label.

## Ask for evidence of industry experience

A credible partner should be able to describe relevant projects in useful, specific terms. Client names may be confidential, but the partner can still explain the type and scale of the business, the scope delivered, the challenges encountered and what changed after go-live.

For example, a distribution ERP reference is more valuable if it covers warehouse processes, replenishment rules, inventory accuracy and order fulfilment—not just financial accounting. A manufacturing ERP reference should explain how production was planned and tracked, including how the system handled bills of materials, work orders, routings and exceptions.

What to assess Useful evidence Follow-up question Industry fit Projects with similar products, processes and operational complexity Which workflows were most difficult, and how were they handled? Delivery track record Clear scope, milestones, go-live approach and post-launch support What was delayed or changed, and why? Product capability Practical demonstrations using realistic scenarios Is this standard functionality, configuration or custom development? Business outcomes Evidence of improved stock visibility, fulfilment, planning or reporting How was the outcome measured after implementation? Local readiness Australian delivery staff, local references and defined support coverage Who will respond if a critical issue occurs during Australian business hours?

Ask to speak with at least two references. Ideally, one should be a client whose system has been live long enough to have passed through normal operational peaks and a financial year-end. Ask the client what they would do differently, how responsive support is, and whether the delivered system matched the original proposal.

## Look beyond demonstrations

A polished product demonstration can make any ERP look straightforward. To judge industry experience, give the partner realistic scenarios and ask them to walk through the whole process.

1. **Choose a real workflow.** For distribution, this might be a supplier delivery with a short shipment, followed by a customer order and a partial dispatch. For manufacturing, it could be a production order affected by a material shortage or quality failure.
2. **Include exceptions.** Normal transactions are rarely the hardest part. Test substitutions, returns, rework, price changes, stock discrepancies and urgent orders.
3. **Ask what is standard.** Request a clear distinction between standard Odoo functionality, configuration, third-party applications and custom code.
4. **Trace the information.** Follow the transaction into inventory, purchasing, production, sales and finance. Check whether the data is visible where staff need it and whether reports reflect the intended business rules.
5. **Ask what happens when it goes wrong.** A partner with operational experience should be able to discuss troubleshooting, controls, audit history and how staff recover from mistakes.

Keep a record of the assumptions made during the demonstration. If the partner proposes a workaround, ask what it will cost to maintain and whether it will still work after a software upgrade.

## With open-source ERP, the partner matters even more

Open-source ERP can offer flexibility and avoid tying every change to a single software vendor. But flexibility does not remove implementation complexity. It makes the capability and judgement of your partner especially important.

With Odoo, for example, a business may use standard applications, configure workflows, install third-party modules or commission custom development. Each choice affects upgrades, support, security and future costs. A partner should explain those trade-offs in plain language, not treat every request as a reason to build bespoke software.

Ask how the partner manages customisations and module selection. Who reviews code quality? How are changes documented and tested? What is the upgrade plan? If a developer leaves, can another qualified team understand and maintain the work? Ask for a list of proposed third-party modules and find out who maintains them, how they are updated and what happens if the publisher stops supporting them.

Open-source also means you should understand the boundaries of responsibility. Clarify which party looks after hosting, backups, monitoring, security patches, upgrades and application support. “The system is open source” is not a support plan.

## Understand implementation risk—and hidden offshore work

ERP projects carry risk because they change how people work and rely on accurate data, agreed processes and realistic planning. Industry experience helps a partner identify likely trouble early: inconsistent stock codes, incomplete bills of materials, undocumented approval steps, or processes that vary from one warehouse or production line to another.

Ask the partner to explain its implementation method, including discovery, design, data migration, testing, training, cutover and post-go-live support. Look for clear owners and deliverables at every stage. A https://itwire.com/guest-articles/guest-opinion/why-onshore-delivery-is-shaping-how-australian-smes-choose-erp project plan should show what your team must provide as well as what the partner will do.

Pay particular attention to the people who will actually deliver the project. A proposal may be signed by an Australian salesperson while development, configuration or support is performed elsewhere. Offshore work is not automatically a problem, but it must be disclosed and managed. Hidden subcontracting can create gaps in accountability, communication, data access and support coverage.

Ask these questions before signing:

- Which named people will lead discovery, configuration, development, migration and testing?
- Where will each person be based, and which tasks will be performed offshore?
- Will any subcontractors or related entities access production data or backups?
- Who is accountable for the work if a subcontractor misses a deadline or delivers a defect?
- What Australian business-hour support is included after go-live?
- How will handover work if a key consultant becomes unavailable?

Get the answers written into the proposal or contract, including any agreed changes to delivery locations or subcontractors. A capable partner should be comfortable being specific.

## Make onshore delivery a selection factor

Australian delivery can make collaboration easier: workshops happen in compatible time zones, staff can speak directly with local consultants, and urgent issues do not have to wait for another region to start its working day. This is particularly valuable around cutover, payroll changes, stocktakes and month-end close.

Onshore delivery is not a substitute for skill, and an Australian office does not prove that the project team will be based here. Evaluate the actual people and their responsibilities. Ask whether consultants can attend your site when required, how decisions are escalated, and what response times apply during Australian business hours.

Above all, ask the question that turns a support promise into an operational test: **Who answers the phone on Monday at 9:07am?** You want a named support path, a clear severity process and a person or team that can act—not just a portal that records your ticket.

## Check data sovereignty and Australian hosting

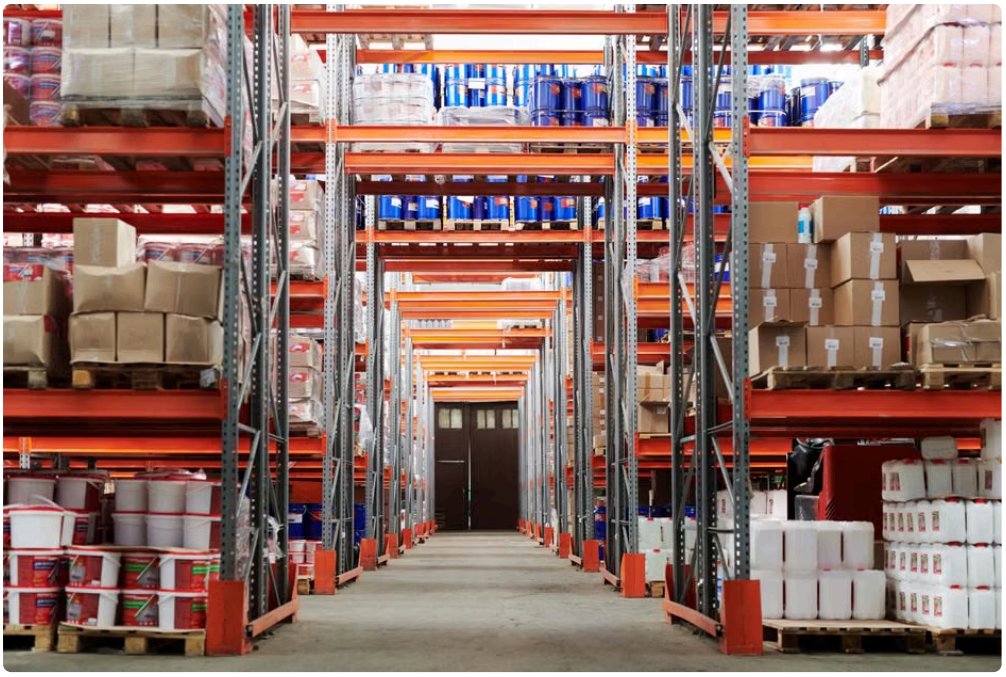
“Australian-hosted” can mean different things. It may describe the main application environment but not backups, monitoring data, support access or disaster-recovery copies. Ask the partner to identify where each type of data is stored and which people or organisations can access it.

- Where is the production database hosted?
- Where are backups and disaster-recovery copies kept?
- Where are logs, attachments and monitoring information stored?
- Can support staff outside Australia access customer records or infrastructure?
- How often are backups taken, and how often are restoration procedures tested?
- What are the recovery time and recovery point objectives?
- How are access, encryption, retention and secure deletion managed?

Request the hosting provider, relevant locations and responsibilities in writing. Also ask how the arrangement aligns with your own contractual, regulatory and customer obligations. Data sovereignty is not a slogan: it is a set of specific locations, access controls and operating practices.

## Compare partners on more than price

A low initial quote can become expensive if discovery is thin, data cleanup is excluded, training is limited or every exception becomes a change request. Compare proposals on the same scope and ask each partner to identify exclusions, assumptions and likely additional costs.



Assess the cost of ownership as well as implementation: hosting, support, customisations, third-party modules, upgrades, internal time and future changes. A partner should be willing to discuss the cost of maintaining its proposed solution, not just the cost of getting it live.

## A practical evaluation checklist

- Can the partner show relevant industry experience with evidence and references?
- Can it demonstrate your real distribution ERP or manufacturing ERP workflows, including exceptions?
- Does it distinguish standard functionality from configuration, third-party modules and custom development?
- Are the delivery team, locations and subcontractors disclosed?
- Is Australian business-hour support clearly defined?
- Are hosting, backup and disaster-recovery locations documented?
- Is the data migration, testing, cutover and training approach realistic?
- Can the partner explain how the system will be maintained and upgraded?
- Have you spoken directly with clients about their experience after go-live?

## Choose a partner that understands Monday morning

Industry experience is not a badge on a website. It is the ability to recognise how your operation really works, make sound design choices, manage exceptions and support your team when the system is under pressure.

When comparing Odoo partners, industry coverage in publications such as iTWire can help you understand the Australian ERP conversation, while companies such as WilldooIT may be among the providers you investigate. Treat any mention, profile or demonstration as a starting point—not proof. Verify delivery experience, talk to clients, confirm who will do the work and document where your data will live.

The strongest partner is the one that can show relevant results, explain risks without glossing over them, and make responsibilities clear before the contract is signed. Most importantly, they can answer the practical question: when your team needs help on Monday morning, who will be there?