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DIGITAL•EXCELLENCE

KNOWLEDGE GUIDE

Interactive product configurators in *industrial B2B sales*

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Great chance that your quotation process runs on people. A buyer sends an enquiry with half the specification missing. Your inside sales rep emails back with three questions. Two days later an answer comes in and it turns out the combination the buyer had in mind cannot be built. An engineer gets pulled off project work to explain why. Somewhere in that loop, the deal loses a week.

Multiply that by the number of enquiries a mid-sized manufacturing business handles each month and you are looking at one of the most expensive processes you run. It generates no margin, it consumes your most technical people, and it happens on almost every order.

What is an interactive product configurator?

An interactive product configurator is a digital tool on a website or webshop that guides a buyer step by step through selecting, assembling, and specifying a technical product. It applies to the engineering and commercial rules of the product range in real time, so that only feasible combinations can be selected, and it returns an immediate result: a specification, a drawing, an indicative price, or a complete request for quotation. In industrial B2B manufacturing, a configurator converts technical documentation into a guided workflow that both the buyer and the sales team can act on.

Industrial buyers across Europe now expect to specify a technical product themselves, at the moment it suits them, without waiting for an email. That expectation came from the consumer world and it is here to stay. The businesses that meet it are quietly taking work off their own sales desks while their competitors are still answering the same three questions by email.

Why do *industrial buyers* expect a configurator now?

Industrial purchasers expect a configurator because the specification phase has moved online. Engineers and procurement specialists now complete most of their technical evaluation before they contact a supplier and they expect the supplier's website to support that work rather than interrupt it.

Three forces sit behind this shift:

Self-service has become the default

Technical buyers research at their own pace, often outside office hours and frequently from a phone on a plant floor. A website that requires an email to get a specification removes itself from that process.

Complexity has to be made navigable

Modular equipment, automation systems, and made-to-order assemblies carry dependencies that a static catalogue cannot express. The buyer either works them out himself, gets them wrong, or gives up.

AI search rewards structured product data

When a buyer asks ChatGPT or Google AI Overviews which supplier can deliver a specific configuration, the systems draw on structured, machine-readable product information. A configurator forces you to organize exactly that kind of data, which makes your range legible to both buyers and answer engines.

What is a missing configurator costing your manufacturing business?

The cost of not having a configurator on your website rarely appears as a line item. It sits inside your engineering hours, your quotation turnaround, and the enquiries that never arrive at all.

Four places where it shows up:

01 Engineering time spent on quotations

Every specification question that reaches an engineer is time taken from development or production support. In most technical businesses this is the single largest hidden cost of the sales process.

02 Quotation turnaround

Each clarification round adds days. In a market where three suppliers are being compared, the slowest quote frequently loses regardless of price.

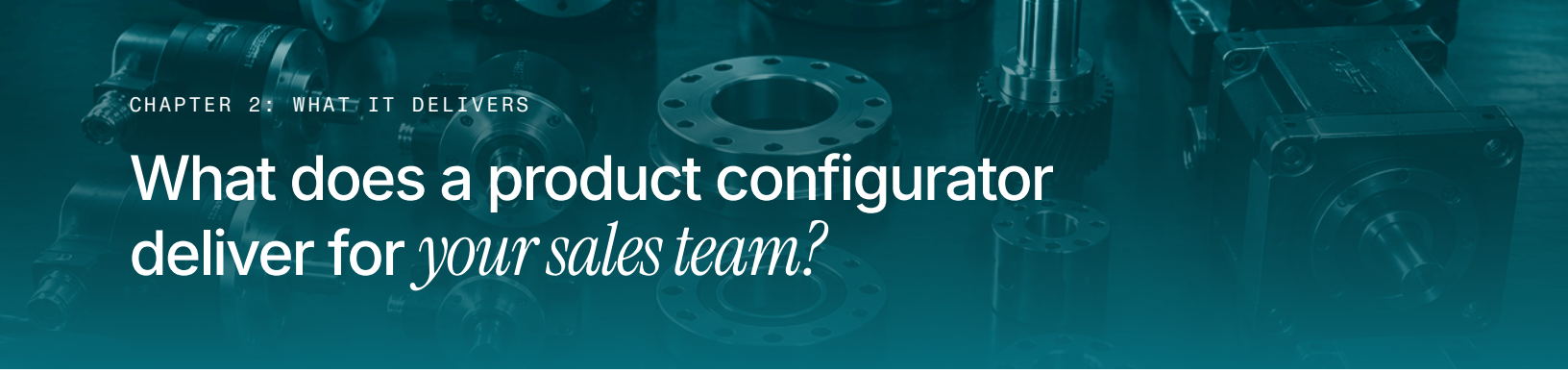
03 Specification errors and rework

An incompatible combination that survives into an order becomes a return, a rebuild, or a credit note, along with the reputational cost that follows.

04 Demand you never see

A buyer working at 21:00 who cannot get a specification will find a supplier who lets him. That enquiry never reaches your inbox, so it never appears in any report you read.

Run those numbers for your own business before you read further. The result is usually larger than expected and it is the number that makes the rest of this article worth your time.



What does a product configurator deliver for *your sales team?*

A configurator delivers four measurable gains to an industrial sales team: better qualified enquiries, faster guided selling, higher quotation accuracy, and shorter sales cycles on custom products.

Better qualified enquiries. Staged questions and enforced rules mean that only complete, buildable requests reach the sales desk. Your team stops triaging and starts selling.

Guided selling and clearer conversations. Complex technical choices are broken into visual steps. The buyer arrives at the conversation already understanding the trade-offs, so the discussion starts at commercial terms rather than at basic specification.

Higher quotation accuracy. Rules logic removes the manual validation step where most errors enter. Incompatible selections are prevented rather than corrected.

Shorter cycles on custom products. Sales that previously required spreadsheets, estimation, and engineering intervention move straight to a firm quotation.

CLIENT CASE

A real example: *MIG Encoders*

BEGE Power Transmission wanted to sell flange encoders worldwide without adding sales headcount. The complication was that two customer types had to be served from one platform: smaller OEMs and dealers who want to order directly, and larger accounts who negotiate through quotations.

The configurator we built for their webshop resolves that in a single flow. The buyer configures the encoder step by step and each selected encoder is automatically connected to their SKU that is linked directly to the inventory and invoicing systems. Smaller buyers order online. Larger accounts route into an integrated RFQ process with custom options and volume pricing.

After launch, downloads of 2D and 3D drawings and datasheets rose sharply, which is the clearest available signal that buyers were genuinely working through configuration rather than browsing. Quotation requests through the RFQ module increased, direct online orders began, and manual steps inside the sales team went down.

Read the full case: B2B webshop and configurator for MIG Encoders

What does a manufacturing configurator deliver for your buyers?

For an industrial buyer, a configurator removes three specific frustrations: uncertainty about whether a configuration is valid, dependence on a supplier's office hours, and the effort of filtering a catalogue that was written for the manufacturer rather than the user.

1. Real-time visualization. 2D and 3D rendering shows how each selection affects form, fit, and performance. The buyer changes a parameter and sees the consequence immediately.

2. Autonomy. Engineers and procurement specialists value moving a project forward without waiting. Accurate online guidance lets them complete the specification and compliance work on their own schedule.

3. Relevance. Adaptive workflows narrow the options to what applies to their industry, application, and performance requirement, which removes the most common specification mistakes before they happen.

CLIENT CASE

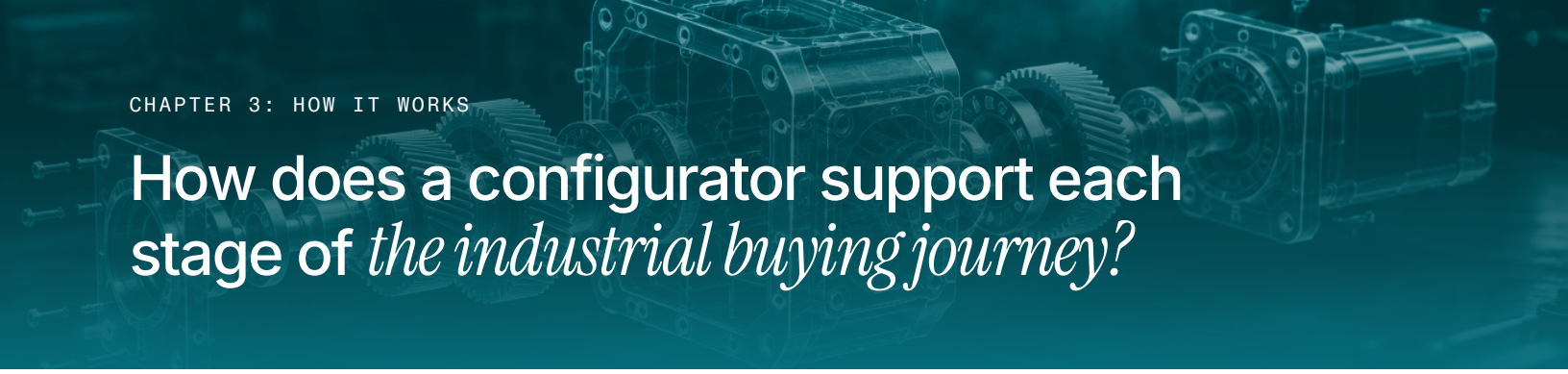
A real example: *Theo Heijmans*

Not every configurator needs 3D rendering to earn its keep. For Theo Heijmans Waste Containers, the barrier was cognitive rather than technical: customers had to think too hard before they could order, particularly on a phone.

We built a container selector for their webshop that resolves the choice in four steps. The visitor sets the work area, type of job, the waste type, the required size, and orders directly from the final screen. Orientation and conversion run into one another rather than sitting in separate parts of the site.

Orders rose noticeably after launch, most strongly from smartphones and customers began mentioning ease of ordering in their reviews.

Read the full case: Webshop and container selector for Theo Heijmans



How does a configurator support each stage of *the industrial buying journey?*

An online product configurator adds value at every stage of the industrial buying cycle by linking technical selection to a clean handover into sales and engineering.

BUYER STAGE	WHAT THE CONFIGURATOR DOES
01 Discovery	Makes the range explorable, demonstrates what is possible, builds awareness of variants
02 Consideration	Narrows options, applies technical constraints, validates compatibility, proposes alternatives
03 Decision	Generates indicative pricing and technical documentation automatically
04 Handover	Transfers the full configuration history and specification to sales for consultation, customization, or negotiation

The handover phase is the one most often overlooked. A configuration that arrives at your sales desk without its history forces your team to reconstruct the buyer's reasoning, which removes most of the efficiency the tool was built to create.

Any pricing a configurator displays should be labelled as indicative unless it is contractually binding. Confirm the commercial terms with your own sales and legal process before they reach a customer.

Which features make an industrial configurator work?

An effective industrial configurator combines six components: a rules engine, visualization, pricing logic, CPQ integration, clean product data and a mobile-ready interface.

CONFIGURATOR FEATURE CHECKLIST

- **Rules engine.** Enforces every technical and commercial constraint so that only feasible options remain selectable. This is the component that separates a configurator from a filter.
- **2D and 3D visualization.** Confirms choices visually, which matters most where dimensions, fit, or mounting are decisive.
- **Pricing logic.** Delivers live, rules-based price indications, so the buyer can assess budget fit before involving anyone.
- **CPQ integration.** Connects the front-end configuration to Configure Price Quote systems for documentation, proposal generation, and automated quotation workflows.
- **Structured product data.** This is the component businesses underestimate. A configurator can only be as reliable as the SKUs, attributes, dependencies, and documents behind it. Most implementations that stall, stall here.
- **Mobile-ready interface.** Engineers configure on tablets in workshops and on phones at customer sites. A desktop-only configurator excludes a significant share of its own users.

Which manufacturing products are the best candidates for a configurator?

The products that benefit most from a configurator share three characteristics: modularity, technical dependencies between options, and a specification process that currently requires human intervention.

Industrial equipment with modular options: buyers specify motors, gearing, controls and safety features in sequence, each selection constraining the next.

Made-to-order components and assemblies: engineers select dimensions, materials, tolerances and applicable standards.

Modular fit-out and installation solutions: buyers assemble a layout, choose specs, and receive capacity and pricing information immediately.

Large multi-option catalogues: process automation panels, HVAC configurations and comparable ranges where an error is expensive to discover late.

If your range fits one of these patterns and your B2B quotation process still runs through email, you are carrying out the cost described earlier in this article.

How do you implement *a configurator* without disrupting your business?

A configurator implementation on your website succeeds when it starts narrow and proves value before it expands. The seven steps below follow the order in which they need to happen.

1. Select one product line
2. Map the configuration logic
3. Standardize and clean the product data
4. Align sales, engineering, and IT
5. Test across real conditions
6. Integrate with your systems
7. Build it into the website, not beside it

IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

1. **Select one product line**
   Choose the range with the highest quotation volume and the clearest modularity. One line proven beats four lines half-built.
2. **Map the configuration logic**
   Document every dependency, validation, and exception before anything is built. This is where the real work sits and skipping it is the most common cause of failure.
3. **Standardize and clean the product data**
   SKUs, attributes, pricing, media, and documentation need to be consistent and current. Assign ownership of this now rather than after launch.
4. **Align sales, engineering, and IT**
   Agree the business rules, escalation paths, and update protocols early, while changing them is still cheap.

IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST (CONTINUED)

5 **Test across real conditions**
Simulate genuine buyer journeys on desktop and phone, and stress-test the edge cases your engineers already know about.

6 **Integrate with your systems**
Connect the configurator to CRM, ERP and marketing automation, so that configurations flow through without manual re-entry.

7 **Build it into the website, not beside it**
A configurator that sits on an isolated subdomain loses the search visibility and internal linking that bring buyers to it in the first place. The configurator is one component of an industrial website that has to perform commercially as a whole, which is a separate challenge worth understanding on its own terms: why your industrial website is not generating leads.

That last point deserves emphasis. The strongest results come when the configurator sits inside a website already built for technical buyers. BEGE saw a huge growth in enquiries after their website and positioning were rebuilt around how their market actually searches. The MIG configurator was built on that foundation rather than in place of it.

Which mistakes make industrial configurators fail?

Four mistakes account for most underperforming configurators: an interface that asks too much, product data that falls out of date, missing system integration and no assigned owner.

- **Too many steps, too much language.** Every additional screen costs completions. If a step does not change the outcome, remove it.
- **Outdated rules and pricing.** A configurator that produces an invalid quotation damages more trust than having no configurator at all.
- **No integration.** A tool disconnected from CRM and ERP produces data that nobody acts on and follow-ups that nobody makes.
- **No owner.** Without a person responsible for rules, pricing and compatibility, the tool drifts out of alignment with the business within a year.

Where should *a manufacturing business* start when considering a product configurator?

Two questions determine whether you are ready:

Is your product data clean enough to build rules on? If SKUs, attributes and dependencies live in several spreadsheets and one engineer's head, that is the first project, and it delivers value on its own.

Does your industrial website bring the right buyers to the configurator? A configurator is a conversion instrument. It converts traffic that arrives with intent. Without that traffic, it is a well-built tool that nobody finds.

This is the work Dutch Synergy does with Conversion Engineering®: translating technical depth into a digital process that produces commercial opportunities. We build configurators inside conversion-focused B2B webshops with FLUX, on industrial website foundations built with IGNITE, supported by industrial marketing campaigns with ASCEND that bring the right buyers to them.

See what that looks like in practice in our industrial marketing and website results, or book a strategy call and we will tell you honestly whether your range is a fit.

Frequently asked questions about product configurators

What defines an interactive product configurator?

An interactive product configurator is a guided digital tool that lets a website visitor specify a complex product step by step, applying the technical and commercial rules of that product range in real time. It prevents invalid combinations, returns an immediate result such as a specification or an indicative price, and passes the complete configuration to the sales team. In industrial B2B, this is the point where technical documentation becomes a commercial conversation.

Which products benefit most from an industrial configurator?

The products that benefit most from an industrial configurator share three characteristics: modularity, custom options and technical dependencies between choices. In manufacturing and industrial B2B, the clearest candidates are engineered assemblies, industrial machinery, technical components, modular fit-out solutions and large multi-option catalogues. Ranges with few variants and no dependencies gain little. Examples across several technical ranges are documented in our industrial marketing and website results.

How long does an online product configurator implementation take?

An online product configurator implementation takes anywhere from a few weeks to several months, and the timeline depends on the state of your product data far more than on the software. A single product line with clean, structured data can be live within weeks. A complex international range requiring data standardization, ERP integration and multilingual support runs to several months. Data preparation is almost always the longest phase.

What data do you need before you build an industrial product configurator?

Before you build an industrial product configurator you need validated technical product data, configuration rules and dependencies, choice matrices, pricing logic, technical PDFs, and structured attribute lists. All of it standardized and current. Treat this as the first deliverable of the project rather than a prerequisite someone else will sort out. Businesses that do reach a working configurator faster, because the data work is where most implementations stall.

Should a configurator be self-service or sales-assisted?

An industrial product configurator should usually be both. Most industrial scenarios work best as a hybrid: the buyer configures independently, then hands over to a sales engineer for verification, customization, or negotiation. MIG Encoders runs both routes from one platform, with direct ordering for smaller OEMs and dealers and an integrated RFQ process for larger accounts. Read how that works in the MIG Encoders webshop and configurator case.

Which systems should a configurator integrate with?

An industrial product configurator should be integrated with CRM, ERP and CPQ at minimum, with marketing automation added where campaigns feed traffic into the tool. The purpose of integration is that a configuration completed on your website reaches your quotation and production systems without anyone retyping it. ERP-linked product data is one of several website tools that change how manufacturing businesses sell online.

Does a product configurator help with visibility in AI search?

A product configurator helps with visibility in AI search indirectly, and more than most businesses expect. Building one forces you to structure your product data into consistent attributes, dependencies and specifications. That is precisely the form of information AI search systems can read and cite, which makes your range more likely to appear when a buyer asks an answer engine who can supply a specific configuration. More on that in getting more leads from ChatGPT.

NEXT STEP

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MARKETING AND WEBSITES FOR MANUFACTURING COMPANIES