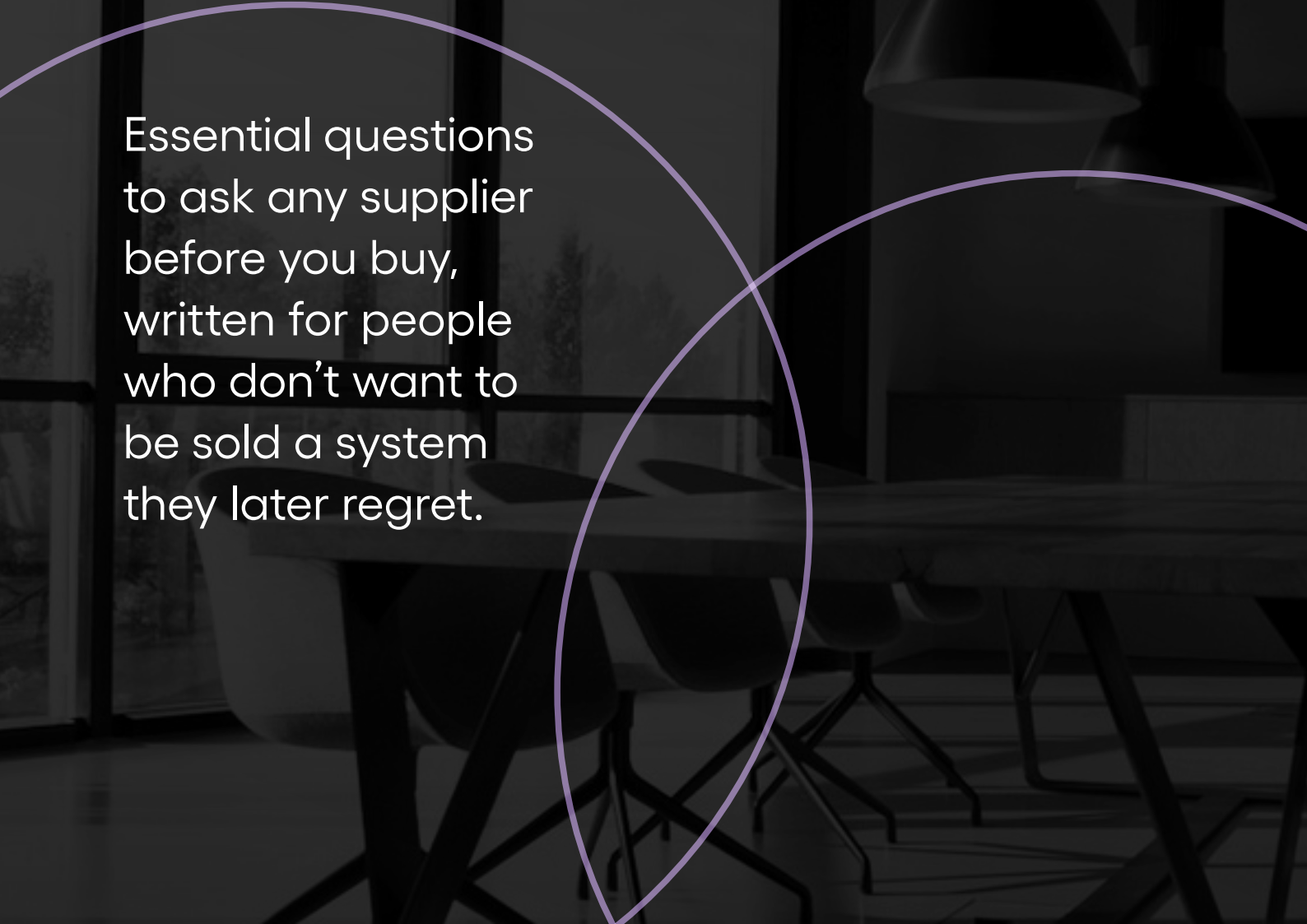


The Workflow and Case Management Software Buyer's Checklist



Essential questions to ask any supplier before you buy, written for people who don't want to be sold a system they later regret.

If you don't have a technical team, choosing a workflow or case management system can feel like a leap of faith. Suppliers are good at sounding confident.

This checklist gives you a set of plain English questions that separate a genuinely capable system from a good sales pitch, grouped into the eleven areas that matter most.

How to use this checklist

- Use it live, as a scorecard while you talk to each supplier.
- Or send it to a supplier in advance and ask them to answer in writing.
- Or use the separate questionnaire to answer in writing, either by printing it or completing the digital PDF.
- Watch for the green flags and red flags under each question. A supplier who cannot answer a question specifically is telling you something, even when the words sound reassuring.



1. Fit and Configuration

Off the shelf software makes you change how you work. A properly configured system should change to fit you.

Q1. If our process is unusual, can the system be configured to match it, or will we have to change how we work to fit the software?

Why ask this: Many systems are built around a generic process. If yours does not match, you will spend years working around the software instead of the other way round.

✔ **Green flag:**

The supplier describes a configuration process, ideally with an example of a similarly unusual client, and explains what can and cannot be changed.

✘ **Red flag:**

“Most clients just adapt to how the system works”, or a long pause followed by “let me check with development.”

Q2. Is there a mobile app, and does it work properly when our team has no signal, such as on site or in a basement plant room?

Why ask this: Field and site-based teams often work in locations with poor or no signal. A mobile app that only works online is not much use to someone stood in a new-build basement or a rural site.

✔ **Green flag:**

A mobile app that supports offline working, capturing data locally and syncing automatically once a connection is available, with a specific example of how that works in practice.

✘ **Red flag:**

No dedicated mobile app, only a browser-based site that requires a live connection, or vague reassurance that “it works fine on mobile” without addressing offline use.

Q3. How steep is the learning curve for someone who isn't technical, and what does their first week actually look like?

Why ask this: A system can be perfectly configured and still fail if the people using it day to day find it confusing. Adoption problems are usually a training and interface problem, not a features problem.

✓ **Green flag:**

A described onboarding path for end users, not just administrators, with a realistic estimate of how long it takes someone to become confident.

✗ **Red flag:**

"It's very intuitive" with no detail on training, or an assumption that configuration workshops with managers cover the whole workforce.



2. Implementation and Timeline

Ask what happens between signing the contract and actually using the system, not just what the system can do.

Q1. Realistically, how long from signing to going live, based on projects like ours rather than the best case?

Why ask this: Best case timelines rarely happen. You want the supplier's honest experience, not their sales estimate.

✓ **Green flag:**

A specific range based on comparable projects, with the main variables that could extend it and an example project plan.

✗ **Red flag:**

A single optimistic number with no caveats, or “it depends” with no further detail.

Q2. What will our team actually need to do during implementation, and how many days of our time will that take?

Why ask this: Implementation projects fail as often because the client's time was underestimated as because of anything the supplier did wrong.

✓ **Green flag:**

A specific description of workshops, a full project roadmap, data or templates provided, testing and sign off, with an estimate of internal hours.

✗ **Red flag:**

“We will handle everything” with no detail on what input is needed from the client.

Q3. What happens if our requirements change partway through the project?

Why ask this: Requirements almost always evolve once people see the system taking shape. How a supplier handles that says a lot about how the relationship will work long term.

✓ Green flag:

A described change control process, ideally without an automatic assumption of extra cost for reasonable refinements.

✗ Red flag:

A rigid contract reference, or a refusal to discuss scope changes before the contract is even signed.



3. Data, Security and Compliance

You are trusting a supplier with information your business and your customers rely on. Ask them to prove it, not just assert it.

Q1. Where is our data hosted, and who legally owns it?

Why ask this: Data location affects your regulatory obligations, and ownership affects what you can and cannot do if the relationship ends.

✔ Green flag:

A clear, specific answer on hosting location and unambiguous confirmation that you own your own data.

✘ Red flag:

Uncertainty about hosting location, or any suggestion that data ownership is shared or unclear.

Q2. What accreditations or certifications do you hold, such as Cyber Essentials / CE Plus or ISO 27001?

Why ask this: Certifications are independently verified evidence, not marketing claims.

✔ Green flag:

Named, current certifications the supplier can provide evidence of on request.

✘ Red flag:

General reassurance about being “secure” with no named, verifiable certification.

Q3. Can we control exactly who sees what, down to individual records or fields, not just broad user roles?

Why ask this: In case management and workflow systems, the wrong person seeing the wrong record is often a compliance failure, not just an inconvenience.

✓ **Green flag:**

A description of granular permissions, ideally with an example of internal versus external visibility.

✗ **Red flag:**

Only broad, all-or-nothing user roles with no finer control.

Q4. Do you host our data on shared public cloud infrastructure, or in a private, dedicated environment, and which is right for a business like ours?

Why ask this: Public cloud, shared infrastructure from providers such as AWS, Microsoft Azure or Google Cloud, is usually cost effective and highly reliable, but your data sits on infrastructure shared with other organisations, kept apart logically rather than physically. A private or dedicated environment costs more but gives you full isolation. Neither option is automatically better, but you should know which one you are getting, and whether it matches what your clients, insurers or regulators expect.

✓ **Green flag:**

A specific, confident answer naming the model used, a plain explanation of how your data is kept separate from other organisations' if it is shared, and a reason why that model suits a business like yours.

✗ **Red flag:**

Confusion about the difference between public and private cloud, or an assumption that "it's all in the cloud" is a complete answer.

Q5. Do you support two-factor authentication, and can it integrate with our existing identity provider, such as Microsoft Entra ID?

Why ask this: Two-factor authentication is a baseline expectation for any system holding sensitive business data. Integration with an identity provider you already use, such as Microsoft Entra ID, means your existing security policies and user management extend to this system too, rather than creating a separate set of logins to manage.

✔ **Green flag:**

Two-factor authentication supported natively, with confirmed single sign-on integration into common identity providers such as Microsoft Entra ID.

✘ **Red flag:**

No two-factor authentication, or authentication that only works as a completely separate, unintegrated login system.

Q6. What is your disaster recovery plan, and what uptime do you actually guarantee?

Why ask this: Backups existing is not the same as a tested plan to get you back online quickly. You want to know how long you could be without the system, not just that data is “safe.”

✔ **Green flag:**

A named recovery time objective (RTO) and recovery point objective (RPO), evidence the disaster recovery plan has been tested, and a stated uptime commitment.

✘ **Red flag:**

“We take backups” with no recovery time stated, or an uptime figure with no consequence if it’s missed.

4. Integration with Your Other Systems

A workflow or case management system rarely operates alone. Ask how well it works with what you already have.

Q1. Will this connect to the systems we already use, such as our accounting or CRM software, and how?

Why ask this: A system that cannot talk to your other tools creates duplicate data entry and a second version of the truth.

 Green flag:

Confirmed integrations with your specific systems, or a documented API you or a partner can build against.

 Red flag:

“Yes, we can integrate with anything” with no detail on how, or what that would cost. No evidence of, or very few external systems integrated with.

Q2. Is there an open API / Integration Layer, or are we reliant on you for every future connection?

Why ask this: An open API means you are not dependent on a single supplier's roadmap for every future integration need.

 Green flag:

A documented, accessible API.

 Red flag:

No API, or an API that is built specifically for each requirement.

5. Reporting and Audit Trail

For compliance driven businesses, being able to prove what happened and when matters as much as the process itself.

Q1. Does the system keep a complete audit trail of who did what and when, without us having to switch it on separately?

Why ask this: If you are ever challenged, whether by a regulator, an insurer or a client, a complete audit trail is what protects you.

 Green flag:

Audit logging built in by default, covering changes, approvals and communications.

 Red flag:

Audit trail described as an optional add-on, or only covering some actions.

Q2. If we needed to produce records for a dispute or an inspection, how quickly could we pull the full history for a specific case?

Why ask this: This tests whether the audit trail is genuinely usable under pressure, not just theoretically present.

 Green flag:

A specific, fast, self service way to extract a full case history.

 Red flag:

A vague answer, or a process that would require lots of work from the supplier to retrieve.

6. Support and Training

The sales team will always be responsive. Ask about what happens after go-live, when you need the support team instead.

Q1. What support is included in the price, and what starts costing extra?

Why ask this: Support scope is one of the most common places for costs to creep after the contract is signed.

✓ **Green flag:**

A specific, written breakdown of what is included versus chargeable.

✗ **Red flag:**

“Support is included” with no detail on limits, hours or exclusions.

Q2. Who trains our staff, is it included, and what happens when we hire someone new in eighteen months?

Why ask this: Staff turnover is a fact of life. Ongoing training access matters as much as initial training.

✓ **Green flag:**

A described ongoing training approach, whether self-service materials, refresher sessions or new starter onboarding.

✗ **Red flag:**

Training only described as a one-off session at go live, with no answer for future starters.

Q3. What is your actual average response time for a support issue, and can you evidence that?

Why ask this: A published service level target is not the same as what happens in practice.

✔ **Green flag:**

A specific figure, ideally with an example or a customer who can confirm it.

✘ **Red flag:**

Only a contractual SLA quoted with no real-world evidence behind it.



7. Cost and Commercial Terms

Ask for the total cost of ownership, not just the headline licence fee.

Q1. What is the true total cost, including implementation, training, data migration and the first year of support?

Why ask this: The number on the front page of the proposal is rarely the number you actually pay.

✓ **Green flag:**

An itemised, all-inclusive figure covering every phase.

✗ **Red flag:**

A single licence fee quoted with no mention of implementation, training or support costs.

Q2. If our business rules or approval logic change, can they be easily adjusted within the system, or does that require custom development?

Why ask this: A system with a proper rules engine lets you redefine how work is approved, escalated or routed as your business evolves, without commissioning a new build every time. This is often the real test of how configurable a platform actually is, beyond the sales pitch.

✓ **Green flag:**

A described rules engine or configuration layer that supports approval routes and escalation paths, with examples of how quickly that can be done.

✗ **Red flag:**

Any change to business rules or approval logic requiring a developer, a new build, or a lengthy change request process.

Q3. What happens to the price at renewal, and is that capped anywhere in the contract?

Why ask this: Some suppliers price competitively at first, then increase significantly once you are dependent on the system.

✓ **Green flag:**

A capped or clearly defined renewal increase written into the contract.

✗ **Red flag:**

No commitment on renewal pricing, or “we will discuss it closer to the time.”

Q4. Are there additional costs as we grow, more users, more storage, higher transaction volumes, or is growth built into the price?

Why ask this: Some platforms price attractively at the size you are now, then charge sharply more as you scale, which punishes success.

✓ **Green flag:**

A clear, predictable pricing structure for growth, ideally with an example of an existing customer who has scaled up.

✗ **Red flag:**

“We’ll discuss that when it happens,” or per-user pricing with no visibility on tiers.

8. Vendor Track Record and Stability

You are not just buying software, you are choosing a partner you will depend on for years.

Q1. How long have you been building and supporting this specific product?

Why ask this: A long track record on the actual product you are buying matters more than the age of the company as a whole.

✔ **Green flag:**

A specific, verifiable history of the product.

✘ **Red flag:**

Vague answers that conflate the company's age with the product's age.

Q2. Can we speak to a current customer in a similar sector to us, not just read a case study?

Why ask this: A written case study is curated. A conversation with a real customer lets you ask the questions that matter to you.

✔ **Green flag:**

A willingness to arrange a reference call, ideally with a customer of a similar size and sector.

✘ **Red flag:**

Reluctance to provide a reference, or only offering written testimonials.

Q3. Who actually builds and supports the system, you directly, or a third party you resell for?

Why ask this: Reseller arrangements can mean slower fixes and less influence over the roadmap, because you are two steps removed from the people who actually build it.

✓ **Green flag:**

A clear, direct answer about who owns the development and support.

✗ **Red flag:**

An evasive answer, or one that only becomes clear when pressed.

Q4. Can you name well-known organisations, whether public sector or blue-chip private sector, who use your platform, and how long have they been using it?

Why ask this: Longstanding relationships with recognisable organisations are hard evidence of reliability. A supplier who is happy to name well-known clients, and how long they have stayed, is confident in what they have built.

✓ **Green flag:**

Named, recognisable public sector or blue-chip private sector customers, with a genuine multi-year history on the platform.

✗ **Red flag:**

Only anonymised or unnamed “case studies,” or an inability to point to any long-standing customer relationship.

Q5. What's your customer renewal rate, and how many customers have left in the last two years, and why?

Why ask this: Retention is the most honest measure of whether a supplier delivers what they promise. A confident supplier will engage with this question rather than deflect it.

✔ **Green flag:**

A specific retention figure and a straight answer about why any customers have left.

✘ **Red flag:**

Refusal to discuss churn, or an answer that only cites new customer wins.



9. Roadmap and Future Proofing

Ask how the system will keep up with your business, and with changing requirements & regulation, in three years' time, not just today.

Q1. How do you decide what gets built next, and can customers influence that?

Why ask this: This tells you whether you are buying into a product that evolves with its customer base, or one shaped entirely by the supplier's own priorities.

✓ **Green flag:**

A described process for gathering and prioritising customer input.

✗ **Red flag:**

No visibility into the roadmap, or a roadmap driven entirely by the supplier's largest clients.

Q2. Can the system grow with us, more users, more processes, more complexity, without a complete rebuild?

Why ask this: You want a platform that scales with the business, not one you outgrow within two years.

✓ **Green flag:**

Examples of existing customers who have expanded their use of the system over time.

✗ **Red flag:**

No referenceable customers who have used the platform for many years and genuinely grown their use of it, or an inability to name any customer relationship of significant length.

Q3. If a relevant law or regulation changes, how do you keep the system compliant, and who is responsible for that?

Why ask this: In compliance driven sectors, regulatory change is constant. You need to know whether the system you are selecting can grow and adapt in line with requirements & an ever-evolving regulatory landscape.

✔ **Green flag:**

A described, proven process for building regulatory changes into the system, with real examples of updates already made, even if that work is sometimes chargeable as a defined piece of configuration.

✘ **Red flag:**

No evidence the system has ever been updated for a regulatory change, or an assumption that the supplier will proactively monitor every rule change across your sector without ever being asked.

Q4. Who owns the intellectual property in the system, and what does that mean for how quickly you can make changes or add new features?

Why ask this: When a supplier owns the underlying IP and roadmap outright, rather than licensing someone else's technology or working within a reseller agreement, they can move faster to build what customers ask for. When IP is shared, licensed in, or controlled by a third party, changes and new features often depend on someone else's priorities and timescales.

✔ **Green flag:**

The supplier owns the IP outright, controls their own roadmap, and can describe features that were added directly in response to customer requests.

✘ **Red flag:**

The IP is licensed from, or shared with, a third party, meaning the supplier cannot unilaterally decide what gets built or how quickly.

10. Exit and Vendor Lock-in

Ask how the relationship ends before you start it. The answer tells you how much leverage you will have for the next several years.

Q1. If we wanted to leave, how do we get our data out, and in what format?

Why ask this: This determines whether leaving is a practical option or a theoretical one.

✓ **Green flag:**

A clear, specific export process producing data in a usable, non-proprietary format & any associated costs.

✗ **Red flag:**

Vague reassurance with no specific process, or an admission that export is limited.

Q2. Are we tied into a long minimum term, or can we scale down if our needs change?

Why ask this: Contract length and flexibility affect your negotiating position for the entire relationship, not just at the start.

✓ **Green flag:**

Reasonable term lengths with a described process for reducing scope if needed.

✗ **Red flag:**

Long minimum terms with no flexibility to reduce scope or user numbers.

11. Artificial Intelligence and Automation

Ask what the system actually does with AI today, and how your data is used, not just whether it has an AI label.

Q1. If the system uses AI or automation, how is our data used, and is it ever used to train a model outside our organisation?

Why ask this: “AI-powered” is now on every product page. Buyers need to know whether their case data, client information or documents are being used to train shared models, and who else’s outputs might be shaped by their data.

 Green flag:

A clear, specific answer on what AI features exist, whether any model training happens, and confirmation that client data isn’t used to train models shared across other customers without explicit agreement.

 Red flag:

Vague enthusiasm about “AI” with no explanation of what it does or how data is handled, or reluctance to answer the data-use question directly.

Q2. Where does the system already save time through automation today, as opposed to what’s on the roadmap?

Why ask this: This separates what you are buying now from what you are being sold on promise.

 Green flag:

Specific, live examples of automation in current use.

 Red flag:

Roadmap items described as if they are available today.



*Ready to put a
supplier to the test?*

Meritec has spent three decades building workflow and case management software for organisations that cannot afford to get it wrong.

Our platform, Orchestrate, is built to fit the way you work, not the other way round. If you would like to see how it stands up against these questions, we would be glad to show you.

Talk to an expert: meritec.co.uk/get-in-touch
See it in action: meritec.co.uk/request-a-demo
It's time to make your work flow