

WHY SWITCH

Why teams switch to Zeak.

What slow, manual product setup costs, what the research says about fixing it, and how to move beyond email, forms and ERP customization, with every step on the record and without replacing the systems you run.

45,000+

new product launches a month, one
CPG database

15–25%

of revenue: the cost of bad data

~\$500K

lost sales per day of delayed
launch, pharma

Products multiply. **So does the cost of setting them up.**

Every new product, pack size and variant has to exist correctly in your ERP before it can be bought, made, priced or sold. Most companies still set them up by hand, one handoff at a time. This guide draws on research from MIT Sloan Management Review, Harvard Business Review, Gartner, McKinsey, Tufts CSDD and GS1 to show what that costs, what fixing it is worth, why most companies haven't, and how Zeak New Product Creation closes the gap alongside the systems you already run.



Not every problem needs AI. Most of this process is connected records, validated values and clear approvals, and that is what Zeak builds first. AI is used where it helps find similar products and propose values, and it never approves, signs or commits a record.

In this guide

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| 01 The cost of standing still | 02 What fixing it is worth |
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External research describes results reported by other organizations; it is not a result of New Product Creation and not a forecast for any customer.

A product in setup **is a product that isn't selling.**

~\$500K

in lost sales for a single day of delayed launch, from 645 drugs launched since 2000

Tufts CSDD, 2024

33%

less profit over five years for a product six months late but on budget

McKinsey analysis, cited in Eisenhardt and Tabrizi, 1995

80%+

of retailer product data inconsistent with suppliers; £700M profit erosion over five years

GS1 UK Data Crunch, 2009

#1

cause of Class I food recalls for at least three years: undeclared allergens, a labeling-data failure

U.S. FDA, 2020

Delay is lost for good when a product has a window

A season, a promotion, a retailer reset, a tender or a patent-limited period does not wait for setup. A launch that misses its window can wait months for the next one, and the days in between never come back.

Bad data multiplies with every new item

Every new item is a fresh chance to create bad data: a wrong unit, a copied cost, a missing allergen, a duplicate. Knowledge workers already spend **19% of working hours** tracking down information they need (McKinsey Global Institute), and poor data quality costs organizations **at least \$12.9 million a year** on average (Gartner). Item setup is where much of it starts.

Item data is a control matter

Product master data drives inventory valuation, cost of goods sold, pricing and revenue. Section 404 of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act requires management's assessment of internal control over financial reporting, and Japan's J-SOX revised standards were enforced from 1 April 2024. Auditors ask who can create items, how each one is approved, and whether what was created matches what was approved.

1. Effort

People in every department looking up, retyping, chasing and correcting data for each item.

4. Rework

Items corrected after creation, sometimes re-approved.

2. Delayed margin

Sales that start later than they could.

5. Downstream failures

Wrong prices, units or pack sizes on orders and invoices; held shipments; chargebacks.

3. Missed windows

A launch that misses a reset, season or deadline waits for the next one.

6. Audit and control

Evidence rebuilt from email for every audit sample; findings to remediate.

Waiting isn't neutral. Every item set up by hand this quarter is effort, delay and audit exposure you can't get back.

Most of the cost **can be removed. Working harder won't remove it.**

Two-thirds

of bad-data costs can be identified and eliminated permanently, by removing root causes

Redman, MIT SMR, 2017

Up to 20%

in bottom-line improvement from managing product variety systematically rather than ad hoc

Olavson and Fry, MIT SMR, 2006

Capability trap

work harder, improve less: pressure removes the time needed to fix the process

Repenning and Sterman, California Management Review, 2001

If each new pack size or variant costs weeks of effort to set up, variety stays expensive. When creating a variant takes a fraction of the effort, you can say yes to the variants that pay, and see the cost of the ones that don't.

The principles the research supports **are the ones Zeak is built around.**

PRINCIPLE	RESEARCH BASIS	HOW ZEAK SUPPORTS IT
Fix data where it is created	Two-thirds of bad-data costs can be removed by eliminating root causes rather than correcting errors one by one (Redman, MIT SMR).	Validated values, a similar product to compare against, and an approval that sees the context, before the item exists.
Manage variety systematically	Up to 20% operating-profit improvement from managing product variety systematically rather than ad hoc (Olavson and Fry, MIT SMR).	A live tracker of every item, package, pack size and variant; new variants built from existing products in a fraction of the effort.
Protect time to improve the process	When people are pressed to work harder, time for fixing the process disappears and capability erodes (Repenning and Sterman, MIT).	Retyping and chasing removed, so the team spends its time on judgment calls and improvement.
Build controls into the process	Authorization, segregation of duties and reconciliation are what SOX, J-SOX and COSO-based controls test.	Approval routing, segregation of duties, an append-only record and ERP read-back, built in and exportable.

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The usual fixes **each solve one part of the problem.**

THE USUAL FIX	WHAT HAPPENS
Build it into the ERP	Whole ERP projects run a median \$450,000 and 9 months, with timeline depending on customization (Panorama, 172 organizations). Cloud ERPs ship regular service updates that can be paused for at most one consecutive update, so custom workflows are retested on the vendor's schedule (Microsoft).
Add a workflow or form tool	Routes approvals, but doesn't compile data from your sources, reuse past products, propose setup values or check the ERP item against what was approved.
Rely on master data or PIM software	Governs the master record. Even companies running dedicated master data governance software build additional front ends for new product introduction (SAP Community, 2024).
Keep email and spreadsheets	Familiar and flexible, but the trail is scattered, values are retyped at every handoff, and evidence is rebuilt from email for every audit sample.

What this means for your decision: the hard part isn't a better form. It is compiling what every area knows, starting from the products you already built, controlling the approvals and proving that what was created matches what was approved. That is the work Zeak takes on.

HANDOFFS

One request; every area works in parallel on the part it owns, with tasks, due dates and reminders.

RETYPING

Values pre-filled from your sources and the products you've built; setup proposed with reasons; a person decides.

CONTROLS

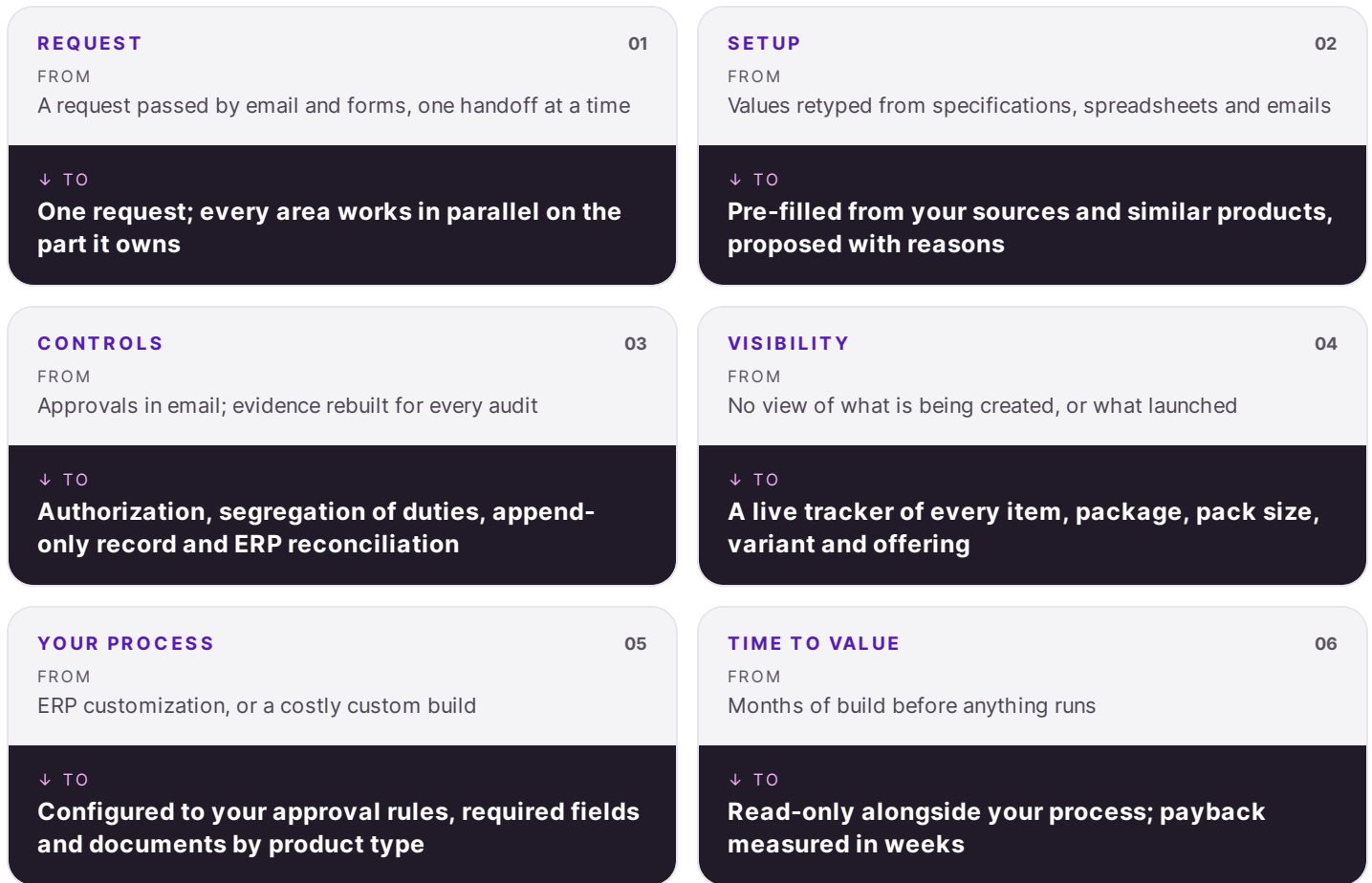
Authorization, segregation of duties, an append-only record and ERP reconciliation, built into the process.

BUILD BURDEN

Configured on the Zeak platform outside your ERP code; no custom workflow, form, integration or audit-trail code to write and retest.

Not ready to write to your ERP? You don't have to. New Product Creation starts read-only, alongside your process. Writing to the ERP is enabled by product type and field group, only when you decide.

Six shifts. **One correct product, on the record.**



Every proof comes from your own data: **people and handoffs per item, days from request to verified ERP item, control evidence per item, one complete record per item, and items in flight and created, by type.**

How Zeak compares **with what you use today.**

Common approaches are described in general terms. Individual tools and implementations vary. ERP customization timing from the worked example in the Customer Overview.

	EMAIL & SPREADSHEETS	WORKFLOW & FORM TOOLS	ERP CUSTOMIZATION	MASTER DATA / PIM SOFTWARE	ZEAK NEW PRODUCT CREATION
Request intake	Emails and attachments	Structured form	Custom form in the ERP	Request often outside the tool	One numbered request from any department, files attached
Data compiled from sources	Retyped by each area	Retyped into the form	Retyped into the ERP	Governed once entered	Pre-filled from your warehouse, documents and tools
Reuse of past products	Copy and edit by hand	Not covered	Built if specified	Search, varies	Similar products ranked, with how they were set up
Setup values	Manual	Manual	Defaults and rules you build	Rules within the tool	Proposed with reasons; a person decides
Approvals and segregation of duties	Email threads	Routing; SoD varies	Built and tested by your project	Within the tool	Routing by type, value or department; SoD enforced and logged
Audit record	Rebuilt from email	Workflow history	Built if specified	Record history	One append-only record, request to created product
ERP reconciliation	None	None	A report, if anyone builds one	Varies	ERP item read back and compared with what was approved
Visibility of items in flight	None	Task lists	Custom reports	Varies	Live tracker by type, stage, owner and age
Multiple ERPs and entities	Manual	Per instance	Per ERP	Varies	One request process across several ERPs or entities
ERP updates	Not applicable	Not applicable	Custom code retested every cycle	Vendor schedule	Outside your ERP code; connectors maintained by Zeak
Deployment and security	Local files	Vendor or tenant	Your ERP	Vendor or your cloud	Your cloud and identity; SOC 2 and ISO 27001 controls; GDPR-aligned
Time to value	Immediate, but doesn't scale	Weeks for the form	4 to 6 months of build before anything runs	Long implementations are common	Weeks: read-only alongside your process, on real requests

Already have a workflow, ERP or PIM? **Keep them.**

Zeak runs alongside your ERP, your request forms and workflow tools, and your master data or product information software. It reads from them, compiles what each area must contribute, starts from the products you have already built, and carries each request through your approvals to a correct ERP product. Your systems of record stay the systems of record; writing to the ERP is a choice, never a requirement.

Customize the ERP, or switch on Zeak

	CUSTOMIZE THE ERP	ZEAK NEW PRODUCT CREATION
Time to first value	4 to 6 months of build before anything runs	Weeks: read-only alongside your process, on real requests
Build cost	About \$317,000 in the worked example	No workflow, form, integration or audit-trail code to write
Upkeep	About \$66,000 a year in the worked example	Connectors and updates maintained by Zeak
Similar-product reuse and proposals	A report, if anyone builds one	Ranked matches with reasons; setup values proposed and validated
Controls and evidence	Built and tested by your project	Segregation of duties, append-only record, ERP reconciliation, built in
ERP updates	Your custom code is retested every cycle	Zeak sits outside your ERP code
Changing the process	A change request to IT	Configured by your administrator
Manual effort that remains	Largely the same; the form is new, the retyping isn't gone	Pre-filled from your sources; people review and decide

RAPID ROI

Payback measured **in weeks**, against your own baseline.

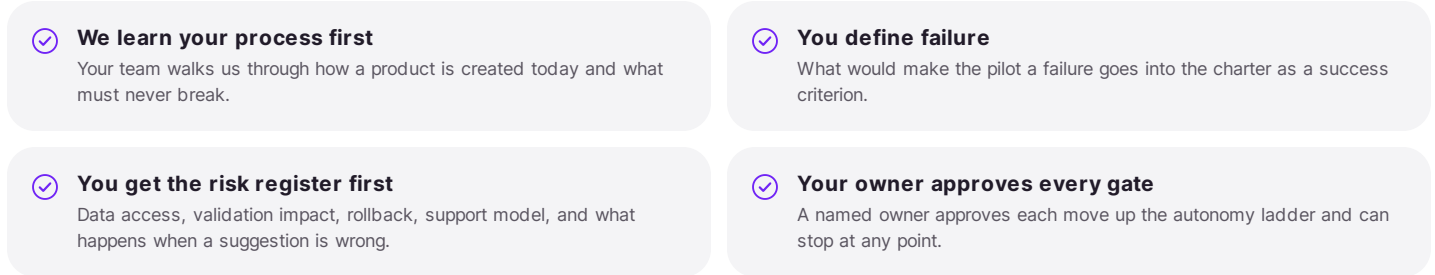
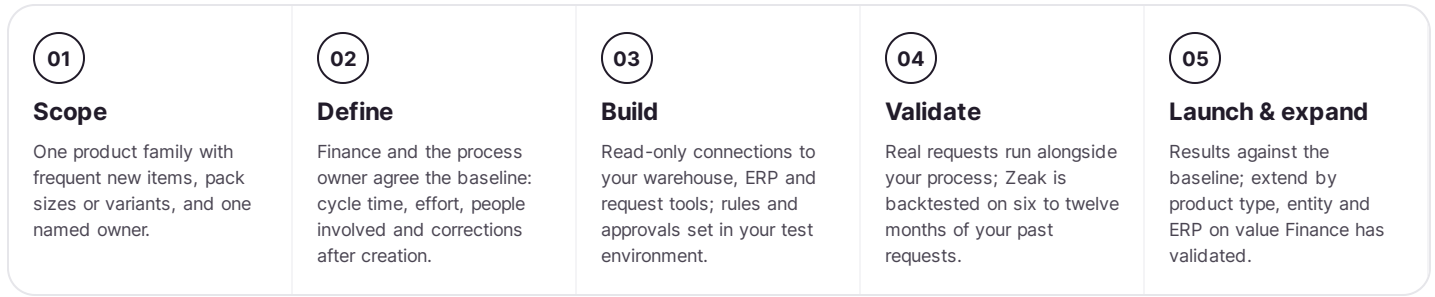
Payback in weeks = first-year cost ÷ measured weekly value. Compared with building it, you are ahead before the first request runs.

STAY IN CONTROL

- ✓ Read-only until you say otherwise
- ✓ Writing enabled by product type and field group, and disabled the same way, instantly
- ✓ Your cloud, your identity; everything exports in open formats
- ✓ AI never approves, signs or commits a record

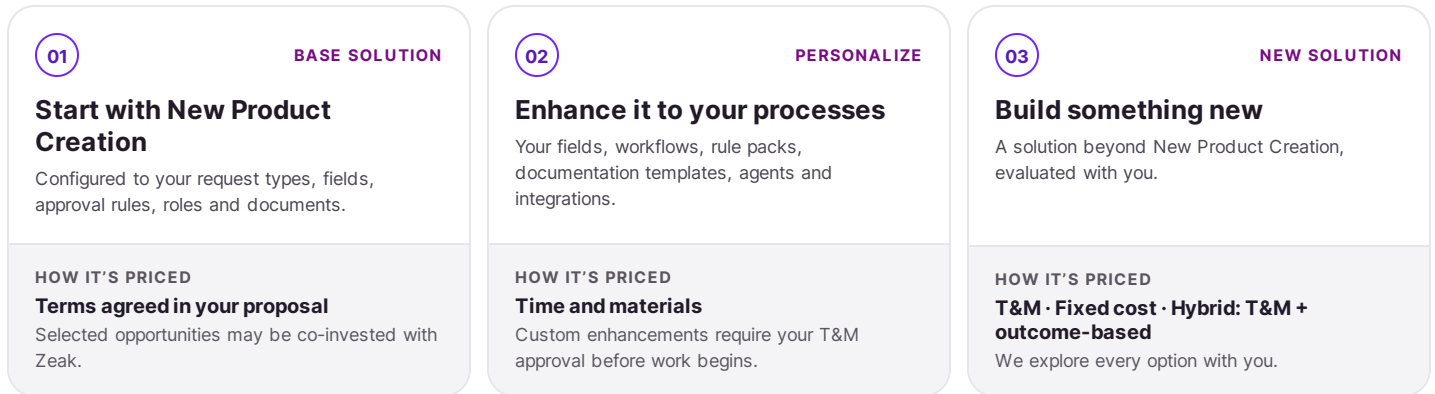
Dollar figures and the build timeline come from the illustrative worked example in the Customer Overview, every assumption shown there. Your partner's quote and your own baseline replace them.

Prove the economics. **Then expand.**



Read-only first; nothing written to your ERP until you say so. Deployment takes days to weeks; value is validated with Finance over the pilot. New Product Creation is being built now; features are delivered in releases, starting with the read-only foundation, and the pilot uses the first release.

Start with the solution. **Shape it to how you work.**



You see the scope, estimate and pricing model before anything is approved.

Questions worth asking any vendor, **including us.**

- 01 Can it take a request from any department, with the files attached, without a long form?
- 02 Does it compile what each area must contribute from the systems where the data already lives?
- 03 Does it start from the products we have already built, and show how they were set up?
- 04 Are setup values proposed with a reason and a source, and does a person decide every one?
- 05 Can we inspect the approval route, segregation of duties and the full record for any item?
- 06 Does it read the created ERP item back and compare it with what was approved?
- 07 Can it run read-only alongside our process, and write to the ERP only by product type and field group we enable?
- 08 Does it work alongside our ERP, workflow and PIM without customizing them?
- 09 Can one request process serve several ERPs or legal entities?
- 10 Where is it deployed, whose identity provider does it use, and which security controls apply?
- 11 How quickly can we run real requests from one product family, and how is value measured against our own baseline?

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External research benchmarks, not Zeak customer results or promised returns. Populations, methods and use cases differ. Sources as cited in the New Product Creation Customer Overview, checked 5 October 2026; recheck before each new edition.

Take the first step to Finance and leadership.

We don't rely on industry averages for your business case. In Discover we measure six parts with your team, using data you already have, and Finance signs the baseline.

1

Effort

Measured as: Requests a year × people per request × hours each × loaded hourly rate

2

Delayed margin

Measured as: Days of delay removed × daily contribution margin of a new item × share of items with a window

3

Missed windows

Measured as: Launches that missed a window last year × margin lost for the window

4

Rework

Measured as: Items corrected after creation × cost of one correction

5

Downstream failures

Measured as: Incidents traced to item data × average cost per incident

6

Audit and control

Measured as: Audits a year × hours to assemble evidence × rate, plus remediation

ITEM	YOUR ANSWER
Business problem	Where product setup is slow, manual or hard to audit today
Why now	Cite what fits: cost of a delay day (Tufts), bad-data cost (MIT SMR), SOX / J-SOX evidence, a missed launch window
Scope of the first step	One product family, with frequent new items, pack sizes or variants
Process owner	Name and role
Finance contact	Name and role
Baseline	Requests a year, people and hours per item, days from request to verified ERP item, corrections after creation
Success measure	For example: days to verified ERP item, handoffs per item, items right the first time, control evidence per item
Systems and data needed	ERP, data warehouse, request forms and workflow tools, documents
Mode	Read-only first; when, and for which product types, Zeak may prepare or write ERP entries
Timing	Deployment in days to weeks; value validated with Finance over the pilot
How it's priced	Per proposal; co-investment if applicable
Decision to expand	What result would justify the next product family, entity or ERP

START WITH ONE PRODUCT FAMILY

Bring us your **next product.**

Start with one product family, prove the economics with Finance, and expand on evidence. Read-only first, in your cloud, with every step on the record.

[See the demo →](#)

[Bring us your next product](#)