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Built for Chaos: Making PIM Fit into Complex Commerce Stacks

Build an integration-ready PIM architecture that delivers from day one

Modern commerce isn't held back by a lack of tools, it's slowed down by the way they're connected.

Product data lives in ERPs, spreadsheets, marketplaces, and people's inboxes. Teams operate on different timelines with different goals. Channels multiply, but consistency doesn't. And somewhere in the middle of it all, your product information is expected to flow cleanly and accurately across systems that were never designed to speak the same language.

To make this work at scale, you need structure. That's where a product-centric architecture comes in, with a unified layer built to organize, enrich, and distribute content across the stack. In many enterprises, that layer is a PIM.

This whitepaper explores how a PIM-centric integration layer can cut through that complexity. You'll get a clear view of how PIM enables better coordination across departments, supports scalable omnichannel operations, and integrates into real enterprise environments without derailing what already works. Let's dive in.

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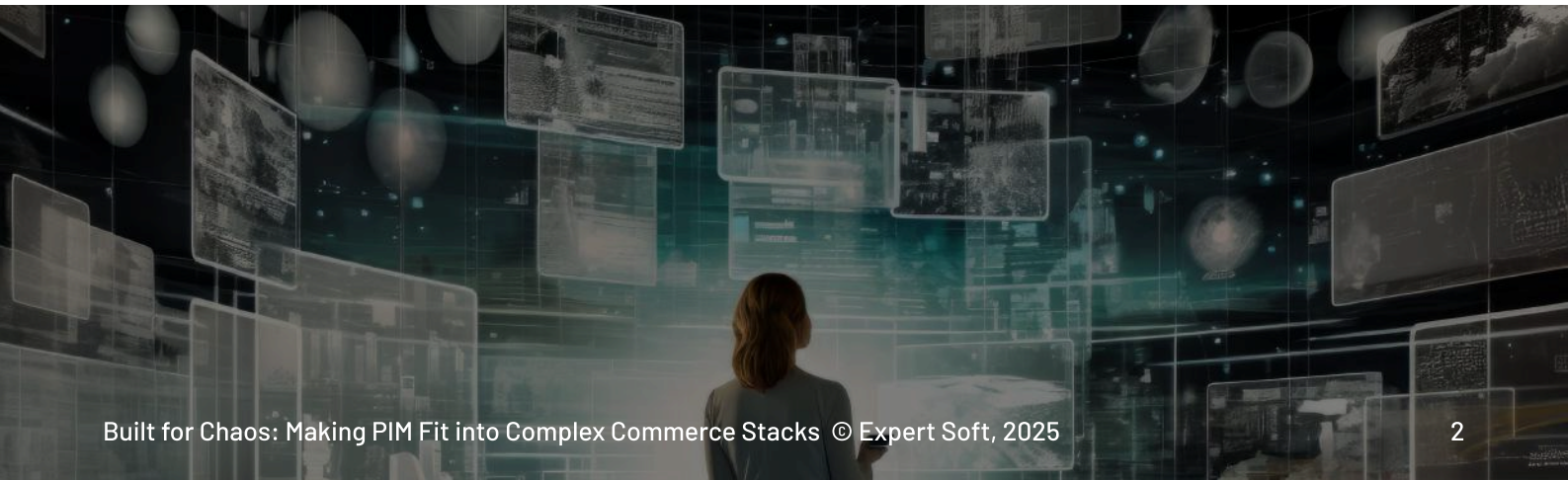
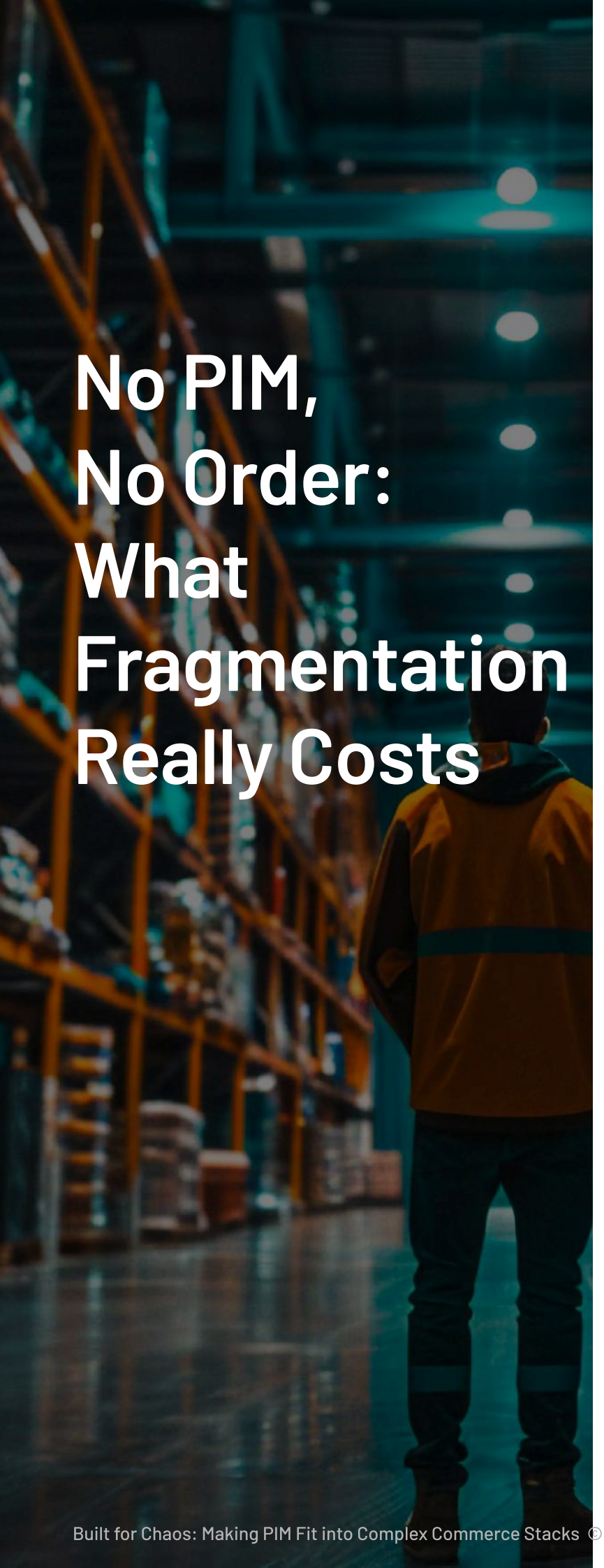




No PIM, No Order: What Fragmentation Really Costs

Very often in high-load enterprise organizations, product data lives everywhere and nowhere at once.

A spec change might be updated in an ERP, forgotten in a spreadsheet, missing in a marketplace feed, and formatted differently in each of them. Teams build their own workarounds. Processes drift. Launches get delayed.

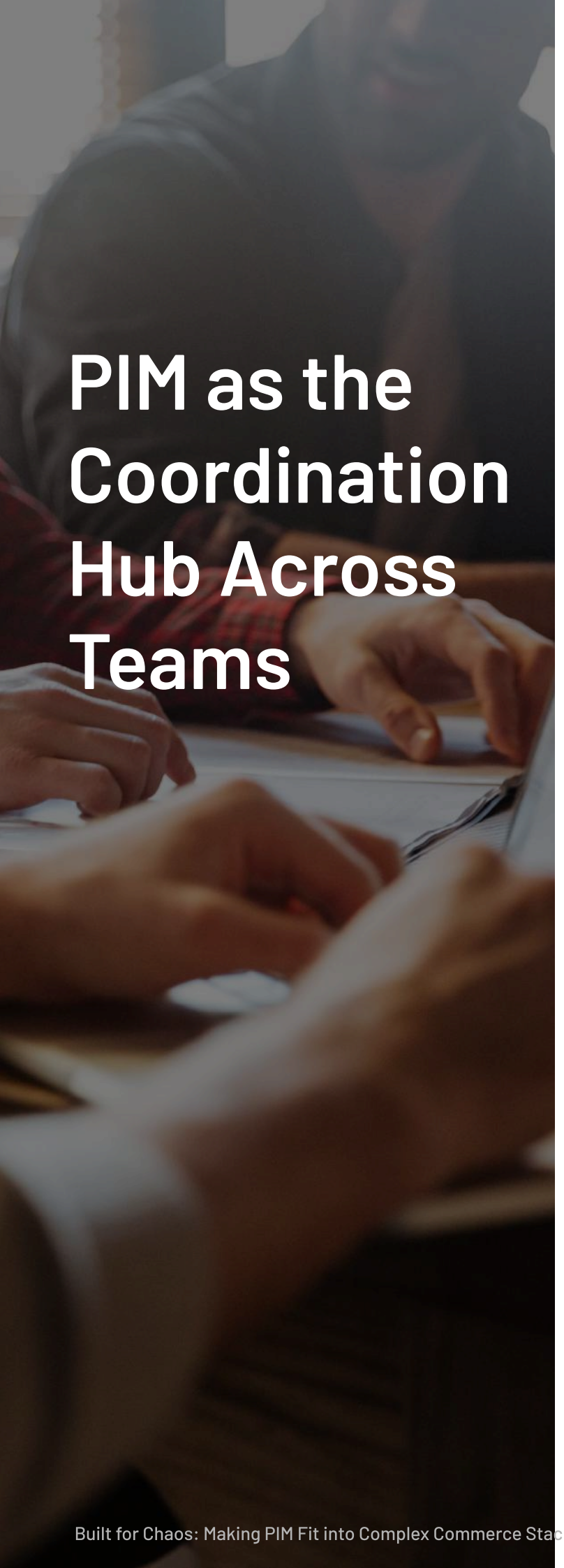
The problem lies in the structure. Without a central layer to organize product information, every update becomes a risk. Data is duplicated, misaligned, or re-entered manually. Scaling becomes slow and expensive, especially when selling across multiple platforms or regions.

What can help here is a central point, and often, that's a PIM. But not as just another tool in the stack. PIM should be viewed as the single source of truth for enriched product content, acting as a connective layer that harmonizes data from multiple authoritative sources. Let's zoom in.

FRAGMENTED APPROACH	PIM-ENABLED APPROACH
Product data scattered across ERP, spreadsheets, eCommerce, and content tools	PIM consolidates fragmented sources into one governed system, ensuring consistency and traceability
Teams repeat the same tasks in silos	Shared workflows with clear roles and ownership
Manual re-entry of the same data in different systems	Automated syndication delivers channel-specific data formats from a single source, no rework needed
Inconsistent naming, categories, and translations across markets	Structured data models and localization layers ensure coherence across languages and geographies
High time-to-market for new product launches	Faster time-to-market through streamlined data readiness and coordinated publishing across all touchpoints
Marketplace expansion blocked by incomplete or messy product catalogs	Platform-ready exports that scale your reach

However, structure alone isn't enough. Behind every data flow are people, and in enterprise environments, they sit in different departments, follow different goals, and often speak different system languages.

And yes, PIM helps here too, not just with data, but with aligning the teams around it.



PIM as the Coordination Hub Across Teams

Teams don't set out to work against each other, but when product content flows through separate systems, inboxes, and spreadsheets, misalignment is inevitable.

Ecommerce needs speed, marketing needs flexibility, IT needs structure, and without a shared coordination layer, everyone ends up duplicating efforts and burning budgets.

Beyond streamlining product data, PIM enables departments to align on a shared goal, approaching it from their respective perspectives while collaborating without operational overlap or conflict.

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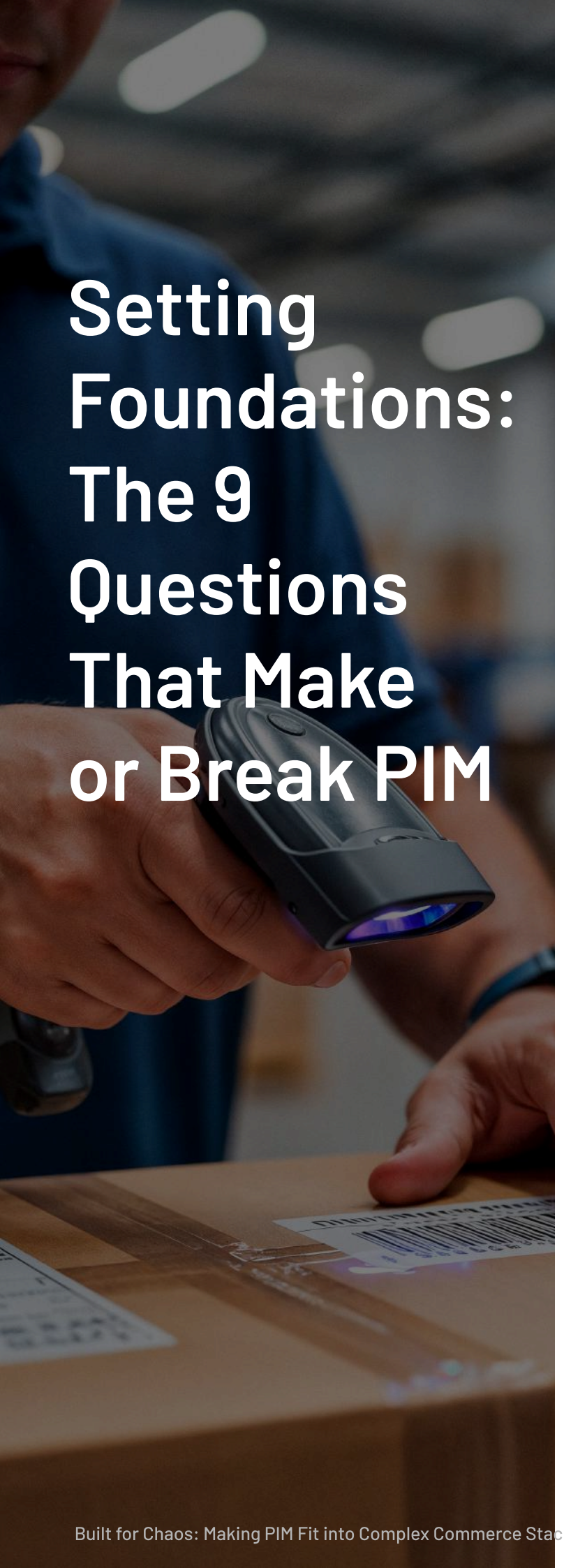
HOW PIM CONNECTS TEAMS

PROCESS	ECOMMERCE VIEW	MARKETING VIEW	IT VIEW	MAIN FRICTION	HOW PIM ALIGNS
Product Launch	"We need to go live across all platforms without delays."	"We need product assets and descriptions finalized and approved within the launch time."	"We need structured, validated product data available before launch day."	Product titles, specs, and media are delivered in different formats and stages; teams work in sequence, causing bottlenecks.	Shared enrichment workflows, asset linking, and scheduled publishing let teams contribute in parallel.
Localization	"We need localized pricing, availability, and content ready per market."	"We need to manage product translations and localize descriptions efficiently across regions."	"We need to avoid maintaining separate versions for every region."	Regional content and pricing are handled independently across teams, leading to duplication, inconsistency, and version conflicts.	Role-based localization layers, translation workflows, and region-aware exports.
Marketplace Onboarding	"We need to meet each marketplace's data structure and image rules."	"We need to ensure product content and visuals stay consistent across marketplaces."	"We need reusable, automated templates to handle different platform requirements."	Each team adapts content separately; copy/paste leads to errors and missed requirements.	Channel-specific templates, validation, and automated syndication.
Content Enrichment	"We need enriched product info — bullets, specs, images — to convert."	"We need tools to manage visuals, SEO text, and assets without chasing IT."	"We need centralized control over what's changed, when, and by whom."	Content lives in disconnected folders, emails, and spreadsheets; multiple edits conflict or go missing.	One platform for enrichment, media management, and role-based editing with version control.
Data Validation	"We need clean data or listings break, especially on marketplaces."	"We need content that passes checks the first time, not after 3 rounds."	"We need automatic validation and clear rules to reduce support load."	Validation happens late, often manually; errors surface after publishing, triggering rework.	Rule-based validation, completeness scoring, and approval flows built into enrichment.

When teams start speaking the same language through one system, coordination finally becomes real, not just expected.

To turn alignment into execution, the next step is clarity: what exactly needs to be defined, agreed on, and prepared before PIM integration begins. That's where most organizations either gain momentum or stall.



Setting Foundations: The 9 Questions That Make or Break PIM

Even the most advanced system can turn into just another layer of confusion if the fundamentals aren't clear.

Before embarking on a PIM implementation, it's not enough to align around the idea of PIM. You need to assess whether your organization is truly prepared, both technically and operationally.

Here is a starting point to make sure you're building on solid ground.

The smartest systems fail when they aren't built to connect.
Get the guide to integration strategies that prevent costly rebuilds.

PIM READINESS CHECKLIST

- [ ] **Which systems currently supply product data (ERP, spreadsheets, supplier feeds)?**
  Why it matters: Missing sources during integration leads to manual patches and data gaps post-launch.

- [ ] **Are attributes, variants, and categories consistently structured?**
  Why it matters: Messy structures mean PIM imports will break or require rework, delaying go-live.

- [ ] **Who handles enrichment today, and with what tools?**
  Why it matters: If responsibilities aren't clear, enrichment will continue in silos outside the system.

- [ ] **Are any teams still updating product info manually in eCommerce or marketplaces?**
  Why it matters: Manual overrides will break synchronization and undermine the PIM's control layer.

- [ ] **How much autonomy do local teams need for editing and localization?**
  Why it matters: If this isn't mapped, teams will either be blocked by restrictions or bypass governance entirely.

- [ ] **Do we have a clear owner for product data across departments?**
  Why it matters: Without it, PIM turns into a battleground, with teams overwriting each other and no one accountable for content quality.

- [ ] **Do we understand the full complexity of our catalog (languages, SKUs, regions)?**
  Why it matters: If underestimated, your setup might not scale or reflect the actual business logic.

- [ ] **Are there defined publishing and approval workflows?**
  Why it matters: Without them, teams may recreate bottlenecks or bypass the PIM altogether.

- [ ] **Are there plans to expand into new markets, channels, or composable architecture?**
  Why it matters: A PIM set up only for the present will need expensive rework to support future scale.

Answering these questions now can save you weeks or even months of rework. Just as critical? Having the right architectural game plan from the start.

So let's shift our focus to execution: what kind of implementation approach fits your organization, where the risks usually hide, and how to avoid common traps before they slow you down.

Common Scenarios for PIM Implementation

There's no one-size-fits-all when it comes to implementing PIM — and that's exactly why it pays to choose your path with intent. The way you integrate PIM depends on what you already have, how your teams operate, and where you're going next.

Below are three of the most common enterprise scenarios we've seen with their own sweet spots and specifics.

SCENARIO 1: ERP → PIM → ECOMMERCE / MARKETPLACES

This is the most common setup in ecommerce, in which the ERP remains the system of record for pricing, stock levels, and core identifiers, while PIM becomes the central hub for enriched product content.

PIM consolidates attributes, descriptions, digital assets, and categorization, and distributes this clean data to all customer-facing channels, from ecommerce platforms and marketplaces to mobile apps and print catalogs.

This model keeps the ERP stable and untouched while allowing the business to scale and adapt content without overloading backend systems.

BEST FIT: Organizations with a solid ERP backbone that need to scale content operations, marketplace presence, or localization without slowing core systems down.

SCENARIO SPECIFICS

This setup demands well-defined integration points between ERP and PIM, particularly for initial data ingestion and attribute model mapping. The biggest challenge is often the messy or inconsistent structure of ERP data, which can require intensive cleanup before it's usable in a flexible PIM model. Export flows to various channels also need to be clearly defined to avoid rework or manual gaps.

PRO TIP

Don't boil the ocean. Start with a single product category and validate the full data flow before expanding. It's the fastest way to spot modeling flaws early and avoid technical debt later.

SCENARIO IN PRACTICE

A global medical technology provider using SAP Commerce faced growing friction as it tried to scale. A rigid back-office setup and heavy manual data handling meant that even simple product updates, from deactivation to localization, required IT support, delaying launches and increasing the risk of errors.

To solve this, we introduced a custom PIM layer, using Sitecore and micro-frontends, integrated with Hybris.

This allowed:

- One-click product deactivation synced with Solr
- Attribute-copying tools to reduce redundancy
- Visual workflows for regional management and external data processing
- API-based reporting to replace manual scripts

With all these capabilities, PIM implementation resulted in over 10× database load reduction, faster onboarding for new SKUs, and the elimination of recurring IT bottlenecks.

SCENARIO 2:
PIM AS PRODUCT EXPERIENCE HUB (HEADLESS MODEL)

In this architecture, PIM plays a central role not only in managing product data but in powering the product experience directly. Through APIs, PIM delivers structured content to the front-end (e.g., headless storefronts, CMS platforms, mobile apps), while transactional elements like pricing and inventory flow in parallel from the ecommerce platform.

However, note that PIM platforms are typically not optimized for high-volume, low-latency public traffic. In production, this is often mitigated by pairing PIM with a caching layer, CDN, or search index for performance and resilience.

BEST FIT: Organizations building composable commerce ecosystems with a focus on flexibility, speed, and customer experience.

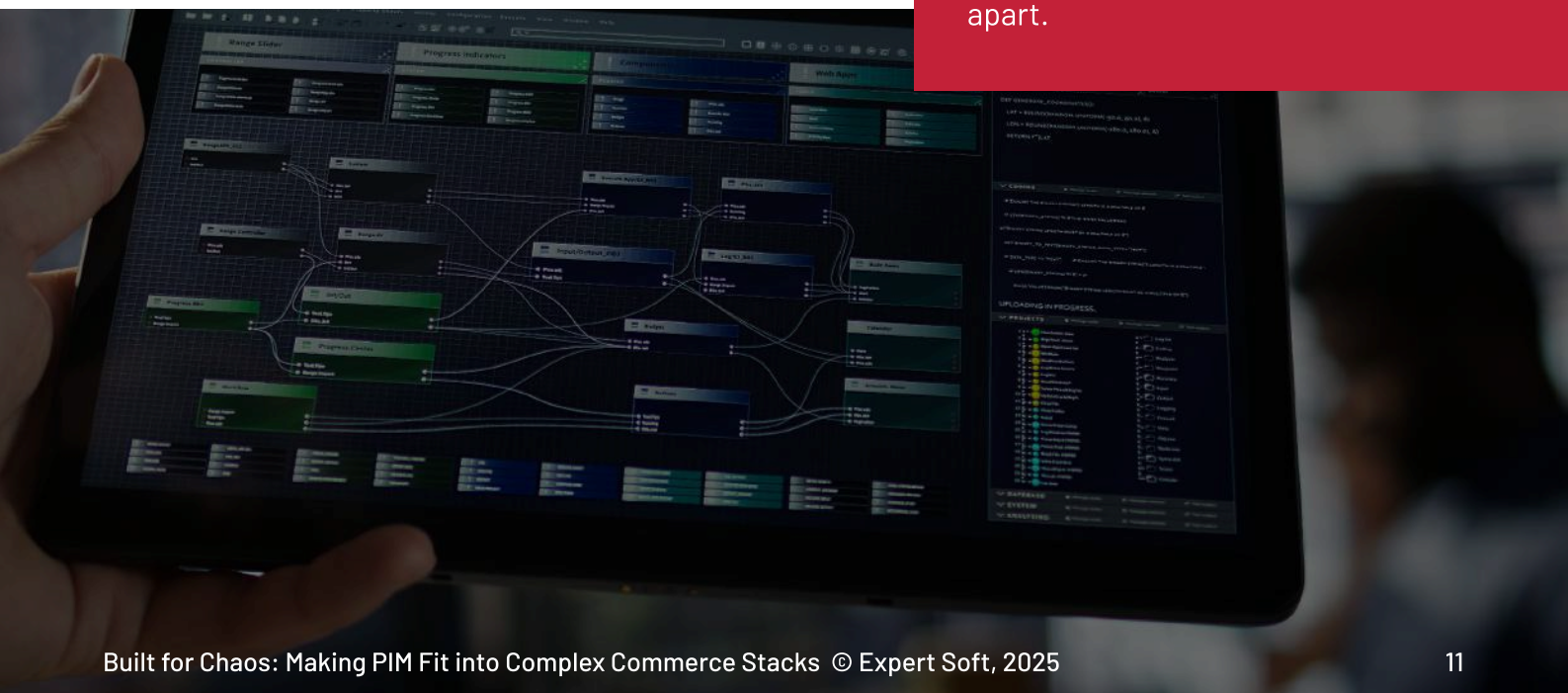
SCENARIO SPECIFICS

In this model, API design is key, especially when front-ends pull data from both PIM and other systems. If that orchestration isn't tight, product pages can show mismatched or incomplete information. Also, watch for misalignment between enriched content and real-time pricing or stock — it's an easy way to break the product experience when it matters most.

PRO TIP

Define strict API contracts early and build in fallback mechanisms. This ensures your product pages don't break if pricing or stock data lags behind content delivery.

API-first doesn't mean plan-second. See how to coordinate systems in a headless setup before they drift apart.



SCENARIO 3: DECOUPLED TEAMS, CENTRALIZED PIM

This model is all about managing complexity at scale. A centralized PIM becomes the backbone of product information, while multiple teams, whether regional units, business lines, or category owners, contribute content through structured workflows and role-based permissions.

While IT oversees and governs the integration flows, business teams are granted controlled autonomy, enabling them to enrich, localize, and manage their respective portions of the catalog within defined governance boundaries.

BEST FIT: enterprises with decentralized teams, regional catalogs, or matrix-style org structures.

SCENARIO SPECIFICS

Success here depends less on pure tech and more on governance maturity. With multiple contributors working in the same system, you'll need clear policies, contributor onboarding, and mechanisms to manage regional overrides. The challenge is striking the right balance: global consistency must coexist with local flexibility, and when that line gets blurry, things break.

PRO TIP

Don't just write documentation — build shared playbooks. When teams know how to collaborate and where to escalate, you avoid friction before it turns into a data war.

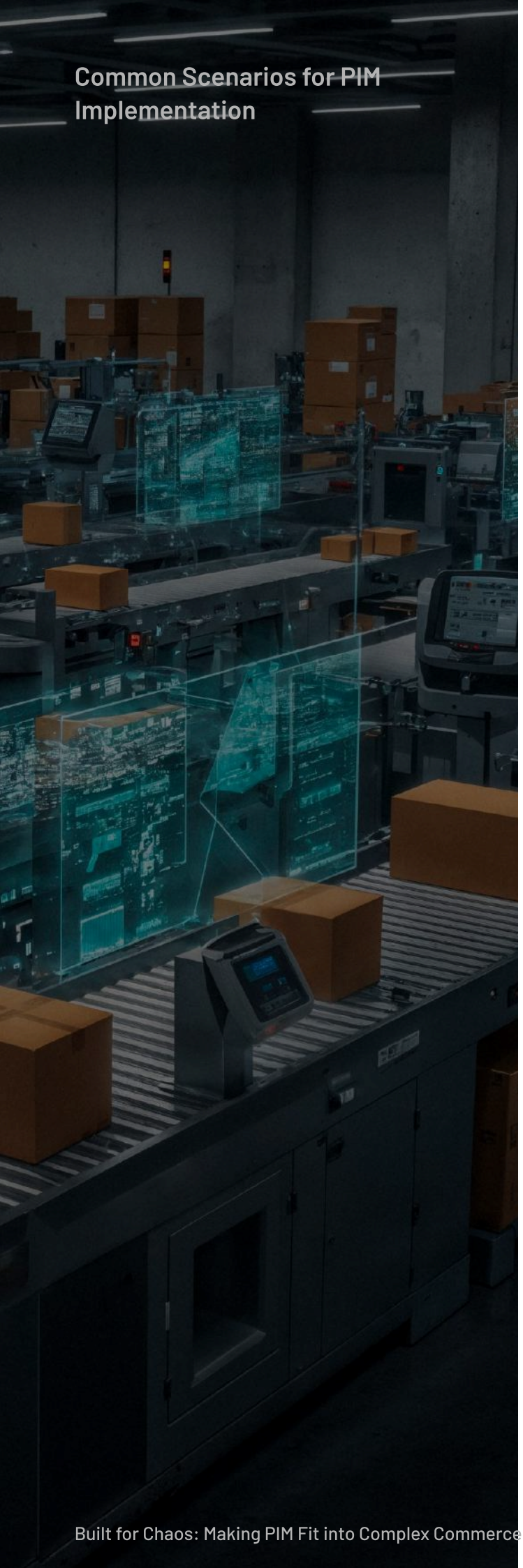
SCENARIO IN PRACTICE

One company working with decentralized content teams needed a system that could support both flexibility and control, without disrupting their existing tech stack. They chose Pimcore for its open architecture and native PHP compatibility, aligning well with their existing Symfony-based service stack.

To integrate the system, we performed key steps:

- Integrating a mid-tier ERP (Odoo) via REST and scheduled batch jobs for master product data
- Setting up localized editorial interfaces with region-specific access rules
- Automating feed generation for PDFs, GS1 exports, and marketplace specs
- Creating approval workflows, so local teams could manage content, while governance stayed centralized

With automated asset workflows and channel-specific feed generation, the company reduced translation overhead and scaled product onboarding across markets, all while maintaining central governance.



Implementing PIM is never just about choosing a tool, but about reshaping how your organization handles complexity.

It starts at the top: aligning goals, defining ownership, and making sure teams know where they intersect and where they don't. Only then do you move into architecture, because the structure you build will either bring clarity or amplify chaos.

And while the plan matters, execution is where most teams hit the wall. That's where the right partner changes everything — someone who's already solved for scale, legacy constraints, and cross-team orchestration.

That's what we do at Expert Soft: help ambitious teams turn complex ecosystems into synchronized engines for growth.

About Expert Soft

Expert Soft is a targeted ecommerce software delivery company, partnering with Fortune 500 companies and global corporations across the US and EU. With SAP Commerce Cloud and Java as our backbone, we know how to ensure scalable and high-performing solutions that can handle 1 mln requests per second, delivering a smooth customer experience.

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EKATERINA LAPCHANKA
Chief Operating Officer
kate.lapsenco@expert-soft.com

+1 585 4997879
+371 25 893 015

PAVEL TSARYKAU
CEO & Founder
of Expert Soft

Let's connect

expert-soft.com

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