



EQUIPMENT BUYER'S GUIDE

WHAT TO ASK YOUR EQUIPMENT MANUFACTURER BEFORE YOU SIGN.

**5 questions that separate a 10-year partner
from a 10-year problem.**

A practical guide for operations directors,
facility managers, and procurement teams.

Komar Industries | One platform. One partner. Built to work.

The cheapest machine could be the most expensive one you'll own.

Most equipment purchases start with a spec sheet and a quote. The buyer compares three or four options, picks the one that fits the budget, and moves on.

Twelve months later, the problems start. A part fails and the replacement is backordered for six weeks. A service call takes 10 days to schedule. The machine that looked like a deal on paper is now costing more in downtime, emergency repairs, and lost throughput than the price difference ever saved.

This pattern repeats across waste handling, recycling, and material processing operations every year and it is almost entirely preventable.

Depending on the industry, the purchase price of industrial equipment can represent just **20 to 30 percent** of what that machine will cost over its operational life (Graco Industrial, 2024). The rest is maintenance, parts, downtime, energy consumption, and the labor required to keep it running.

This guide gives you a framework for evaluating equipment manufacturers on the factors that actually determine lifetime cost. It contains five specific questions you can bring to your next vendor meeting, along with a scoring methodology your team can use to compare options objectively.

You will not find product recommendations in this guide. What you will find is a decision framework built on 60+ years of manufacturing experience that helps you ask better questions before you sign.



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of what that machine will cost you over its operational life.

(Graco Industrial, 2024)

THE HIDDEN COST PROBLEM

Why the lowest quote rarely delivers the lowest cost.

When operations teams evaluate capital equipment, the RFP process focuses on upfront price, delivery timeline, and whether the machine meets the stated specifications. These are reasonable starting criteria. They are also insufficient.

The costs that determine whether a piece of equipment was a good investment show up in Year 2, Year 5, and Year 10.

They include parts availability and lead times, quality and speed of field service, energy efficiency under real operating conditions, how the machine holds up under continuous duty cycles, and whether the manufacturer is still supporting that model a decade from now.

Operations directors who have been through two or three equipment purchasing cycles already know this. The machine that ran flawlessly for 15 years and the machine that became a maintenance headache within 18 months often looked identical on the spec sheet.

The numbers that matter:

20–30%

Purchase price as a share of total equipment lifetime cost. The remaining 70–80% is maintenance, parts, downtime, energy, and labor.

Weeks → days

Lead time difference between overseas and domestically manufactured parts. Reshoring cuts delivery from weeks to days.

10–20 years

Expected operational life of a properly maintained quality baler. Equipment built to a price often fails in half that time.

\$25,000–\$200,000/hour

Estimated cost per hour of unplanned industrial downtime. Actual costs vary based on facility size, throughput, and process complexity.

TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP

The framework that changes how you evaluate equipment.

Total cost of ownership is not a new concept. But in equipment purchasing, it is rarely applied with the rigor it deserves. Most TCO calculations in RFPs are limited to purchase price plus a maintenance estimate from the vendor. That is like estimating the cost of owning a building based on the mortgage payment alone.

A complete TCO analysis for industrial equipment includes six cost categories. Each one should be part of your evaluation before you sign a purchase agreement.

Cost Category	What to evaluate
Acquisition cost	Purchase price, freight, installation, site preparation, and training. This is the number everyone negotiates, and it is only the beginning.
Operating cost	Energy consumption, consumables, and labor hours per cycle. The number most buyers underestimate because it compounds every day the machine runs.
Maintenance cost	Scheduled preventative maintenance, unscheduled repairs, service call rates, and annual service contracts. Ask for actual maintenance cost data from existing installations.
Parts cost and availability	Replacement part pricing, lead times, domestic vs. overseas sourcing, and inventory guarantees from the manufacturer. This is the category most likely to produce surprises.
Downtime cost	Hours of lost production per unplanned outage, multiplied by your facility's hourly throughput value. One multi-day outage can erase years of upfront savings.
End-of-life cost	Residual value, decommissioning, and disposal. Equipment built to last retains value at end of life. Equipment built to a price may not.



When you add all six categories, the manufacturer who quotes the lowest price may deliver the highest lifetime cost.

THE 5 QUESTIONS

Ask these before you sign any equipment purchase agreement.

These five questions are designed to reveal how a manufacturer actually operates, not just what they promise in a sales meeting. The answers will tell you whether you are buying from a company that builds equipment for the long term or one that sells equipment for the short term.

1. “WHERE ARE YOUR PARTS MANUFACTURED, AND WHAT IS YOUR GUARANTEED DELIVERY LEAD TIME?”

This is the single most important question in equipment evaluation. A machine is only as reliable as its parts supply chain.

Manufacturers who build, source, and stock parts domestically can typically deliver replacements in days. Reshoring manufacturing cuts delivery lead times from six weeks to six days (Reshoring Initiative, 2025). Manufacturers who source parts overseas add 30 to 40 days of lead time from shipping and customs alone (Paramount Global, 2024), and that timeline stretches further when demand spikes or supply chains tighten.

Ask for specific commitments: stocking location, guaranteed lead times in writing, and the manufacturer's track record on parts fulfillment over the past 24 months. If they hesitate, you have your answer.

2. “WHAT DOES YOUR SERVICE NETWORK LOOK LIKE, AND HOW FAST CAN A TECHNICIAN BE ON SITE?”

Equipment will need service. The question is how quickly.

Manufacturers with a North American service infrastructure, including factory-trained technicians, preventative maintenance programs, and installation support, can respond in days. Manufacturers who rely on third-party service networks or regional distributors often take weeks.

Ask how many service technicians the manufacturer employs directly. Ask what the average response time was for emergency service calls last year. Ask whether they offer preventative maintenance contracts and what those cover specifically.



3. “WHAT IS THE EXPECTED OPERATIONAL LIFE OF THIS EQUIPMENT, AND WHAT DATA SUPPORTS THAT CLAIM?”

Any manufacturer can claim their equipment lasts 15 to 25 years. The question is whether they can prove it.

Ask for lifecycle data from installations that have been running for a decade or more. Ask how many units they have in the field with over 10 years of continuous operation. Ask what the typical failure mode is at end of life and whether major components can be rebuilt or must be replaced entirely.

Manufacturers who design and build equipment in their own facilities, using their own engineering teams, can usually answer these questions with specifics. Manufacturers who assemble components sourced from multiple suppliers often cannot.

4. “WHERE IS THIS EQUIPMENT DESIGNED AND BUILT, AND DO YOU CONTROL THE MANUFACTURING PROCESS?”

This is not a question about patriotism. It is a question about quality control, lead time predictability, and long-term support.

Manufacturers who design and fabricate equipment in their own facilities control every variable: steel quality, weld integrity, component tolerances, paint and coating durability, and final assembly inspection. They can adjust production schedules when demand changes. They can trace a defect back to the specific process that caused it. And they are not subject to the shipping delays, tariff fluctuations, and communication gaps that come with overseas sourcing.

Ask where the equipment is designed. Ask where it is fabricated. Ask whether final assembly happens under the manufacturer's roof or at a third-party facility. The answers will tell you how much control the manufacturer has over the quality of what they deliver.

5. “CAN YOU PROVIDE REFERENCES FROM CUSTOMERS WHO HAVE OPERATED YOUR EQUIPMENT FOR 5+ YEARS?”

A manufacturer's willingness to connect you with long-term customers tells you everything about their confidence in their own product.

Ask for references who have been running the equipment for at least five years, ideally in an application similar to yours. Then ask those references the following: How has the equipment performed relative to what was promised? How responsive has the manufacturer been on service and parts? Would you buy from them again?



MANUFACTURER EVALUATION SCORECARD

Rate each manufacturer 1–5 on each criterion. Use this in your next vendor comparison meeting.

Evaluation Criterion	Weight	Mfr A	Mfr B	Mfr C
Parts availability and lead time guarantee	25%			
Service network coverage and response time	20%			
Equipment lifecycle data and proof	20%			
Manufacturing control (design + build)	15%			
Long-term customer references (5+ yr)	10%			
Total cost of ownership transparency	10%			
WEIGHTED TOTAL	100%			

WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE IN PRACTICE

How manufacturers who score well on all five questions actually operate.

The five questions are designed to separate manufacturers who build equipment from manufacturers who sell equipment. Here is what the answers look like from a manufacturer that scores well across all five criteria.



Parts and supply chain.

In an ideal world, the right replacement parts are in stock, ship quickly, and get your equipment back up and running in days, not weeks.



Service infrastructure.

A combination of factory-direct technicians and certified service partners handles installation, preventative maintenance, and emergency repairs. The manufacturer manages the service network directly, maintaining training, quality standards, and accountability across all service locations.



Build quality and lifecycle.

Properly maintained equipment has an expected operational lifespan of 10 to 20 years. Compactors, balers, shredders, augers, or other waste equipment are built with heavy-gauge steel, precision welding, and components rated for decades of daily operation.



Manufacturing control.

Design, engineering, fabrication, and final assembly happen in a controlled environment. The manufacturer controls steel sourcing, weld quality, coating durability, and final inspection with full accountability.

HOW KOMAR SCORES ON ALL FIVE

We wrote this guide. We should be held to the same standard.

Question	How Komar answers
Q1: Parts	Major components are manufactured to Komar engineering specifications and subjected to quality control and inspection processes. Parts inventory is maintained for active product lines to support uptime and responsive service.
Q2: Service	Service is delivered through a network of factory-direct technicians and certified service partners across North America. Preventative maintenance, emergency repairs, installation support, inspections, and aftermarket services are coordinated through a manufacturer-managed network with established training, quality, and performance standards.
Q3: Lifecycle	Integrated product platform from legacy brands PTR, BACE, Maren, and Metro Compactor Service with 60+ years of combined manufacturing history. Equipment engineered for 10–20 year operational lifecycles in continuous-duty industrial applications.
Q4: Manufacturing	All equipment designed and engineered in the United States. Komar controls the manufacturing process from steel sourcing, welding, assembly, coating, and final inspection, using a combination of global and domestic manufacturing.
Q5: References	Komar equipment operates in retail, distribution, recycling, waste, and industrial facilities across North America. Customer references and application-specific examples are available upon request.

SECTION 6

YOUR NEXT STEP

This guide was designed to be a helpful tool. Bring it to your next vendor evaluation meeting. Ask each manufacturer the five questions and score their answers. The manufacturer who scores highest on parts, service, lifecycle, manufacturing control, and references is the one most likely to deliver the lowest total cost of ownership over the life of the equipment.

If you would like to see how Komar scores against your specific requirements, we are happy to walk through the evaluation framework together.

Contact Us



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Schedule a walkthrough:
komarindustries.com/contact

ABOUT KOMAR INDUSTRIES

Komar brings together the industry's most comprehensive portfolio of waste and recycling equipment solutions under a single engineering, manufacturing, and service organization. More than 165 factory-trained technicians handle 85,000+ service calls annually across North America, delivering consistent service levels, direct manufacturer parts access, and a single point of accountability for equipment performance and uptime.

iSMART™, Komar's IoT monitoring platform, provides real-time equipment visibility, predictive maintenance alerts, and cross-location performance analytics, helping organizations reduce downtime, improve operational efficiency, and make more informed equipment decisions.

Learn more at komarindustries.com



85,000+

Service calls supported
annually

165+

Factory-trained
technicians

60+

Years of combined
manufacturing history

5

Benchmark categories
evaluated in less than
five minutes