



TABLETTING BUYER'S GUIDE

**THE KEY QUESTIONS
YOU NEED TO ASK
BEFORE BUYING A
TABLET PRESS**

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Buying a tablet press is a major capital investment. Knowing what you're getting (and what you may not be getting) in a tablet press is crucial to your decision making process. Before you buy, it pays to do your homework and, when the time comes, ask some pointed questions. This guide will help to familiarize you with the things you should find out in order to make an informed decision.

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GENERAL

What is the tablet press manufacturer's corporate profile? (size, years in business, relevant patents, overall assets, earnings, sales, sister companies, market share, etc.)

Making tablet presses is one thing; making tablet presses that perform properly and are designed to meet your needs is another. Learn all you can about the manufacturer and the quality of their machines; the company's stability; the longevity of their staff, etc.

What product(s) do I want to run on the press?

Will you be producing single-, double-, or triple-layer tablets? OTC drugs? Vitamins and dietary supplements? Pharmaceuticals? Will you be working with toxic materials? Make sure the machine you consider is designed to handle the raw materials, the production schedules and workload. Check into ease of changeover, maintenance, operator friendliness, and safety.

Will the machine eventually be used globally?

If so, can it meet the different regulatory requirements and cGMP's from country to country? And don't forget about spare parts availability, service and support, and electrical systems compatibility.

Does my company presently run any of the same machines (either locally or globally)?

If the answer is yes, find out how well (or not) those machines perform. What real-world benefits do they offer? Are there any disadvantages?

What does the machine offer that will give me a competitive edge? How will it improve my company?

How can the tablet press increase your product yields? Decrease downtime? What is the machine's maximum output capabilities? Can it run 24/7? What innovations does it feature?

How can it help me reduce my consumption unit cost?

Learn all you can about the machine's safety, output, and efficiency. What features does it offer to minimize or help eliminate product loss while ensuring product quality and consistency?

How do I compare quotations from different companies for the same type of machine?

Find out about the true total cost of ownership. This includes the total acquisition cost and the total operation cost. Look into such factors as technical evaluations, equipment testing, cam design, die fill characteristics, feeders, precompression and main compression issues, etc. And don't forget about training, validation, installation, and support services.

Can I get references, case histories, and "success" stories regarding the machine in "real world" use?

If not, would you be willing to take the seller at his word? If not, why not?

Do they offer an on-site lab?

This is a great way for you to see the machine put through its paces and to learn, first hand, about the company's depth and expertise. It is also a great way to see if the machine can handle your product and what you can expect to see in terms of speed.

What is the machine's price and exactly what is included in that price?

Ask for specific answers and an itemized list of what is and is not included. And get it in writing.

What about payment terms/options.

How do they compare with your needs and budget? Realistic payment capabilities? How will they affect your overall operating costs...now and in the future?

Is there a price guarantee and warranty?

There should be...and be sure to get any specifics in writing.

How fast can I get delivery once I order the machine?

Does the timeline fit your production deadlines/requirements? How will it affect your ready-to-market timing?

Is there a penalty for missed delivery deadlines?

Again, there should be.

Is there an estimate on the total cost of ownership?

If not, ask for one. It's an important guide to the real cost of the machine.

What about installation, set-up and test runs?

These are vital to achieving maximum productivity from your press.

TECHNICAL

What innovations does the machine offer?

Look for things like advanced computer control technology, simplification of turret removal, new online measuring devices, R&D capabilities, the latest in electrical systems, that it meets required mandates of the Government's Code of Federal Regulations, dedusters, NIR capability, tablet-in-tablet functions, containment, operating software, integrated video support, etc.

Does it feature a modular design?

Modular design means easier cleaning, operation, and changeover along with maximum flexibility... now and in the future.

Can the machine run 24/7 if necessary?

It will be too late to ask when and if the need arises.

What is the machine's highest possible output? Is this realistic for all products? What are typical outputs?

Find out what the machine's limitations are before you buy. Make sure it can handle the anticipated workload for the different products you will manufacture.

Can the machine handle different products?

Find out how different granulations and raw materials affect the machine's performance and product consistency.

What are my finished product yields? What have you done to increase yields?

Ask about process improvements and application/optimization services.

How many compression stations does the turret have and how is it designed?

This is vital to better tablet quality, overall performance, and less machine stress.

What is the machine's changeover time?

Are there actual statistics from other customers' experiences?

What about downtime for cleaning?

Are there recommended procedures and intervals to limit downtime?

What about preventive maintenance?

Are outlined schedules and procedures available? Are they geared toward running 24/7?

Can the machine handle toxic materials?

Check into safety and contamination issues.

What are the machine's containment/wash in place features? Do you offer a complete package? If not, who are your partners?

Ask about real-world containment applications and check references.

Is the machine compliant with 21 CFR Part 11?

Be sure to review any/all compliance manuals and documentation.

What are the machine's process parameters?

Are they simplified and user-friendly?

What are the machine's safety features?

Do they meet OSHA requirements?

Is the machine compatible with my current machines?

Will the results be identical to that of my current presses?

What are the machine's main technical points (i.e., control system, user interface, integrated video support, noise levels, touchscreen, etc)?

What about electronic faults?

Are they easily identified?

What options are offered and what are the costs?

Are they required to fulfill my product requirements?

What about software, hardware, and upgrades?

Is it important to upgrade often, and if so, are there validation requirements?

Does the machine feature hydraulics?

Does the machine offer pre-compression for bi-layer production?

Can the machine be quickly converted from bi-layer back to single layer?

What is the timeframe for this?

How are the machine's compression rollers designed?

What material are they made of? What about lifespan? Are they the same size?

What about compression force? For pre- and main?

What are the maximum and minimum compression forces that can be used on the pre- and main?

What about turret removal and exchange?

Is it simplified? Automated? Are both upper and lower cams easily changed? What is required, and is it included with the machine or at an extra cost?

What are the machine's lubrication requirements?

What are the machine's die fill characteristics (i.e., feeders, cams, etc)?

Find out how these measure up to the parameters you want for the products you will produce.

From a production point of view, how does the machine measure up in the areas of dust production, product loss, weight variation, etc?

All of these can adversely affect your product quality, consistency, and yields.

SERVICE & SUPPORT

What kind of validation package comes with the machine?

Are there various packages, and are they specific to each machine ordered?

What about documentation?

What other documentation is provided?

What about SOP's?

What kind of special services are available (i.e., drawings, designs, etc.)?

Is there level-based training available? What is it, and is it for everybody?

Does the vendor provide structured training seminars on a regular basis? Are there open enrollment seminars? Can seminars be brought "in house"?

What are the "real world" machine/operator problems most commonly associated with this model?

Ask for details on mechanical, electrical, and training related issues.

Is a troubleshooting guide available?

Describe the size of the available parts inventory in the U.S. and detail the number of full-time employees dedicated to parts management.

Are OEM spare parts readily available and what is the turnaround time on critical wear parts?

What about emergency service/critical parts failure?

What about reconditioning and trade-ins?

What kind of customer service/support is the machine backed by?

What about service calls on nights, weekends and holidays?

What is the response time for routine start-up? For emergencies?

How many full-time service technicians are on the machine manufacturer's staff and how are they trained and qualified?



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