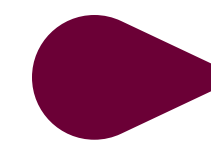


The AI-powered buyer's guide to retail planning solutions





Choosing a retail planning platform is one of the most consequential decisions your team will make. The wrong choice costs you in delayed go-lives, mounting customization debt, and planners who quietly retreat to spreadsheets. The right choice gives you an AI-driven single source of truth, real-time scenario planning, and measurable value from day one. Demos look impressive. Reference calls tell the truth. Use this checklist to pressure-test every vendor against the criteria that separate proven, AI-powered platforms from template-heavy tools that struggle at scale.



1. Production and deployment

A demo proves what a platform can do. Production proves what it does.

- Is the vendor live in production with customers at your scale, and on which modules?
- How many business units or geographies are live today?
- Are all planning functions on the platform, or are some still on legacy tools?

Why this matters:

Many tools demo beautifully but have few customers genuinely live. Insist on production references that mirror your scope.



2. Scale and performance

Performance at demo scale tells you nothing about performance at your scale. This is where template-based platforms most often break down.

- What scale does the solution support today (stores, SKUs, distribution centers, orders)?
- Can planners run scenarios in near real time, or do they wait for large jobs to complete?
- Has anyone reduced data scope or shortened the planning horizon to maintain performance?

Why this matters:

If a vendor makes you trim your data to stay responsive, you're buying a constraint, not a capability. Blue Yonder delivers AI-driven, near real-time scenario planning at enterprise retail scale without those compromises.



3. Implementation experience

Implementation timelines are where ambitious promises meet operational reality.

- How long did implementation actually take versus the original plan?
- What level of internal IT or data engineering support was required?
- Did the customer rely on the vendor, a system integrator, or internal resources?

Why this matters:

Extended implementations and heavy reliance on system integrators are warning signs of a platform that isn't truly productized.



4. Out-of-the-box functionality versus customization

This is the single most important distinction in your evaluation: Are you buying proven functionality, or templates you'll have to build yourself?

- How much functionality was out-of-the-box versus custom built?
- Is the customer still building or enhancing custom components?
- Who supports the custom code over its lifetime?

Why this matters:

Template-based platforms shift the burden of building and maintaining core functionality onto you. Proven, out-of-the-box, AI-powered functionality means faster value and a lower total cost of ownership.



5. Data model and integration

Your platform is only as good as the data flowing into it, and integration effort is consistently underestimated.

- How long did it take to integrate core operational data?
- Were there challenges aligning source data with the platform's data model?
- How much ongoing effort is required to maintain integrations and pipelines?

Why this matters:

A rigid data model turns integration into a perpetual project. AI-driven planning depends on clean, real-time data, so ask whether alignment was a one-time effort or an ongoing struggle.



6. Planning usability and adoption

A powerful platform delivers zero value if planners won't use it. Adoption is the truest measure of fit.

- How many planners actively use the system today?
- How much of the planning flow happens in the solution versus Excel?
- How much training was required for planners to become proficient?

Why this matters:

If planners have drifted back to spreadsheets for core processes, the platform has failed. High Excel dependency is a red flag about usability and trust.



7. Scenario planning and decision support

Modern retail demands fast, confident decisions. Scenario planning is where speed and trust come together or fall apart.

- How long does a meaningful scenario take to run?
- Can planners easily simulate network or assortment changes?
- Does the business trust scenario outputs enough to act on them?

Why this matters:

Slow scenarios discourage exploration, and outputs nobody trusts get ignored. The goal is AI-powered, real-time simulation the business acts on with confidence, exactly what apparel buyers need when a trend breaks.



8. Value and business outcomes

Every vendor promises ROI. Ask customers to prove it with numbers.

- What measurable value is the customer getting today?
- How is it measured (inventory reduction, service levels, productivity)?
- Did they achieve the ROI originally expected?

Why this matters:

Press for hard metrics, not anecdotes. A vendor with strong production deployments will have customers who can quantify forecast accuracy gains, inventory reductions, and improved service levels.





9. Operational gaps and workarounds

No platform is perfect, but the number of workarounds reveals a lot. This is often the most candid part of a reference call.

- Which planning activities still require manual workarounds?
- What capabilities do planners wish the system handled better?
- Where does the system fail to support the business process?

Why this matters:

Persistent manual workarounds signal functional gaps the demo conveniently skipped. Ask where reality diverged from the sales pitch.



10. Upgrade and maintenance

The cost of ownership extends across the entire lifecycle. A platform that's hard to maintain becomes a liability.

- How easy is it to adopt new releases and updates?
- How much effort is required to maintain the solution over time?
- Has it required significant ongoing tuning or model adjustments?

Why this matters:

Heavily customized platforms make every upgrade a project. Proven, productized solutions deliver new AI capabilities through standard releases, so you benefit from continuous innovation without continuous rework.

The bottom line

- The pattern is clear. The questions that trip up template-based platforms are the ones that proven, AI-powered solutions answer with confidence: real customers live at scale, fast time-to-value, out-of-the-box functionality, near real-time scenarios, and measurable ROI.
- As you evaluate, watch for the warning signs: gaps between demo capabilities and actual workflows, implementation delays, integration struggles, low planner adoption, and value that never materializes.
- Blue Yonder was built to meet this checklist head-on, with proven AI-driven functionality, enterprise-scale performance, and customers who can show the results.
- When you're ready to compare, bring these questions.
- We're confident in the answers.

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