

Digital basics: what a 20-person shop actually needs



In this order and no other. Each step comes up only once the one before it is actually running in the business — not once it has been bought. The prices are rough figures for a shop of around 20 people, as at the start of 2026.

Step 1 — backup, before anything else happens

- 01 An automatic daily backup with one copy held off site. Once a quarter, a restore test: pull one file back out of the backup and open it. Roughly €15 to €40 a month.
- 02 Two people who know how to run the restore. Not one. Costs nothing but an hour.

Step 2 — drawings and documents in one place

- 03 One shared drive or cloud folder with a binding folder structure and a naming rule for files. The argument about the naming rule is the actual work; the technology is not. About €5 to €12 per person per month.
- 04 A rule about which drawing counts: one revision, one date, one place. Paper in the hall is fine, as long as it was printed from that one folder.

Step 3 — feedback off the shop floor

- 05 Time and job booking that a worker wearing gloves can finish in under ten seconds. A terminal or tablet at the machine, no password login. Around €900 to €2,500 one-off plus running costs.
- 06 One report that arrives by itself every Monday: which jobs are open, which are over their costed time. If nobody reads it, it was the wrong step.

Step 4 — and only now: everything else

Only once steps 1 to 3 have run without complaint for at least six months does it make sense to talk about an ERP system, detailed scheduling or machine connectivity. Before that you buy a system that needs data the business does not have — and then pay consultants to create the data afterwards.

What you do not need

No app of your own. No dashboard on the hall wall before step 3 is running. No smart glasses, no chatbot and no island solution only one employee can operate. And no software whose vendor will only tell you the price after a meeting.

This list is deliberately short. If somebody wants to sell a 20-person business more than three tools at once, that is a reason to get a second opinion — including one that does not come from us.