



Pharma Enquiry AI
GENERATLY.AI

ENQUIRY-TO-QUOTE INTELLIGENCE

From Enquiry to Quote: How AI Is Changing CDMO Quoting

Why the quoting cycle — not capacity, not price — decides which contract manufacturer wins the business. And what can safely be automated in a regulated environment.

RESPOND FASTER

QUOTE CONSISTENTLY

PROTECT MARGINS

WIN MORE BUSINESS

A · ORIENTATION

Who this is for

This guide is written for the people who own the quoting cycle at a pharmaceutical contract manufacturer: business development, commercial operations, costing, and the operations leadership who get pulled in to sign off on assumptions.

It is not a product manual. It sets out where time is genuinely lost between a customer enquiry arriving and a quotation going back, which parts of that are worth automating, and — the part most vendors skip — which parts should not be automated at all in a regulated environment.

What you will get out of it

- A breakdown of where the days actually go in a typical enquiry-to-quote cycle.
- A clear line between what AI should do in pharma quoting and what it must never do.
- A six-stage reference workflow you can compare against your own process.
- A readiness checklist to run against your organisation before you change anything.
- A method for testing the idea using one real enquiry, in under an hour.

A note on scope

Everything here applies whether you run development-stage projects, commercial manufacturing, or both, and whether you quote for regulated markets, emerging markets, or a mix. The vocabulary differs — some teams say enquiry, others say RFQ or tender — but the bottleneck is the same one everywhere.

B · THE PROBLEM

Your enquiry process is a revenue control

Every enquiry is a live revenue opportunity with a clock on it. But preparing a pharmaceutical quotation is not a pricing exercise — it is a coordination exercise across Business Development, R&D, Manufacturing, Procurement, Quality and Finance.

While your team is still assembling inputs, another contract manufacturer may already have responded. In competitive situations the first credible quotation frames the conversation, and everything after it is a comparison against that frame.

The eight things standing between an enquiry and an answer

- Reading lengthy enquiries spread across emails, PDFs and spreadsheets.
- Manually extracting product and manufacturing requirements.
- Following up with the customer for missing or ambiguous information.
- Collecting costing inputs from multiple departments.
- Locating and comparing previous quotations and the assumptions behind them.
- Calculating margins and modelling alternative commercial scenarios.
- Chasing internal approvals across technical, finance and management.
- Preparing and then revising the customer-facing quotation.

None of these steps is difficult. That is precisely the problem — each is individually trivial and collectively expensive, and no single person owns the total elapsed time. The cycle is slow not because anyone is slow, but because the work is handed between people who each have something more urgent in front of them.

C · DIAGNOSIS

Anatomy of a six-day quote

The pattern below is typical of what teams describe when they map their own cycle honestly. Your numbers will differ — the shape rarely does.

STAGE	TYPICAL ELAPSED	WHERE THE TIME GOES
Enquiry received, sits in an inbox	0.5 – 2 days	No owner assigned until someone notices it. Weekends and site visits extend this.
Requirements read and extracted	0.5 – 1 day	Manual reading across formats. Details get missed and resurface later as rework.
Missing information chased	1 – 3 days	Round trip to the customer. Often the single largest block, and often avoidable.
Costing inputs collected	1 – 2 days	API, excipients, packaging, testing, stability, regulatory — each from a different desk.
Comparable quotes located	0.5 – 1 day	Searching inboxes and shared drives for what was quoted to whom, and on what basis.
Margin and scenarios modelled	0.5 day	Usually fast, because it is done by one person in one spreadsheet.
Internal approvals routed	1 – 3 days	Sequential, email-based, and stalls entirely when one approver travels.
Quotation prepared and issued	0.5 day	Reformatting, checking assumptions, version control.

Two observations worth sitting with. First, almost none of the elapsed time is analytical work — it is waiting, searching and chasing. Second, the two longest blocks (chasing missing information, and routing approvals) are both coordination failures rather than technical ones.

D · THE CRITICAL DISTINCTION

What AI should and should not do here

This is the section that matters most, and the one most quoting-AI pitches avoid. In a regulated manufacturing environment, the question is not whether AI is capable. It is whether the output can be defended.

A number you cannot explain is a number you cannot put in front of a customer, an auditor, or your own management. So the boundary has to be drawn deliberately, and drawn in the architecture rather than in the marketing.

	AI IS THE RIGHT TOOL	AI IS THE WRONG TOOL
Reading and extraction	Parsing enquiries across email, Excel, Word and PDF into structured requirements.	—
Gap detection	Flagging requirements that are missing, ambiguous or internally inconsistent.	—
Retrieval	Finding the closest comparable prior quotations and surfacing their assumptions.	—
Drafting	Producing a first-pass quotation document from approved inputs.	—
Arithmetic	—	Cost build-up must be deterministic and reproducible — a formula, a rate card, a version.
Pricing decisions	—	Margin thresholds and commercial judgement belong to your rules and your people.
Approvals	—	Routing can be automated; the approval itself must be an attributable human act.

The principle in one line

AI reads. A deterministic engine calculates. A named person approves. If a system cannot show you which of the three produced a given number, it is not ready for a regulated quoting process.

E · THE WORKFLOW

Six stages, one system of record

A reference process you can compare against your own. The value is less in any individual stage than in the fact that all six share one record, so nothing has to be re-entered and nothing lives only in an inbox.

- 01** Ingest the enquiry
Customer emails, Excel sheets, Word documents or PDFs — in whatever format they arrived. No reformatting by your team before the process starts.
- 02** Extract the requirements
Product, dosage form, strength, volume, batch size, packaging, market, testing, stability and regulatory requirements identified automatically. Anything missing or unclear is flagged for follow-up rather than discovered three days later.
- 03** Build the costing
API and excipients, packaging, manufacturing, testing, stability, regulatory and other costs brought together with your organisation's own costing rules and assumptions applied — not a vendor's idea of what they should be.
- 04** Protect the margin
Cost, target margin and alternative commercial scenarios evaluated before the quotation leaves the building. Thresholds are yours; the system enforces them consistently.
- 05** Route for approval
The quote goes to the appropriate technical, finance and management stakeholders based on your business rules, in parallel rather than sequentially, with a visible status.
- 06** Generate the quotation
A standardised, professional document with assumptions stated, commercial terms attached and full version history retained.

F · THE BUSINESS CASE

What actually changes

Speed is the headline, but it is not where most of the value sits. Four of the six effects below are structural rather than temporal.

Faster turnaround Business development responds while the opportunity is still active, rather than after the customer has anchored on someone else's number.	More quoting capacity Process more enquiries without adding commercial and costing headcount. Your experts review decisions instead of moving information between spreadsheets.
Margin protection Standardised costing assumptions, approval thresholds and margin controls reduce underpriced quotations and inconsistent commercial decisions.	Better win rates Engaging earlier and clarifying requirements faster changes the shape of the conversation, not just its timing.
Institutional knowledge A searchable history of products, customers, cost assumptions, prior quotes, margins, versions and outcomes — instead of intelligence that leaves when a person does.	One shared view BD, R&D, Procurement, Manufacturing, Quality and Finance working from the same record. Less email, fewer spreadsheets, clear ownership.

The fifth point is the one that compounds. Most contract manufacturers lose more quoting intelligence to staff turnover than to any competitor. When the basis of every past quote is retrievable, a new costing hire is productive in weeks rather than quarters.

G · FIT

This does not replace your CRM or your ERP

The most common objection is the most reasonable one: nobody wants another system, and nobody in a regulated environment wants a migration.

The enquiry-to-quote layer is deliberately narrow. It handles the pharmaceutical journey between an enquiry arriving and an approved quotation going out — which is precisely the stretch that neither a CRM nor an ERP was designed for.

Salesforce / CRM	Customer and opportunity management
Pharma Enquiry AI	Enquiry · requirements · costing · margin · approvals · quote
SAP / ERP / QMS	Operations, finance and quality processes

Your CRM continues managing the customer and the opportunity. Your ERP continues managing operational and financial processes. Accepted quotations push outward into those systems rather than being re-keyed into them.

H · SELF-ASSESSMENT

Are you ready to change this?

Run this against your own organisation before evaluating any system, including ours. If you cannot tick most of the first group, fix that first — software will not compensate for it.

Process readiness

☐

We can state, from records rather than memory, how long our last ten quotes took.

☐

We know how many enquiries we received last quarter and how many we actually quoted.

☐

There is a defined owner for an enquiry from the moment it arrives.

☐

Our costing assumptions are written down somewhere other than in one person's head.

☐

We could reconstruct the basis of a quotation issued twelve months ago.

Commercial readiness

☐

We have documented margin thresholds, and we know when they are overridden.

☐

We can compare quoted margin against realised margin on a won order.

☐

We know which customers and which product types we win and lose on.

Organisational readiness

☐

Someone senior owns the quoting cycle end to end, not just their own stage of it.

☐

We can name the approvers for a quotation without checking.

☐

A pilot could run without an IT project being raised.

Most contract manufacturers find the second group hardest. That is diagnostic in itself: it usually means quoting and delivery are reconciled annually, if at all.

I · NEXT STEP

Test it with one enquiry

Do not start with a software implementation. Start with a single representative enquiry and find out whether any of this is true for your organisation.

What the session covers

One representative enquiry walked end to end: extracted requirements, missing information identified, costing inputs assembled, a commercial scenario modelled, approval routing mapped, and a draft quotation produced.

What to bring

One enquiry in any format — customer email, Excel, Word or PDF — plus the costing assumptions you would normally apply. No system access and no IT involvement required.

Who should join

Business development, costing or commercial operations, and optionally R&D, manufacturing or finance. Forty-five minutes is usually enough.

What you get afterwards

A structured version of your own enquiry, a clear view of where time is lost in your current process, and a read on the business value — before any implementation decision is on the table.

The point of the exercise

You keep the output whether or not you take it further. A structured version of a real enquiry, with the gaps in it made visible, is useful to your team on its own terms.



Pharma Enquiry AI
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**Bring us one enquiry.
We will show you a
better way to quote it.**

No need to replace your CRM. No need to replace your ERP. Start with one enquiry and evaluate the business value.

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