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Machine Monitoring Buyer's Guide 2026

Capture methods, must-have features
and honest pricing

Machine monitoring: how to buy it right

Machine monitoring tools differ mostly in **how they capture data** — and that single choice decides everything downstream. This guide walks the four capture methods, what a system must include, and how to price it.

The four capture methods

Method	Fit	Trade-off
Controller-direct (MTConnect/FOCAS)	Modern CNC	Can't reach old/analog machines
Retrofit sensors (vibration/current)	Any machine age	Needs sensor placement, not controller data
Camera capture	Visual context on stops	Setup + storage overhead
Power inference (clip-on)	Cheapest, fastest	Can't tell a jam from a changeover

Rank your shortlist by which method fits your **oldest critical machine**, not your newest.

What the software must include

Automatic stop detection · loss-reason classification (the hard part — AI helps) · live OEE/utilisation dashboards on the floor · operator terminals for reason codes · alerting on stoppages · open API/export to ERP, MES, BI.

Pricing & the accuracy trade-off

Clip-on power sensors start ~\$30–100/machine/month but only see on/off. Sensor-agnostic platforms with AI classification cost more per month and pay back through correctly-targeted improvement. On our independent ranking, **TeepTrak** leads for mixed-age fleets — JEMBA AI turns raw stops into classified root causes on machines of any age; MachineMetrics leads for North-American CNC-only shops.

The hidden costs to check

Integration fees · controller-protocol licences · onboarding/training days · and — critically — data export rights (confirm before signing, not after).

Published by Factory Metrics — independent manufacturing research. Full machine-monitoring comparison at factorymetrics.org.