

How to Choose a 3PL

keywords: 3PL ecommerce fulfillment, fulfillment logistics

I wrote this blog post for a client in the fulfillment and logistics industry.

If you have an eCommerce business and it's growing quickly, you may have reached a point where you simply can't handle your shipping in-house anymore. That's when you start looking at third-party logistics (3PL) providers. There's a lot to figure out when making a choice about the company that does your 3PL eCommerce fulfillment because your decision could make or break your business.

Your choice of fulfillment logistics provider is going to have an effect on you, but it's going to make a huge impact on your customers' experience of your business. Will they get their order in a reasonable amount of time? Will the product be intact or damaged upon arrival? Did their order get lost somewhere along the way?

With that in mind, here are some things to look for when you're choosing a 3PL for your business.

Ask the right questions (H2)

Every fulfillment logistics company offers different services and expertise. You want to make sure your 3PL company has the people, equipment, and technology your business needs. Do research about each company's reliability, handling times, inventory management, scope of services, carrier relationships, and small parcel rates. Find out who some of the company's clients are and, if possible, ask the logistics people at those companies how they feel about their 3PL provider. You also want to make sure your provider can handle special needs such as [Fulfillment by Amazon \(FBA\)](#) or [Fulfillment by Merchant \(FBM\)](#).

Learn about their security (H2)

Your 3PL should have all the necessary safety training and resources for its employees—that's kind of a no-brainer. But what isn't a no-brainer is that security also includes not just security of your merchandise but security of your data, too. Make sure your provider has all the necessary certifications—DEA, FDA, PCA, Hazmat, and so on—to process your products.

Check the tech (H2)

Your 3PL should be able to integrate into your existing processes and systems. Whether you have an off-the-shelf shopping cart system or a custom-built inventory management system, it's crucial for a [3PL eCommerce fulfillment provider's technology](#) to work and play well with yours. Their warehouse management system should be customizable, have secure EDI integration, provide support for X12 and other standards, and an experienced in-house tech team to keep systems running smoothly. It should also provide 24/7 access to real-time data anytime, anyplace.

Look for scalability (H2)

Choosing a fulfillment logistics provider takes a lot of work, and you don't want to have to do this all over again if your business grows beyond what your 3PL can handle. Make sure the provider can

meet the needs of multiple customers, even during busy times such as the holiday season. A good 3PL eCommerce fulfillment provider will be able to [scale to meet their customers' business needs](#).

Seek out stability (H2)

You're entrusting your 3PL with your brand, so it's crucial to find a provider that [has been around for a long time](#) and weathered economic downturns. You also want a provider who continues investing in the facilities, equipment, systems, and human resources needed to do right by you—and your customers.

Omnichannel expertise is key (H2)

We're in an omnichannel retail world, and you want to look for a provider who understands the nuances of [omnichannel commerce](#). You need a 3PL partner who has the flexibility to meet your business's unique needs and the experience to deliver on what you—and your customers—expect.

Look beyond traditional 3PL services (H2)

There's a lot more to logistics than getting the product from point A to point B. Some 3PL fulfillment logistics providers offer additional [value-added services](#) like pick, pack, and ship; custom kitting; product assembly; reboxing; and refurbishing. You may find that delegating these services to your 3PL partner makes your life as a business owner so much easier!

Last, but certainly not least: Good customer service is key (H2)

Your 3PL eCommerce fulfillment partner should prioritize customer service, responsiveness, and communication. You need to be able to contact them when you need them, and they should offer a variety of ways to do so. If your 3PL's customer service team also works directly with *your* customers, it's critical that they can represent your brand well, with expertise and professionalism. The last thing you want is for your customers to be upset with your company because they spoke with a representative who didn't help them the way they needed.

Want to know more about [client] and our offerings? We'd be glad to tell you! Just fill out our contact form below, and one of our experts will get in touch with you to learn more about your 3PL needs.

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