

The 3PL Evaluation Checklist

35 Critical Questions
Every E-Commerce
Brand Should Ask

Plus the Top 5 Dealbreakers
That Should End the
Conversation

Thrive 3PL

thrive3pl.com

FREE RESOURCE

Introduction

We built this checklist because we have been on your side of the table. Before founding Thrive 3PL, our team built and operated a \$100M+ Amazon e-commerce business — and we have hired and fired enough 3PLs to know which questions actually matter.

How to Use This Checklist: Print this document. Take it to every 3PL conversation. Do not let charm or sales pressure override systematic evaluation.

TOP 5 DEALBREAKERS

#	Question	Why It Matters
1	What is your average order accuracy rate over the last 12 months?	Demand 99.5%+ with proof. Below this means systemic problems.
2	Will I have a dedicated account manager or shared support queue?	Shared queues = poor service. You need a human who knows your business.
3	Can you provide an all-in cost estimate based on my actual volumes?	Vague pricing = hidden fees. Real quotes require real data.
4	What WMS do you use and can I get a live demo today?	No demo = outdated system. Technology matters for visibility.
5	Can you provide 3 client references similar to my business?	No references = red flag. Past performance predicts future results.

Section 1 — Operations & Capabilities

These questions reveal operational maturity. Good 3PLs have systems, metrics, and processes. Bad ones wing it.

01. What is your average order accuracy rate over the last 12 months?
02. What is your same-day ship rate for orders received before cutoff?
03. Do you handle kitting, bundling, or assembly — and how is it priced?
04. How do you manage lot tracking, expiration dates, or serial numbers?
05. Walk me through your receiving process from dock to shelf.
06. What is your process for handling damaged or defective inventory?
07. Can you fulfill both DTC and B2B/retail from the same facility?

THRIVE'S ANSWER

Thrive: 99.8%+ accuracy, 250K sqft Houston facility, same-day before 2 PM CST, full kitting/FBA prep, Extensiv WMS with real-time tracking.

Section 2 — Technology & Integrations

Technology separates modern 3PLs from warehouses with phones. You need real-time data, not daily reports.

08. What WMS do you use, and can I get a live demo?
09. Do you offer real-time inventory visibility — what does "real-time" mean?
10. Which platforms do you natively integrate with?
11. Can I connect my own BI dashboards to your data?
12. How do you handle integration failures?
13. Do you provide automated tracking updates?

THRIVE'S ANSWER

Thrive: Extensiv (3PL Central), native integrations to Shopify, Amazon, Walmart, 50+ platforms. Real-time = minutes per scan. Client portal with full API access.

Section 3 — Pricing & Contracts

Pricing complexity hides profit extraction. Demand transparency in every fee category.

14. Can you provide an all-in cost estimate based on my actual SKU mix?
15. How do you calculate storage — pallet, cubic foot, bin, or shelf?
16. Are there minimum monthly fees?
17. What fees are NOT included in your standard quote?
18. How does pricing change with volume?
19. What is your contract term and termination fee?
20. When did you last raise rates, and by how much?

Storage Assessment: How a 3PL assesses storage can swing your bill by 30%+. Cubic foot works for most brands, but pallet pricing can be cheaper for uniform products.

THRIVE'S ANSWER

Thrive: Flexible storage assessment, no hidden fees, complete cost model before commitment. We analyze your catalog and recommend the method that minimizes cost.

Halfway through? Get a transparent quote → thrive3pl.com/quote

Section 4 — Communication & Account Management

Communication failures kill brands. You need proactive partners, not order takers.

21. Will I have a dedicated account manager?
22. What are support hours and average response time?
23. How do you communicate issues — proactively or reactively?
24. Can I reach my manager by phone, email, and Slack?
25. Do you provide regular performance reports?
26. Can I speak with 2-3 current clients?
27. How do you handle escalations?

THRIVE'S ANSWER

Thrive: Dedicated account manager (not a queue), phone/email/Slack, proactive issue flagging, monthly performance reports.

Section 5 — Scalability & Growth

Today's solution must handle tomorrow's growth. Plan for 3× volume.

28. What is your capacity ceiling?
29. How do you handle seasonal spikes?
30. Multi-channel without splitting inventory?
31. Returns processing, custom packaging, international?
32. Where are facilities and shipping time impact?
33. What brands do you specialize in?
34. When would you tell a prospect you are NOT the right fit?
35. How do you stay ahead of industry changes?

THRIVE'S ANSWER

Thrive: Houston = 80% of US in 2-3 days ground. DTC, FBA prep, retail, wholesale from one facility. Geographic expansion planned as clients scale.

Scoring Template

Category	Weight	3PL A	3PL B	3PL C
Order Accuracy & Speed	×3	----	----	----
Technology & Visibility	×3	----	----	----
Communication	×3	----	----	----
Scalability	×2	----	----	----
Pricing Transparency	×2	----	----	----
Geographic Fit	×1	----	----	----
WEIGHTED TOTAL	/70	----	----	----

Remember: Price is important — but it is not #1. A 3PL that costs 10% more but ships accurately and communicates proactively will save you far more than the fee difference.

Ready to Find Your Partner?

Use this checklist to evaluate every 3PL conversation. Or skip the search entirely — get a transparent quote from the team that built this guide.

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