
Choosing The Right Inventory Management Partner: A Primer

Are your warehouse capacities strained? Are you spending too much time on logistical issues instead of focusing on your customers and your bottom line? If so it's probably time to start seriously considering the basic requirements in an inventory management partner you'll need to fulfill your warehousing needs. (You can read our article "Outsourcing Your Warehouse Saves You Time, Money And Headaches" to help you further evaluate if outsourced warehousing is right for you.)

But where do you start?

We've compiled a list of questions and considerations to help guide the process of how to evaluate your prospective inventory management partner.

The Basics

1. How long have they been in business?
2. What is their reputation in this industry?
3. What is their reputation in the community?
4. What is their safety rating?
5. What is their accuracy rating?
6. Are they ISO Certified?
7. What are their SOPs?
8. Do they have a business continuity plan (BCP)?
9. Can they ship globally, locally and regionally?
Do they have rail?

The Specifics

1. Do they have experience in your product category and processes?
2. Where would they store your product?
3. Will they need to purchase and up-fit space specifically for your needs?
4. Are they able to store, ship and provide logistics for you?
5. What are their current customers saying about them?
6. How do they ensure your products are stored and shipped correctly while managing cost?

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The Considerations

Capabilities

A potential warehouse and logistical partner that offers a full range of services (warehousing, distribution and logistics) is investing in trucks, facilities and people. That means they're also investing in making the partnership successful.

Technology

An inventory management partner must utilize a robust software system that enables continual visibility to monitor orders, inventory and shipments in transit. They must also always have an eye on future of the technology landscape.

Location

Location is key to getting your products to customers for cost-effective and timely delivery. Not only location within the country, but access to rail, water and interstate.

Community

You want a partner that is entrenched in their community, exhibited through their longevity and commitment. They should be an essential part of the community and not just a specific client base opportunist. You want a partner that has ethical values and will be a continuous community advocate.

Experience

An inventory management partner that is staffed with an experienced workforce, from warehouse to management, with long-tenured employees is a sign they're a great company that cares about their employees and their community.

Labor

When it comes to labor and warehousing, there's the inevitable ups and downs. Your partner needs to have the full-time and part-time labor force, as well as the access to temp labor to weather these demand storms.

Storage

Consider your storage needs: racked or bulk storage, proper square footage and the compatibility of products stored together.

Safe Storage

If you need warehouse space for products with strict safety and integrity requirements, like perishable food or hazardous materials, your inventory management partner must be equipped with the proper alarms, secured entry, sprinklers, risk management SOPS and the approved credentials, people and equipment to ensure safe storage and handling.

This is just a brief list to get you thinking. If you have any further questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to us. No obligations, honestly. We just want to help.

clientrecruiting@wilsonwarehouse.com

