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One key step to finding answers to any logistics, supply chain, or technology challenge is knowing the right questions to ask.

Inbound Logistics assembled a team of supply chain and logistics technology leaders, and asked for their perspectives on the important logistics challenges and opportunities impacting your business.

More importantly, these logistics thought leaders can give you guidance when considering improvements to your business processes.

Thought Leaders

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THOUGHT LEADERS

Finding the Right 3PL Partner Delivers Key Benefits



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Q: *How important is it to find a good 3PL in today's transportation marketplace?*

A: Today, finding a good 3PL company to partner with is more important than ever. Supply chains have been dramatically impacted by the pandemic and businesses need a partner who is both nimble enough to make the proper adjustments on the fly, and experienced enough to offer the best solutions during the most challenging situations.

The right 3PL partner will help you save money and achieve greater flexibility by leveraging better economies of scale, offering access to established carrier relationships, and supplying knowledge of the industry provided by 3PLs.

You can also take advantage of better customer service by establishing a relationship with your 3PL for all of your shipping needs. And if the 3PL operates through a nationwide agent station model, like we do at DLS Worldwide, you will find a partner who is familiar with key vendors as well as who can make things happen when needed in local markets.

All these qualities combine to make a 3PL partner your best asset when shipping is at its most difficult.

Q: *What should you look for when choosing a 3PL?*

A: One thing you should consider is the breadth of offerings they provide. Can they handle any mode, any size, or type of shipment?

Another consideration is technology. Do they offer robust technology that easily integrates with your existing systems? Is their system easy to use, offer cradle-to-grave capabilities,

and offer full visibility of your order throughout the process?

You should also seek a provider that is established and maintains a strong network of locations. Having a local office that is more in tune with regional trends and key local vendors can be more advantageous than dealing with a mega-call center platform.

Does the 3PL have a proven history? Do they have vast experience as a shipper and a logistics provider? Do they have offices and/or stations in numerous areas to help meet your shipping needs? Most importantly, will they be more than a simple service provider?

When you find a 3PL that can be a true partner to you, that helps you to weather the storm, takes the time to understand your needs, and is flexible enough to keep up with changes including with your vendors, the choice is simple.

DLS Worldwide optimizes your distribution and controls your costs through our spectrum of integrated services, unique sources of capacity, and global, technology-based delivery network.

Rely on DLS Worldwide for:

- Domestic LTL & Truckload
- International Air, LCL, and FCL
- Expedited Air or Ground with Same-Day, Next-Day, or Two-Day Options
- White-glove solutions including install & unpack, liftgate delivery, and more

Setting Up a Successful RFP

Managing a Request for Proposal (RFP) process can be daunting. Prequalify respondents, then keep things focused for the best results.

Q: *How do I extend invitations to the most qualified providers?*

A: The most qualified providers will reveal themselves through a Request for Information (RFI) process or reference. Preceding the Request for Proposal with an RFI allows you to gather information on providers and screen out the less qualified applicants.

References from peer or partner companies are also a great source for qualification. While this can seem to seed competition, good experiences at one firm can translate to growth, partnerships, and prosperity for the whole industry.

Q: *How do you clearly define the scope of the RFP? Is there a benefit to being restrictive or instead allowing alternative responses?*

A: A well-defined scope is critical to a successful RFP event. The scope needs to be clearly laid out early in the RFP document and should include a company's background, the purpose of the RFP, specific service parameters, and your quantified goals.

Unclear scope can lead to inaccurate responses that require you to issue a clarification document or potentially causes you to select a provider that lacks expertise or one that leads to an unexpected increase in cost.

Q: *What question structure reveals the best answers?*

A: The most important section of a great RFP is the open response section. A strong RFP always includes primary response items such as price, operational plan, and references; however, it is the open response area that allows the respondents to positively differentiate themselves.

A section for a cover letter or supplemental material is the ideal place for this and offers respondents a chance to convey their culture, history, business approach, and innovative ideas.

Q: *What is the best way to evaluate the responses?*

A: The RFP host should expect responses that are as accurate as possible, but accuracy does not always equal importance.

There are two methods of determining how to ultimately make your provider selection. Using a rubric with values assigned to responses is the formal method. A more informal approach can be taken where the host weighs the submissions and makes a decision based on thoroughness of response, creativity, and overall impression of the respondent's solution.

Either way, the categories considered should be an accumulation of metrics that are carefully vetted to provide the RFP host the most value. Most often the best value isn't in price alone, but is a compilation of capabilities, price, innovation/continuous improvement ideas, proof of savings, adherence to metrics, and quality of work.



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THOUGHT LEADERS

Supporting Shippers' COVID-19 Adjustments



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Q: *How has your company pivoted or adjusted your feature set in response to changing customer needs resulting from the pandemic?*

A: Airlines in the United States and abroad were forced to quickly respond to diminished demand in all aspects of the business as the COVID-19 pandemic hit. With passengers grounded, airlines saw the opportunity to assist in the COVID-19 response by opening cargo-exclusive routes, requiring new and modified supply chain channels. Time-sensitive changes were needed to support the critical movement of supplies.

Fortigo swiftly adapted to the new requirements with real-time changes to their cloud-based software, putting our customers in a better position to support all-cargo flights.

Fortigo's streamlined, all-in-one Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) delivery model allowed airline customers to rework and reoptimize all of their supported supply chain channels overnight and make necessary changes on an hourly basis.

Fortigo's easy-to-use, one-stop TMS benefits all parties in an organization and empowers front-line employees to successfully continue daily operations within the new supply chain directives. The system enables companies to ship everything from a letter, box, pallet, or container. The capability is particularly important to COVID-19 companies who had to ship to lanes, using modes that they may not have used otherwise.

The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the importance of speed and flexibility. Fortunately, both of these values are at the core of Fortigo's SaaS implementation and delivery system. A cloud-based

solution beats legacy deployment methods, with deployment time measured in weeks rather than months or years. Cost is predictable, with a monthly subscription versus millions in capital expenses.

With the SaaS delivery model, the vendor manages the hardware, infrastructure, software, tools, and personnel. Upgrades are seamless, and there is no need to schedule deployment windows to support upgrades, fixes, and patches. There is no concern with who on your team will work with the added servers, databases, tools, and network connections, and if they have the right skills for the task.

Integration with existing systems is essential and Fortigo has proven experience in quickly integrating with leading ERP and WMS systems. This requires an open system architecture that supports multiple data formats, including XML, EDI, and Web Services, something not all vendors support.

Consider these features when evaluating a TMS solution:

- Open architecture to enable accelerated data mapping
- Support multiple integration options including XML, EDI, and Web Services
- Proven record integration with commercially available ERP or WMS
- Growing integrated carrier network
- Real-time reporting
- Cloud computing capabilities
- Security, redundancy, reliability, scalability
- Support for all pertinent modes of transportation

Fortigo works hard to get you up and running easily. Contact us to discover how we can meet your needs quickly and save your organization money.