



QUESTIONNAIRE

Looking for a new fulfillment partner for your growing business? You probably realize how important it is to make the right decision. After all, your business can sell a highly coveted product, promoted by a world-class marketing team, through a beautifully designed website, with unprecedented customer service. But without an exceptional fulfillment provider, that value cannot be delivered to your customers.

Red Stag Fulfillment understands this better than most. Our company was built out of necessity when the owners of a successful eCommerce company switched fulfillment providers three times and still couldn't find a fulfillment partner who could meet their expectations. We also understand that we're not going to be the best fit for every eCommerce business out there, but if we can at least help you learn from our mistakes, that's a win in our book!

We created the following questionnaire after our experience interviewing numerous potential fulfillment providers. This framework should serve as an aid to your team when considering a potential fulfillment partner. This questionnaire covers important factors such as company alignment, capabilities, and pricing, while also bringing light to a few more detailed topics that should be discussed such as "Shrinkage Allowance" and backup ISP's.

PRE-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

What goals are you looking to achieve by partnering with a fulfillment provider?

Is your current fulfillment provider causing headaches that you need to alleviate? Or is your company growing so fast that scalable processes are your top priority? Perhaps you're expanding into a new country & need a physical footprint for your inventory?

What are the unique, physical features of the products my business sells?

Are you selling apparel, or flat screen monitors? Power tools with lithium-ion batteries, or high-end chocolate bars? It seems simple, but think about the unique aspects of your product line compared to everything else that's sold online, & the capabilities/processes that your new fulfillment provider will need to deploy.

HIGH-LEVEL COMPANY ALIGNMENT:

Is your company privately or publicly owned? What are the long-term goals of the company's ownership?

Does the ownership of the company plan on selling the business in the foreseeable future, or are they looking to grow long-term? New company ownership could seriously change your relationship with a fulfillment partner.

How much debt does your company have?

What's the risk of the fulfillment company going out of business, & taking your inventory with it?

How is your company's management incentivized to meet or exceed certain performance metrics?

Is the company's management incentivized to simply sign as many new contracts as possible? Or to focus on the acquiring the right kinds of clients to ensure the long-term growth of both parties?

How is your warehouse staff incentivized to meet or exceed certain performance metrics?

Are the people who will be handling your inventory incentivized to treat it as if it was their own with an emphasis on accuracy? Or are they constantly trying to meet speed & volume expectations?

Do you have a no long-term contract agreement?

Are you going to be locked into a contract for # months or years? Or does your fulfillment company work to continuously earn your business month after month?

CAPABILITIES:

Do you have a monthly order volume minimum?

Is there a minimum number of packages that I must be shipping to be able to fulfill through your company?

What percent of Americans can be reached within 2 days via ground shipping from your facility(s)?

Your fulfillment partner should significantly enhance your speed to customer delivery times with a well thought out warehouse network. Generally, the broader the 2-day coverage with as few warehouses as possible, the better.

Do you provide inventory management & control services?

See: "Inventory Accuracy Guarantee"

Am I able to break down cases of product into individual selling units as needed once they're received as inventory?

How quickly will my inventory be received & ready to ship out?

See: "Inventory Receiving Guarantee"

When my pallets or containers of products reach your warehouse(s), how long will it take for that inventory to be processed & ready to be sold online?

What happens if my inventory arrives at your warehouse(s) already damaged?

Is there video surveillance to monitor the receiving dock? How is damage reported back to me as the client?

Do you offer a selection of cutoff times for order processing?

See: "Order Processing Guarantee"

What's the latest cutoff time? Example: "All orders placed before 5pm EST will ship that same day"

Do you offer value-add services including kitting, labeling, custom boxes, inserts, etc.?

Can you help me source branded boxes? Or can I have a coupon placed in every parcel as it's packed?

Do you offer Returns processing services? How quickly are returns processed to ensure my customers are refunded in a timely manner.

What options, if any do I have for any returned inventory? Can inventory be inspected or tested & (if approved) be added back to the live inventory shelves?

Do you provide shipment email confirmations for my customers? Do your shipment email confirmations contain tracking information?

Is the process of notifying my customers that their order has shipped automated? When does this occur in the fulfillment process?

Do you have web-based business monitoring & reports?

Am I able to access my inventory and order status in real-time via a dashboard with detailed reports from any device?

Do you offer multiple shipping carriers to choose from?

Do you have the option to ship via FedEx, UPS, USPS, or any other carrier of your choosing?

Do you provide international shipping?

Do I receive similar shipping discounts for international orders?

Are your warehouses climate-controlled?

For businesses shipping food or other perishables.

GUARANTEES:

Do you offer an Inventory Accuracy Guarantee?

If any of my inventory is lost or damaged, will you reimburse me for the cost of that inventory?

Do you offer an Order Accuracy Guarantee?

If you make an error on an order, will you pay an error penalty fee on top of correcting the mistake?

Do you offer an Order Processing Guarantee?

If you don't pick, pack & ship an order on time, will you pay a penalty fee for your mistake?

Do you offer a 100% no data loss Guarantee?

Information is just as important as inventory. What happens if any of my order data is lost due to an outage at the warehouse?

Do you offer a Receiving Guarantee?

Is inventory guaranteed to be received within 48-hours? If you don't receive a shipment into inventory on time, will you pay a penalty fee for your mistake?

SUPPORT:**Do you have customer service response via phone or a 24/7 support ticket system?**

When I have a question & need details regarding an order, how quickly will your inquiry be responded to?

Do you have a fast & easy way to communicate with your clients?

If I have a general question, how will I interact with your team? How quickly will your inquiry be responded to? Are there additional resources I can reference?

Do you have a Technology Team available to resolve any system or technology issues?

If there's an error/bug in the system, are you relying on an in-house team for support, or another company?

What happens if a carrier loses my customer's parcel after it leaves your warehouse?

Do I deal with the carrier to resolve the issue, or do you?

PRICING:

Do you have a free trial period so we can test out your services?

Is your fulfillment provider willing to give you a trial period to prove their worth?

Do you have a policy on inventory shrinkage or damage?

“Inventory Shrinkage” is one of those dirty words in the fulfillment industry that essentially gives a fulfillment provider an allowance (usually in the form of a % of your inventory value) that they are permitted to lose or damage, without having to compensate you. If present in an agreement, this is a clause you want to have removed.

Do you offer flexible pricing plans that can be tailored to my business needs?

Or do you have to conform to the structure of the fulfillment company?

Do you offer free account setup?

Are you going to be charged to become a client of the fulfillment company?

Do you offer free account management?

Are you going to be charged to remain a client of the fulfillment company each month?

Do you offer free SKU management?

Are you going to be charged if your business grows & you begin selling a greater breadth of products?

Do you offer free system integration?

Is there a charge or ongoing fee for integrating your shopping cart?

Do you have a “no hidden fees” policy?

You don't want to have charges popping up on your invoice that are unexplained.

Do you provide shipping discounts?

Does your fulfillment provider pass along shipping discount savings from carriers to help save you money?

Do you offer flexible inventory storage pricing options based on palletized or non-palletized items?

If you sell out of a pallet worth of product halfway through the month, are you required to pay for the full month's storage space? Or only what's used?

Does any of your pricing (storage, handling, or shipping) change during holiday season?

Does any pricing change during the holiday season?

Does any of your pricing (storage, handling, or shipping) change during as my business grows?

When my business grows, will my fulfillment pricing structure evolve as well?

SECURITY:

Do your facilities have 24-hour monitored security camera coverage of every square foot of the operation? Are there cameras over each packing station? Is the security camera coverage recorded & stored?

Let's say your customer calls in & claims to have only received one product in their order, when they ordered three. Could your fulfillment warehouse use the unique order number to review the security footage of that specific order being picked to determine if there was in fact an error?

What happens if the Internet goes out at your warehouse(s)? Do you have a wireless ISP as a backup? Have you tested your ISP backups within the last 6 months?

Do you have multiple internet service provider backups for continuous information flow?

What happens if the power goes out at your warehouse(s)? Do you have a backup power generator so the facility & systems are always on-line? Have you tested your backup power generator within the last 6 months?

My website is working and taking orders, but if the power goes out at your fulfillment center, are my packages still making it out the door?

Does your facility have an individualized access control system with on-site management?

How difficult would it be for a non-employee to get inside the warehouse unaccompanied?

Do you do full background checks on your employees?

Even seasonal employees?

Do you offer fenced or gated secure inventory storage areas?

For high-valued or controlled substance inventory that may need an additional level of protection.

Do you have website security with 100% uptime? Do you have off-site data servers with access via multiple backup service providers?

Protecting my inventory is great, but how well is my data and customer's sensitive information also protected?

Does your system allow user-specific, permission-based login to business account information?

If more than one person manages our operations can multiple user accounts be created and managed safely?

Do clients have access to your facility for visits?

Can we stop by if we need to?



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