

DTC Fulfillment Partner Success Guide & Checklist



 Lateral

Learn how to successfully find the right long term fulfillment partner for your brand in this guide and checklist.



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How to Find a Long Term Fulfillment Partner

- Identify Your Business Needs
- Understand the Different Fulfillment Models
- Evaluate Potential Partners on Key Criteria
- Plan for Long-Term Success
- Questions to Ask Potential Fulfillment Partners



Choosing a fulfillment partner can be like finding the perfect pair of shoes—some look great on paper but pinch when you really start walking. Your fulfillment partner is going to be with you every step of the way, so you've got to get it right. Here's how to make sure you find the right fit for your business.

1

Identify Your Business Needs

Before you start evaluating potential fulfillment partners, take a good look at your business. What do you actually need? Here are a few questions to guide you:

Order Volume

Are you shipping a few hundred orders a month or preparing for world domination?

Think about where you are now and where you'll be in the next couple of years.

Product Type

Are you sending out delicate, hand-blown glass vases, or durable yoga mats?

Fulfillment needs vary widely based on what you're shipping.

Delivery Speed

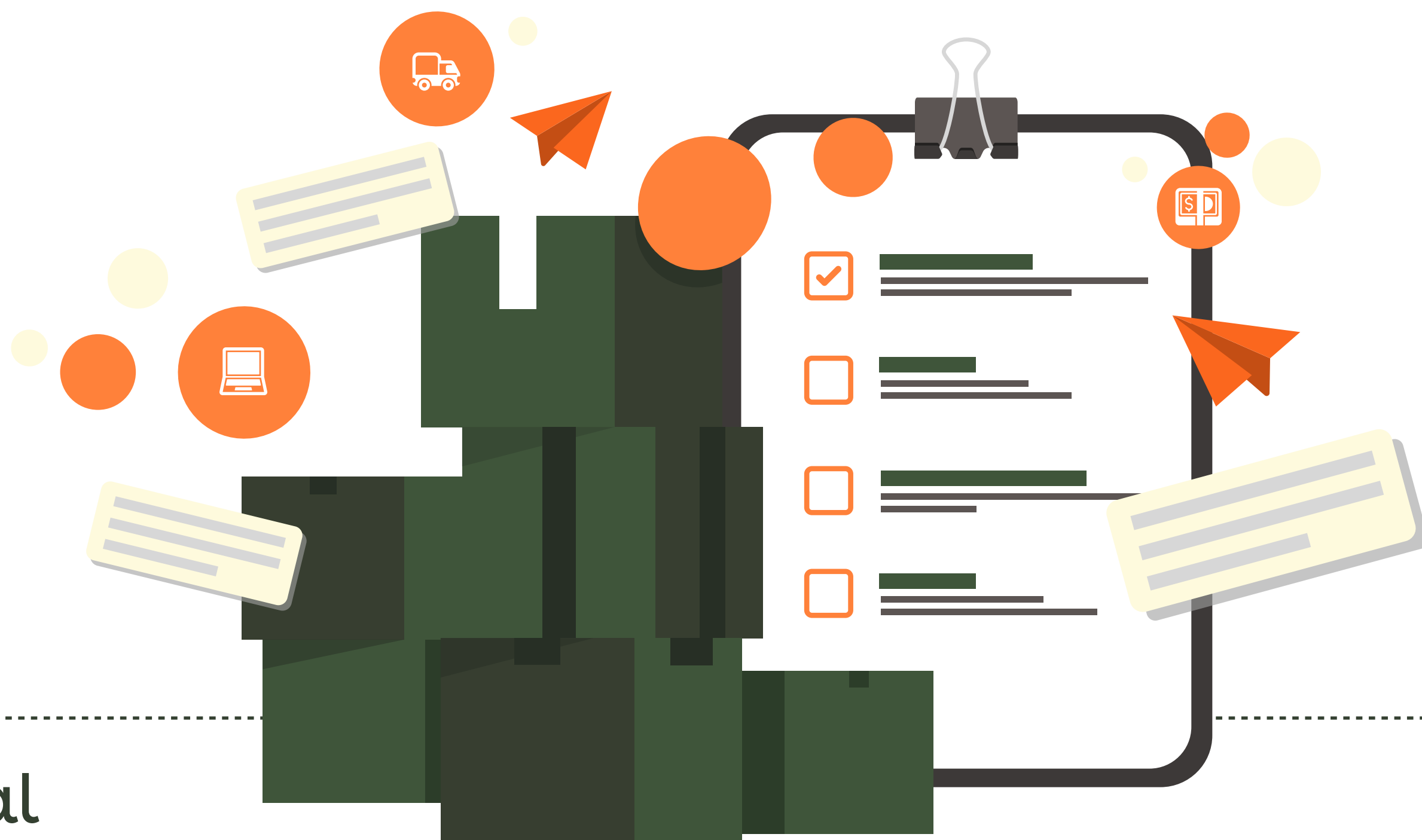
Do your customers expect lightning-fast, next-day delivery, or are they happy to wait a few days if it means free shipping?

Geographical Reach

Are you shipping across the country, around the globe, or just next door?

Customer Expectations

Do your customers expect the royal treatment, or is simple, reliable shipping enough?





In-House Fulfillment



Third Party Logistics (3PL)



Hybrid Fulfillment

2 Understand the Different Fulfillment Models

There are a few different fulfillment models to choose from, and it's kind of like picking the right ride at an amusement park—some are slower, some faster, and some have more twists and turns:



In-House Fulfillment

This is the DIY route. You control everything from warehousing to shipping. It's like running your own theme park—great if you can handle it, but expensive and a little chaotic as you grow.



Third-Party Logistics (3PL)

Think of 3PLs as the experienced ride operators. They handle the heavy lifting while you focus on running the show. This is great for businesses that are growing and need a partner to help scale.



Hybrid Fulfillment

A mix of both. You keep some control but let the pros handle the more complicated or volume-heavy stuff.

3

Evaluate Potential Partners on Key Criteria

Now that you know what you need, it's time to figure out who's got the goods. Here's what to look for:



In-House Fulfillment

Have they been around the block? Make sure they've got a track record for reliability. Ask for references, read reviews, and dig into case studies. You wouldn't trust your luggage to an airline with one-star reviews, so why risk it with your fulfillment partner?



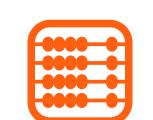
Cost Structure

Make sure their pricing isn't going to surprise you like a haunted house in the middle of your amusement park. Transparency is key—ask about any hidden fees, surcharges, or seasonal pricing.



Tech Capabilities

Is their system cutting-edge or are they still using paper spreadsheets? Your fulfillment partner should offer real-time inventory management and integration with your eCommerce platform. If it feels like a technology from the 90s, run.



Flexibility and Customization

You need a partner who can adjust to your specific needs. Do they offer specialized packaging, custom shipping options, or unique handling services? If they're rigid, you might find yourself stuck in a tight spot.



Scalability

Can they keep up when your business takes off? You don't want to outgrow your fulfillment partner after your next big sale. Ask how they handle peak seasons and large order volumes without missing a beat.



Customer Service and Support

Your fulfillment partner should feel like an extension of your team. Make sure they offer dedicated account management and are responsive when problems arise.



Geographical Reach

If you're dreaming big and going international, make sure they can handle it. Ask about their experience with global logistics and customs compliance.



4 **Plan for Long-Term Success**

Finding the right partner isn't just about today—it's about the long haul. Here's how to make sure your fulfillment relationship stands the test of time:

Strategic Partnerships

Your partner should be in it for the long game. Look for someone who offers strategic insights and proactive recommendations to help you improve your logistics and save on costs.

Ongoing Optimization

Ongoing Optimization

It's not enough to set it and forget it. Your fulfillment partner should constantly be looking for ways to optimize your logistics processes, whether it's refining packaging or finding better shipping routes.

Data-Driven Insights

A good fulfillment partner will provide data-driven insights to help you improve. You want to know what's working, what isn't, and where you can cut costs without sacrificing service.

5

Questions to Ask Potential Fulfillment Partners










Before you sign on the dotted line, make sure you're asking the right questions. Here are a few to get you started:

- How do you handle seasonal spikes or sudden increases in order volume?
- What technology do you use for inventory management, and how does it integrate with my platform?
- Can you share examples of how you've helped other clients improve their logistics?
- What's your customer service like—will I have a dedicated account manager, or am I calling a hotline?
- How do you ensure accuracy in picking, packing, and shipping orders?
- Do you offer additional services like custom packaging, kitting, or returns management?



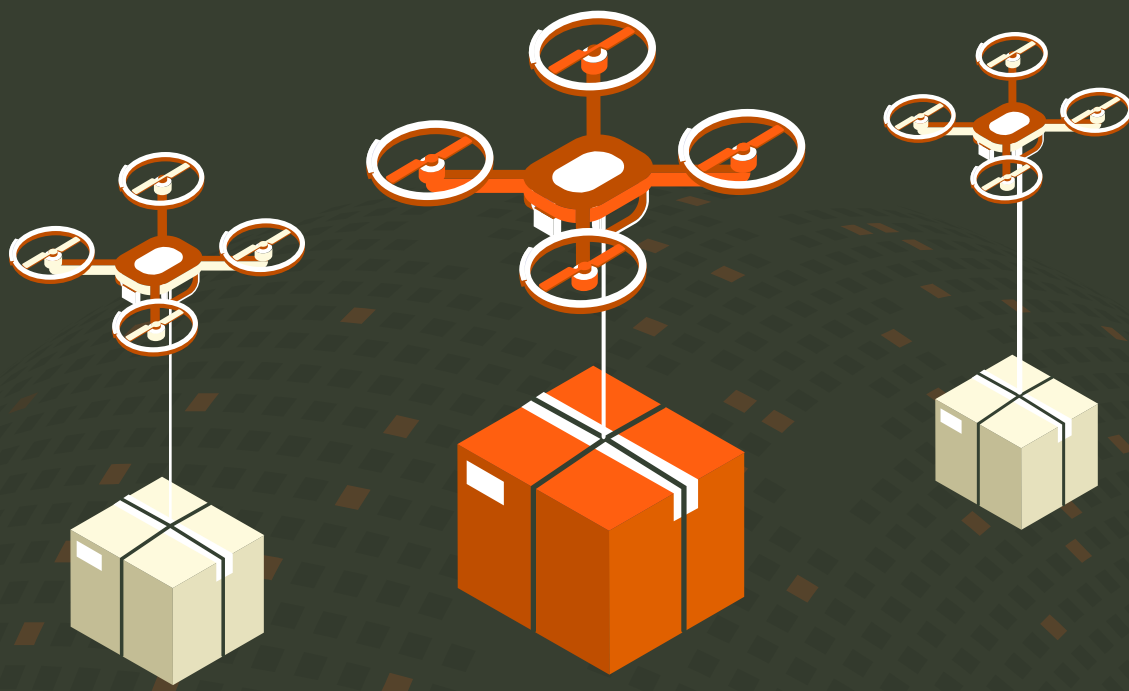
Fulfillment Partner Options

As you explore potential partners, some naturally stand out more than others. Here's a quick breakdown of what to expect:

Benefit	Lateral	US Based 3PL Firms	In House Logistics	Mexico Based Firms	Canada Based Firms
 Low Cost Fulfillment	●	○	○	●	○
 Abundant Labor	●	○	○	●	○
 Section 321 Savings	●	○	○	●	●
 Custom Built Tech Stack	●	◐	◐	◐	◐
 30 Day Onboarding	●	○	○	○	○
 Ample Warehouse Space	●	○	○	○	●
 Value Added Services	●	●	●	●	●
 In-House Customs Compliance	●	○	○	○	○
 In-House Freight Services	●	○	○	○	○

Next Steps

Your business deserves a fulfillment partner that's as serious about your success as you are. Here's what to do next:



Ready to streamline your logistics and grow your bottomline?

[Schedule Free Consultation](#)

Get a Demo of the Lateral Fulfillment Partner Portal:

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