

# Can Your 3PL Partner Grow with You?

## Five Questions to Ask

---

With new 3PL providers and consultants emerging constantly, pharmaceutical manufacturers are faced with an influx of options to address their supply chain challenges. It can be difficult to determine which type of provider will serve your needs best or choose the one that's right for your product. But the implications of making the wrong choice include knowledge gaps that can lead to compromised product integrity and affect patient safety and product reach, as well as process shortcomings that can jeopardize your customer relationships and brand reputation — a particularly important consideration for manufacturers during their first product launches.

In this article series, we'll explore the five questions manufacturers should ask to uncover whether your 3PL provider is the right choice for your business, now and in the future.

---

### Question 3: What is your product profile?

**YOUR PRODUCT IS THE CORNERSTONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.** If it doesn't arrive where it should, on-time and within temperature range, you're losing time and money in duplicated distribution efforts and wasted product. And when these execution nightmares occur regularly in your supply chain, operational inefficiency could lead to damaging business results.

Considering how critical the movement of your product is to the success of your business, every supply chain partner that serves your product should be tailored to your product's specific features. After all, when your product moves as it should, you're maximizing your opportunity for growth.

You already know how a [logistics partner with experience](#) in the distribution of specialty pharmaceutical products can

help you drive success, and [why it's also important to keep your business goals top-of-mind](#). But eliminating waste by selecting the right 3PL provider for your product also requires looking closely at your product's needs — from temperature control to ordering processes and regulatory requirements. It is critical to ask the questions up-front that will determine if your 3PL has the flexibility and scale to accommodate your product — and thereby enable your success.

“When your product moves as it should, you're maximizing your opportunity for growth.”

## So what are you looking for?

When it comes to matching your product with a partner, keep the following in mind:

### Safety

Product efficacy and patient safety should be just as much a priority for your 3PL as they are for your R&D team. As such, closely evaluate a potential partner's ability to meet your product's specific temperature control and other transport needs — not just in how the partner stores your product, but also in how it packages your product for shipment. For example, how versed is your 3PL partner in packaging technologies? What recommendations can they make (and with how much certainty) around pack-out and container options that will keep your product safe and your shipment costs economical?

Moreover, do not overlook your 3PL partner's ability to comply with the Drug Quality and Security Act (DQSA) and other changing regulations. Proving supply chain safety and product integrity will continue to grow in importance — especially for specialty medications — in the years ahead.

### Storage

Product storage is a function of “how”—but it's also a function of “where.” Knowing exactly how your product is stored, as well as the protocols around how it is accessed, can make a significant difference for many manufacturers. Between controlled room temperature products, refrigerated products, refrigerated controlled substances, frozen and deep frozen products — does your 3PL partner have the range of infrastructure and expertise to support the storage needs of your sensitive specialty product? Can your 3PL partner support your disaster recovery plans by storing product in multiple locations?

### Supply

How much does your 3PL know about your end-customer? A qualified logistics partner should understand the nuances of both high-volume and high-value products and what they mean for your customers. An expert who can harness industry expertise and reach to anticipate where challenges might arise will prove invaluable in helping you forecast supply and move your business in the right direction. Executionally, the right partner will also be able to expedite product direct to the customers that need your products most, even in times of short supply. At these moments, it's about scale and experience — flexing to accommodate both your product's needs and your market's demand — with the goal of improved product access at the forefront.

**In part four of our five-part series, we'll look at how to evaluate a 3PL's success metrics.**

## About ICS

ICS, a business unit of AmerisourceBergen, has provided outsourced logistics and distribution services since 1997. We partner with pharmaceutical manufacturers to deliver third-party logistics services that improve the quality and efficiency of their supply chains — especially for products that require special handling.

[icsconnect.com](http://icsconnect.com)