

# Can Your 3PL Partner Grow with You?

## Five Questions to Ask

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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.

Over the last several months, we've explored the five questions manufacturers should ask to uncover whether your 3PL provider is the right choice for your business, now and in the future.

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### Question 5: What are your needs beyond distribution?

**GETTING YOUR PRODUCT MOVING THROUGH THE SUPPLY CHAIN EFFECTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY IS CRITICAL.** Distribution services that get the job done do just that. But what about when you're ready to think bigger? What happens when you simply need more from your logistics partnerships?

It can happen faster and more frequently than you think. Post-launch outcomes data reveal new product indications and new market possibilities. Drug pricing fluctuations can create affordability challenges. Then there are packaging regulations, administration considerations and marketing messages to think about.

When you think about the future of your business, [think about new ways to glean value](#) from your 3PL relationship. Think beyond your day-to-day distribution needs. As products move through their life cycles, your business needs will naturally change. Is your 3PL equipped to shift with you?

“Even if your product doesn't change, changes in global healthcare delivery are ongoing. Position yourself for the best possible product performance by partnering with a 3PL that stays abreast of these changes and can anticipate the impact on your distribution strategy.”

Here are a few final considerations from a strategic perspective:

### **More than Logistics**

Think end-to-end. Once your product is on the market, you are collecting real-world data on everything from its efficacy to demographics around the patient population it is serving. But even before that, you're engaged in strategic commercialization initiatives such as overcoming access barriers. Imagine the possibilities inherent in having a 3PL partner that can connect you with expertise in these areas. When you need commercialization support, a patient support program or access to payer data, can your 3PL provide integrated service offerings or connections to seamless partnerships across the product life cycle?

### **More than Ordering**

What happens to your product once it gets to the customer? Do providers or specialty pharmacies need education on how to administer the product? Does it need to be kitted with a syringe or other administration device? Are there site-of-care storage specifications that are critical to patient safety? Consider whether your 3PL partner has the expertise, experience or forward-thinking ability to advise on best practices for ensuring your product is used properly once it's ordered. An experienced 3PL's capabilities should include quality assurance measures for product handling even after your product leaves its hands.

### **More than a Vendor**

Is your 3PL an order-taker? A consultative 3PL can advise on the best distribution channels and strategy. Particularly when indications expand once a product enters the market, make sure you're connected to a partner who can help you evaluate how to get your product into the hands of new patients in new disease state populations.

Even if your product doesn't change, changes in global healthcare delivery are ongoing. Position yourself for the best possible product performance by partnering with a 3PL that stays abreast of these changes and can anticipate the impact on your distribution strategy.

Whether you're evaluating an existing 3PL or seeking out a new one, you'll always want one who is more than a provider. When you think 3PL, think partnership. And think of the five questions we've covered in this series:

1. What does "the right experience" look like?
2. What are your business goals?
3. What is your product profile?
4. What are your distribution success metrics (and what are theirs)?
5. What are your needs beyond distribution?

**With these five questions in mind, you'll always know if your 3PL can grow — or if you've outgrown it.**

## 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.

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