

HOW 3PLs CAN SELECT THE RIGHT WMS FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS



FOR THIRD-PARTY LOGISTICS (3PL) PROVIDERS, YOUR WAREHOUSE IS MORE THAN A STORAGE SPACE—IT'S A DYNAMIC, DATA-DRIVEN HUB AT THE CENTER OF YOUR BUSINESS. SELECTING THE RIGHT WAREHOUSE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (WMS) IS A CRITICAL DECISION, ONE THAT MUST BALANCE YOUR CUSTOMERS' OPERATIONAL DEMANDS WITH TOMORROW'S GROWTH AND INNOVATION. HERE ARE THE FACTORS TO CONSIDER AND QUESTIONS TO ASK TO ENSURE YOU MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE.



The supply chain is changing, and along with it are warehouse management systems (WMS). As sophisticated technology transforms supply chains, [WMS solutions](#) don't just strive to keep pace with progress; they also help drive new advances.

At the same time, third-party logistics (3PL) providers are under increasing pressure to operate with greater speed, visibility, and agility. As the supply chain landscape rapidly evolves, the warehouse management system you choose can make or break your ability to meet client demands and scale effectively.

Selecting a WMS isn't just a tech decision—it's a strategic one. And for [3PLs](#), the stakes are even higher. You need a system flexible enough to serve multiple clients, industries, and fulfillment models—all while positioning your business for future growth.

A NEW TECH LANDSCAPE

WMS applications have made a monumental shift from on-premise platforms to cloud-based solutions. Meanwhile, companies continue to embrace real-time tracking and visibility that allows better inventory control while reducing errors.

Integrating artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms allow a WMS to analyze large volumes of data and make intelligent predictions. This helps optimize inventory management, improve order fulfillment and enhance overall operational efficiency.

Generative AI is no longer just a tool for automating tasks—it's becoming a catalyst for smarter decision-making across the supply chain.

As the technology continues to progress, it will play a more prominent role—making it an important consideration for those shopping for a WMS.

Here's how 3PLs can make the right WMS choice from the start.

1. ANCHOR THE WMS SELECTION TO YOUR 3PL BUSINESS PRIORITIES.

Start with a clear understanding of your operational goals and client needs. A one-size-fits-all approach won't cut it.

Patrick Maley, Chief Revenue Officer of Softeon, a global provider of innovative supply chain solutions, advises: "Develop a business case first. Understand where efficiencies or savings are expected, then determine which [WMS capabilities](#) will deliver those outcomes."

For 3PLs, that means considering:

- Client onboarding speed
- SLA compliance
- Flexibility in billing models
- Multi-client inventory visibility
- Labor management and productivity

"Don't get distracted by a long list of features that may not apply to your operations," Maley adds. Instead, narrow your focus to 6–12 key capabilities that directly support your workflows.

Stakeholder alignment is equally critical. Operations, IT, and business development teams must be unified around the selection process, ensuring everyone is working toward the same objectives.

Whether the focus is on expanding ecommerce capabilities, adding new

client verticals, or improving service levels, evaluate the WMS based on how well it supports those strategic priorities.

2. MATCH THE TECHNICAL FIT TO YOUR OPERATING MODEL.

As 3PLs continue to serve a wide range of clients with diverse operational needs, selecting a WMS that aligns with your technical and business model remains critical.

Key areas to evaluate:

- **Deployment:** While the cloud is now the default for most modern WMS platforms, it's still important to assess how each solution supports rapid facility launches, remote access, and seamless updates—key for 3PLs adding clients or locations frequently. On-premise deployments are increasingly rare but may still be relevant for highly specialized operations.

- **Pricing:** With pricing models having largely standardized around subscriptions, the focus has shifted from basic cost structure to value. Look at how pricing scales with usage, client volume, and added services, ensuring it supports your business growth without hidden fees.

- **Ownership:** Most WMS platforms today are vendor-managed, reducing internal IT burdens. Still, it's important

to evaluate the vendor's responsiveness, SLAs, and ability to support your unique configurations—especially in multi-client environments.

[3PLs](#) need a system that supports flexibility and speed. Look for a WMS that enables rapid onboarding, configuration without custom code, and native support for multi-client operations. In 2025, agility isn't a nice-to-have—it's a requirement.

3. REQUEST REFERENCES

Don't stop at brochures. Request client references and go beyond the RFP. "Have detailed conversations with vendors about real-life use cases," Maley recommends. "Push the demos to cover your specific workflows—pallet-level tracking, client-level billing, multi-site support. That's where the differences emerge."

4. NARROW DOWN THE LIST

To create a shortlist of potential WMS providers, consider factors such as reputation, experience, customer recommendations, and industries served.

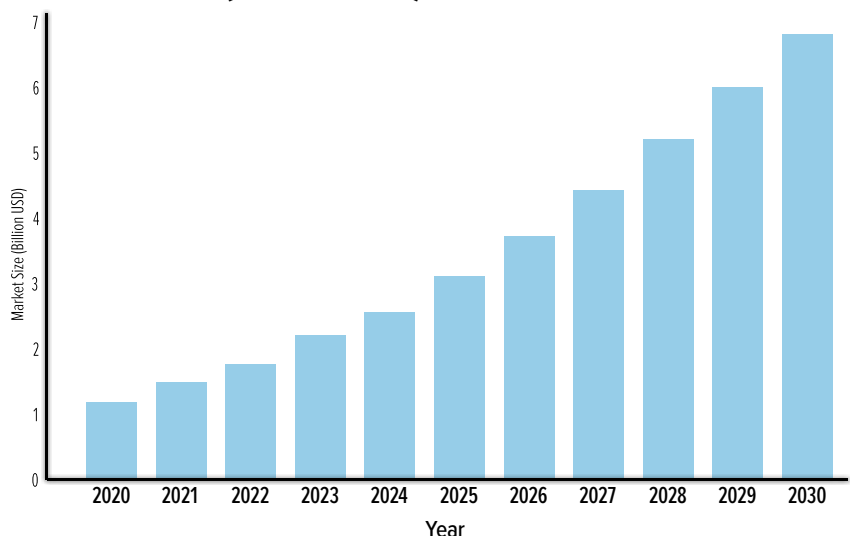
Reference checks can help gauge a vendor's commitment to customer service. Ask existing customers of prospective WMS vendors about their experience with the system, the implementation process and ongoing support. This will give you insights into the provider's commitment to customer service and satisfaction.

A vendor who asks unique, compelling questions that help you think about your business more deeply offers promise as a strategic partner who can help strengthen your organization over the long term.

Companies should not miss an opportunity to have a dialog with vendors, particularly as the prospect list narrows. When companies have "a real discussion" with vendors about their goals, objectives, and business case, "they learn a lot and improve the project," Maley says.

A scripted demo of solutions is a key decision-making tool in WMS selection. Companies shopping for a WMS should take time to ensure the demo is nuanced and specific to their needs.

NORTH AMERICAN CLOUD-BASED WMS MARKET SIZE (2020-2030)



Adapted from Inbound Logistics Research

“At the RFP level, vendors say yes to everything,” Maley says. “Even in the demo, a vendor might claim they have all the capabilities. But if you take it down a level to more detail, you will find out that there are some differences that wouldn’t show up otherwise.”

Beyond a product and its features, a 3PL organization should consider how a [WMS vendor](#) aligns culturally, weighing factors such as its mission and values, its approach to sustainability, and how it treats its team members. Also consider the big-picture question: Is this a company you want to do business with?

For instance, a 3PL that wants to be on the leading edge of technology will want to ensure its WMS vendor has a similar commitment.

5. PLAN FOR FUTURE GROWTH, NOT JUST CURRENT NEEDS.

Some 3PLs make the mistake of buying a WMS that solves today’s pain points, without thinking about where their business is headed.

“You’re not just buying a tool—you’re investing in a platform for continuous evolution,” Maley says.

As 3PL clients increasingly expect [robotics](#), AI-enhanced insights, and real-time visibility, your WMS must be able to integrate and scale alongside those innovations. Ask yourself:

- Can this WMS scale to new clients and facilities?
- Does it support future automation plans (like AS/RS or robotics)?



Softeon's WMS is a cloud-based platform designed to optimize complex fulfillment operations for 3PLs and other supply chain organizations. It offers robust multi-client support, real-time visibility, and seamless integration with automation and enterprise systems.

- Will it integrate easily with TMS, ERP, and customer platforms?
- Does the vendor have a product roadmap aligned with emerging tech?

When evaluating warehouse management system providers, it’s essential to review their product roadmaps and gain a clear understanding of how their systems are expected to evolve. Scalability and flexibility are not optional features—they are critical for 3PLs operating in a fast-moving, competitive environment.

A strong WMS partner should also demonstrate a clear commitment to innovation. Providers that are not actively preparing for advancements such as generative AI, robotics integration, or real-time decision-making tools may struggle to keep pace with the demands of future growth.

6. CHOOSE A TRUE PARTNER, NOT JUST A VENDOR.

Finally, consider the relationship beyond the contract. A strong WMS partner will bring strategic insight, industry expertise, and shared commitment to your long-term success.

Evaluate vendors on:

- Cultural fit and values
- Responsiveness and support
- Innovation and thought leadership
- Willingness to collaborate and

co-create

Vendors who ask deep, thoughtful questions are often the ones best positioned to support you as a strategic partner.

For [3PLs](#) not ready to make a full investment in a warehouse management system, subscription-based or phased-implementation models can provide a flexible path forward.

DON'T JUST BUY A SYSTEM; BUILD A COMPETITIVE EDGE

The right warehouse management system can become a competitive differentiator for your 3PL operation—streamlining workflows, improving client satisfaction, and future-proofing your business.

In this fast-changing environment, you have to stay ahead—or risk falling behind, so make your selection count. Choose a WMS that not only fits today’s needs but grows with you into tomorrow’s opportunities. ■



When choosing a warehouse management system, be sure it can support future plans, such as robotics or other automation implementations.



Softeon is a WMS provider focused exclusively on optimizing warehouse and fulfillment operations. For over two decades now, we have been helping our customers succeed. Investing in R&D enables us to develop software to solve the most complex warehouse challenges. Softeon is laser-focused on customer results, with a 100% track record of deployment success. We believe warehouse leaders shouldn't have to settle for a one size fits all approach to technology.

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