

The 2026 3PL Peak-Season Readiness Checklist

15 critical questions. A post-peak review template. A realistic switching timeline.

Peak 2025 just stress-tested your fulfillment.

\$44.2 billion in Cyber 5 sales. \$5.1 million in orders per minute at peak.
202.9 million shoppers in 5 days.

If your 3PL kept up, this playbook will confirm it. If they didn't, it will show you exactly where, and what to do next.

\$44.2B

CYBER 5 SALES

\$14.25B

CYBER MONDAY RECORD

202.9M

ACTIVE SHOPPERS

\$5.1M/min

PEAK ORDER RATE

1

Audit

Score your 3PL

2

Document

Capture what happened

3

Decide

Plan your next move

Section 1: 15 Questions to Audit Your Current 3PL

Score each question from 1-5. Be honest - this audit is for you, not your 3PL.

#	QUESTION	1 - CRITICAL ISSUE	3 - ACCEPTABLE	5 - EXCELLENT
1	Did your 3PL maintain shipping SLAs during peak 2025?	Major failures, missed commitments	Some delays, recovered by week's end	No degradation from normal performance
2	Did your 3PL have capacity to handle peak volume without backlogs?	Significant backlogs, multi-day delays	Minor delays, cleared within 48 hours	Handled seamlessly, no backlog
3	How quickly does your 3PL respond to urgent issues during peak?	>24 hours or no response	Same business day	<2 hours, proactive communication
4	Do you have a dedicated, single point of contact (Client Success Manager)?	Ticket system only, no named contact	Shared account rep across many brands	Dedicated CSM who knows your business
5	Are your monthly invoices predictable, or do you see frequent "surprise" fees?	Frequent surprises, unexplained charges	Occasional variances, requires review	Transparent, predictable, no surprises
6	What is your 3PL's same-day ship rate?	<90%	95-97%	>99%
7	What is your pick/pack accuracy rate?	<99%	99-99.5%	>99.9%
8	Does your 3PL provide serial number or lot number traceability per shipment?	No traceability	Available on request, not standard	Standard on every shipment
9	Does your 3PL follow FEFO (First Expired, First Out) for dated inventory?	No expiration protocol	FIFO only, no expiration awareness	FEFO enforced with proactive alerts
10	Does your 3PL offer a single integrated OMS across all global fulfillment centers?	Fragmented systems, manual reconciliation	Partial integration, some gaps	Unified global OMS, single source of truth

11	Can you see real-time inventory across all locations in one dashboard?	No visibility or delayed reports	Delayed sync (hours/daily)	Real-time, unified view
12	How many integrations does your 3PL support (Shopify, Amazon, etc.)?	<10, requires custom work	20-40 pre-built	70+ pre-built integrations
13	Can you reach your 3PL via multiple channels (email, phone, SMS, Slack)?	Email only	Email + phone	All channels including Slack/SMS
14	What time is the daily shipping cutoff?	Before 12pm	2-3pm	5pm or later
15	Does your contract include mutually friendly exit terms?	12+ month lock-in, punitive exit	6-month notice required	Flexible, fair exit terms

Your Total Score: _____ / 75

- 60-75** Your 3PL is performing well. Optimize, don't replace.
- 45-59** Notable gaps. Address issues directly or begin evaluating alternatives.
- 30-44** Significant risk. Fulfillment is likely hurting customer experience and growth.
- <30** Critical. Your 3PL is a liability. Begin transition planning now.

Red Flag Alert

Scored 2 or below on questions 8, 9, or 10? You're operating with blind spots that become liabilities at scale - especially with regulated products, expiration-dated goods, or multi-location fulfillment.

Section 2: Post-Peak 2025 Review Template

Document what actually happened during peak season. This becomes your evidence file - for internal decisions or 3PL conversations.

Part A: Peak Performance Snapshot

Metric	Your Data	Target	Gap
Peak period dates			
Total orders during peak			
Same-day ship rate during peak	_____ %	>99%	
Pick accuracy rate	_____ %	>99.9%	
Shipping-related customer complaints		<0.5% of orders	
Average order-to-delivery time	_____ days	<3 days	

Part B: Incident Log

Date	Issue Description	Orders Affected	Time to Resolve	Resolved?
				[]
				[]
				[]
				[]

Part C: Communication Review

Response time during peak crises	
Were you proactively notified of issues?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Sometimes
Was your dedicated contact available throughout peak?	☐ Yes ☐ Limited ☐ No
Overall communication score (1-5)	_____ / 5

Part D: Cost Review

Line Item	Budgeted	Actual	Difference
Fulfillment fees	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Shipping costs	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Storage fees	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Unexpected/surprise fees	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Per-order cost (peak)	\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
Per-order cost (normal)	\$ _____	-	-

Part E: Go-Forward Decision

What specific changes would your 3PL need to make for you to confidently stay?	
What did peak failures cost you? (Refunds, lost customers, team overtime, reputation damage)	\$ _____
How many hours did your team spend managing 3PL issues during peak?	_____ hours
If nothing changes, what will next peak look like?	
What's the #1 thing holding you back from switching?	
If you could start fresh, when would your new 3PL need to be live?	

Section 3: Switching Timeline Comparison

Switching 3PLs doesn't have to be a months-long project. Here's what a realistic timeline looks like - industry average versus fast-track.

PHASE	INDUSTRY TYPICAL	FULFILLMENT.COM FAST-TRACK	WHY FASTER
Discovery & Evaluation	2-4 weeks	3-5 days	Dedicated solutions team, transparent pricing
Contract & SLA Negotiation	2-4 weeks	3-5 days	No hidden fees, standard fair terms
Integration Setup	2-4 weeks	2-3 days	70+ pre-built integrations
Inventory Transfer	2-4 weeks	5-7 days	White-glove receiving, multiple inbound options
Testing & Go-Live	1-2 weeks	2-3 days	Parallel testing, dedicated onboarding support
TOTAL	9-18 weeks	14-21 days	

Risk Mitigation Checklist

- ☐ Get references from brands your size before signing
- ☐ Confirm your ecommerce platform is already supported (custom builds add weeks)
- ☐ Demand mutually friendly exit terms - avoid 12+ month lock-ins
- ☐ Plan for overlap: don't cut off your old 3PL until the new one is proven
- ☐ Run parallel test orders before full cutover

Questions to Ask Before You Sign

- ☐ What is your same-day ship rate, and how is it measured?
- ☐ Do you provide serial/lot number traceability on every shipment?
- ☐ Is there a single OMS for all fulfillment locations?
- ☐ Will I have a dedicated Client Success Manager?
- ☐ What are your exit terms if this doesn't work out?

Ready to see what your fulfillment could look like?

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No long-term lock-in. Mutually friendly exit terms. Most brands go live in 14 days.