SKULogic

LOOK ▶
BEFORE YOU LEAP

10 Questions to Ask During the WMS Selection Process

According to Gartner, the WMS market is very mature, but "WMS offerings continue to differ in areas like usability, adaptability, intelligence, life cycle costs and ability to support end-to-end logistics process orchestration."

Choosing the right WMS today is critical, as a good fit solution will position your organization for long-term growth and greatly improve customer service. But with so many on the market, how do you choose the right one for your business?

The team at SKULogic is packed with industry veterans. Our leadership team has amassed 50+ years of experience building and implementing warehouse management systems, and one thing we know for sure is: Not all warehouse management solutions are created equal.

While many vendors might look alike, it's our experience that they are not. It's important to "look before you leap", dig deep, and ask the questions required to identify the best fit. To help you do that, we're sharing a list of the 10 questions we always ask during a selection process.

1 What's your process to validate that there's a strong fit between our operational requirements and the base-package software?

When it comes to buying the right WMS, you definitely want to purchase a system that is as close to perfect as possible right out of the box. It will improve support and maintenance costs, and allow for easy upgrades to keep your WMS current and modern. But, if a WMS vendor claims its system includes all the features and functions your business will ever need – RUN! We've never seen that to be the case.

The right WMS partner will be able to create a strong functional flow document that outlines base functionality against your individual requirements. While this may not be part of the initial sales process, don't shy away from asking for sample functional flows to validate a vendor's capabilities to truly scope your needs.

2 How many software modifications are required on an average implementation?

Modification costs can be painful. Some estimates indicate that companies spend more than 50% of post-implementation costs to support modifications. Modifications can also make upgrading tricky if they involve custom code that must be re-implemented from one version to the next. Ask for specific numbers around the average number of modifications requested, the number of man hours required to complete them and the cost of those hours.

3

Do you offer an on-demand/cloud delivery model?

Cloud computing is revolutionizing the supply chain and WMS solutions are increasingly moving to the cloud. Some studies predict that by 2020, 90% of new WMS spending will be in the form of cloud-based systems. With cloud solutions, your WMS vendor hosts the software application and hardware infrastructure for you. This means that there is no hardware to purchase or maintain. It also simplifies implementation and upgrading.

While a cloud solution may not be right for all environments, it's important to know your options and weigh the plusses and minuses of doing business in the cloud.

4

How does the system integrate with my ERP solution, and what are the ongoing integration costs?

A top-notch WMS needs to be interoperable with ERPs from well-known vendors, including SAP, Oracle, and Microsoft Dynamics. Seamless integration eliminates double data entry, reduces errors, facilitates information sharing, and increases business process efficiency. If a WMS can't integrate with the leading ERPs with ease, there will be more headaches (and costs) as the implementation progresses. One way to ensure ease of integration is to determine whether or not a WMS is built around an open architecture. If it is, the WMS is more likely to work with multiple applications and operating systems.

5

How challenging will it be to change specific workflows if necessary?

A major task in installing a new WMS will be making the system play according to your organization's current and future supply chain strategies. To do so, you need a broad range of options available to adapt workflows to product properties, warehouse locations and equipment used.

Certain WMS providers offer built-in adaptability tools that enable your IT team to adjust workflows. This makes configurations both cheaper and faster. When you need to adapt your business to take advantage of new opportunities, you know you'll have the technology to do so.

6

Was an external or internal design firm used to design the solution's UI/UX?

If you think of your WMS solution as a house, the User Interface (UI) is the foundation and electrical work and the User Experience (UX) is the landscaping and interior decorating. Where UI is concerned with building a sturdy, functional house, UX uses aesthetics to influence how users feel about using the solution.

The best software solutions strike a perfect balance between form (UX) and function (UI). Design firms that specialize in UI and UX experiences and genuinely understand how users think are best at achieving this balance. Be sure that your vendor has invested in designing an easy-to-use system.

7

What type of reporting does your WMS provide?

Your WMS will collect massive amounts of data, but be sure the system will help you make sense of that data by turning it into graphical, easy-to-interpret, actionable information. Ask for sample reports.

What's the experience of the implementation team we'll be working with?

We've all heard the saying: A team is only as strong as its weakest player. During the sales process, you will more than likely meet many tenured resources from a vendor's team, but don't assume that those resources will be assigned to your project. Dig for details on the specific team that will be responsible for your implementation. Ask for bios, resumes and references in order to gauge how much experience each resource has with the vendor's solution and your specific industry. We've seen vendors send consultants with just DAYS of experience with their products to project sites. Budgets are tight enough; you don't want to waste yours training newbies.

8

How often do your release upgrades and how easy are they to implement?

The sheer magnitude of supply chain complexity increases by the day. Cloud-based systems, analytics and monitoring of goods, vehicles and other assets via the Internet of Things (IoT), and many other emerging trends will keep you hopping. Will your WMS vendor innovate at a rate that enables you to take advantage of these trends? To find out, probe deep into R&D efforts and budgets, and make sure your solution provider regularly delivers new functionality that positions you ahead of the market. Adapting upgrades and enhancements should not require large investments of time or money.

9

Are you financially stable and growing?

Given the investment and time needed to successfully implement a WMS solution, it's important to choose a solution provider that will be around for the long haul. New customer acquisitions and overall company growth are good indications of a vendor's vitality. Ask your provider how many new customers they've acquired over the past 12 months and who they are. Also, find out how much is being invested in expanding the business and staff.

10

Let's Build the Future Together…

It's a lot to consider, but we're here to help. The SKULogic team is packed with supply chain leaders who have deep experience developing and delivering WMS solutions. If you need help selecting, implementing or maximizing a WMS, call us today at 678.212.5550 or email inquiry@skulogic.com.

About SKULogic

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Too many software implementations are delivered behind schedule and over budget and fail to address the problems they set out to solve. At SKULogic, we're proud to be behind some of today's most successful supply chains, including those at Chico's, Steve Madden and Columbia Sportswear. Whether you need to select a new supply chain solution, implement a new supply chain system or engage support to help maximize a solution in place, we're here to help. We're small enough to care, but big and experienced enough to deliver.