

Supply (Cold) Chain / Fulfilling the Last Mile **Best Practices**

The Cold Chain Dilemma continues to inhibit online grocery adoption, as the issue revolves around consumer's lack of trust that perishables are not consistently transported and stored in proper temperatures from "farm-to-table", therefore, affecting food quality and safety. Below are some best practices you should absolutely consider when addressing the cold chain dilemma and fulfilling the Last Mile.

1. **Build a safer, smarter and connected Cold Chain Solution to ensure food integrity and freshness from "Farm-to-Table"**. Leverage available technology to document and store data, digitally monitor and provide on-demand real-time product visibility and movement traceability.
2. **Improve Food Transparency & Traceability**. For grocers and consumers, it's important to know where the food comes from and to have enough information about what's in the food and its origins. Track product movement through every stage of the supply chain, never losing visibility.
3. **Proactively Prevent Waste with 24/7 Monitoring and Real-time Notifications**. Leverage monitoring tools that can alert you when product starts to go out of temperature range so you can immediately intervene at any stage of the supply chain.
4. **Optimize Routes to Reduce Delivery Time**. Delivery is expensive — gas, vehicle maintenance, and employee salaries all contribute to delivery overhead. To help keep costs inline, leverage analytics and statistics to optimize routes and reduce delivery time.
5. **Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOP)**. Temperature-controlled shipping necessitates strict standard operating procedures (SOPs). Establish clear processes to further mitigate risks and close any gaps.
6. **Achieve End-to-End Collaboration from Key Stakeholders**. All key stakeholders should be involved up front to define roles, expectations, and requirements to reduce risk. Collaboration with all key stakeholders is critical for long-term temperature controlled success in the cold chain. Establishing processes and setting expectations is a necessary component, along with sharing of data.

FULFILLING THE LAST MILE

1. **Integrate a Perpetual Inventory Solution within your Ecommerce Platform**. Enhance the online shopping experience by displaying actual product inventory status in real-time by fulfillment locations. This will minimize product substitutions needed and improve order fulfillment efficiency.
2. **Explore Options to Fulfill the Last Mile**. Grocers can leverage their physical store locations to fulfill customer orders, and fulfill the "last mile" with delivery and click-and-collect services. These services are available from 3rd party providers, which allow grocers to quickly test the waters, with minimum upfront investment.
3. **Provide Online Order Visibility and Traceability**. Online shoppers want full visibility into where their order is at any given point in time, and reassurance that their order is being transported to them safe and sound. They also like to track delivery: when it was packed, when it was shipped and the expected time of delivery.
4. **Coverage and Capability Required to Shorten Delivery Times**. Shoppers generally want their merchandise as soon as possible. To accomplish a speedy delivery, your provider must have delivery resources – strategically placed distribution centers and delivery teams – close to where consumers live.
5. **Expertise in Home Delivery**. Choose a provider with committed individuals that demonstrate high standards for interpersonal communications and etiquette. The right people drive a consistent, quality experience that creates repeat customers.

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eCommerce Diligence™ Checklist

Supply (Cold) Chain / Last Mile Key Questions to Ask Providers

Company

1. How long have you been in this business?
2. Who is on your leadership team, and what are their experiences?
3. How many clients have you sold to? What is your churn rate, and why?
4. What size or types of clients fall into your “sweet spot”?
5. What peripheral or support services do you offer (e.g., technology, process analysis and reengineering, 24/7 customer services)?
6. Who are your current partners and why? Who have you worked with in the past?
7. Who are the team members I'll be working with and what is their experience?

Products/Services

1. Do you staff your own in-house help desk onsite or outsource to a third party?
 - a. If outsource, where is the help desk located?
 - b. The best service providers staff their help desks onsite.
2. What are the terms of your service-level agreement (SLA)?
 - a. It's important to have a strong SLA with reasonable terms.
3. What is your model for High Availability?
 - a. You can't afford downtime due to an IT issue. How they'll ensure uninterrupted continuity of operations should a failure occur.
4. Do you provide around-the-clock automatic and remote monitoring? What type of automated remote monitoring and management (RMM) solution do you use?
5. Do you provide Cloud services? Is your cloud services proprietary or are they outsourced to a third party?
 - a. There are security concerns with any provider that outsources cloud services to a third-party vendor.
6. If you provide fulfillment services, where are your distribution centers?
7. If you provide fulfillment services, are there any types of products that you can't fulfill?
8. How long will it take to deploy?
9. What does your onboarding process look like?
 - a. Ensure your provider has a plan in place so that you are not left on your own to deal with the transition and adjustment period. A good managed provider will be there to support you and your employees throughout.
10. Who are your current partners? Who have you worked with in the past?
11. What client references can you offer? Who are running the same kind of applications I'll be using?

Features

1. What key features are included in your solution?
2. What features are currently missing?
3. What new features have been added recently?
4. What does the product roadmap look like?
 - a. Choose a vendor who is passionate about building rich new features into their technology.
5. What is your product's competitive advantage over other packages? Why?
 - a. Price? Dashboard? Ease of use? Flexibility?
6. What does your dashboard include? How customizable is it?
7. Will your solution scale with my business?
 - a. You don't want to find yourself shopping for a new solution
8. How does your platform integrate with other Systems, including back-office systems, other online shopping channels and/or point solutions?

Pricing

1. How do you price your services? Do you charge for number of users, assets, etc.?
2. How do you charge for annual support? What about maintenance?
3. Are there any additional fees (e.g., implementation, training)?

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