

It's not a bad problem to have—your business is growing and expanding to the point you can no longer handle everything yourself. You've run out of places to store product, and you're so busy filling orders, you don't have time to focus on selling or marketing your product. When you reach this point, you might consider using a fulfillment service to help you deal with the logistics of managing inventory.

### What's a Fulfillment Service, and What Does It Do?

Fulfillment centers are sophisticated warehouse-management and inventory-control systems. At their warehouse facilities, they receive items for you, store and track them, and ship them directly to your customers. They have the systems, software, and picking-and-packing equipment, as well as the experience, to efficiently oversee your stocking and shipping needs.

According to Jim Smith, of [FFPGlobal.com](http://FFPGlobal.com), choosing the right fulfillment center is critical because if you pick one that isn't reliable, they can damage your image and your customer relations. Says Smith, "If they ship your customer's order wrong the first time, you're never going to get another order from that customer."

### What Do I Need to Look For?

Smith recommends asking certain questions to get a feel for whether or not a company will work with your individual needs and requirements:

#### 1. Can you manage my backorder shipping?

If you get orders for more product than you currently have stored, you don't want to have to communicate back and forth with your customers on the status of their orders. You want to know that your fulfillment service will send out the product you do have in stock immediately, with a notice telling your customers their other items are on backorder.

#### 2. Do you provide kitting and assembly?

You may be running a special selling products in bundles, and all those products may come from different manufacturers. So you need a warehouse that's capable of stocking things individually, but repackaging them and moving them out as a single unit.

#### 3. Can you receive orders via multiple channels?

Find out if a company takes email and fax orders and can provide seamless integration with your call center, so there are no customer disruptions. Also make sure they can establish a web page and incorporate a shopping cart for you, so they can collect your order data directly and ship your products.

#### 4. Can you customize the invoices and shipping documents for my business?

Ask them to include your return policy with each order, put your company's logo on every packing slip that goes out, and address those slips to your individual purchasers, rather than with a generic "Dear Customer."

Admonishes Smith, "It's important not to sacrifice your customer experience as you grow... You're looking for a company that will help you keep those one-to-one relationships with your customers."

Fulfillment centers have the capability and infrastructure to handle your inventory responsibilities so you can concentrate on developing your product line and promoting your business.

**For More information Visit [www.FFPGlobal.com](http://www.FFPGlobal.com)**

## Fulfillment Centers

### 4 Questions You Should Be Asking

#### FEATURED COMMENTARY

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