The essential supply chain planning buyer’s guide for logistics planners

QUESTIONS YOU MUST ASK FOR THE BEST ROI

1. Can the software be configured to match my unique business requirements?

Anything less than a 100%-fit to your needs will result in suboptimal business decisions. Choose a solution that matches your business model exactly and is flexible enough to adapt to changes. (For example, if you buy a new fleet of trucks, add modalities, or start using a new type of pallet.)

2. Can the software optimize my fleet?

Choose a system that can handle multiple modes, multi-hub trips, direct shipments, and scheduled and non-scheduled options. High-performing software should be able to combine modes and trips, while taking into account hub and trailer capacities. It should then be able to come up with plans that minimize empty miles to produce the most cost-effective solution.

3. Is it a “point solution” or can it handle all my organization’s planning needs?

Invest in a solution that covers long-term planning, near-term scheduling and day-of-operations management. It should be able to plan every part of your operations – from your drivers and routes, to your docks and equipment, to your capacity and sales budgets.

4. Does the software provide my planners with real-time KPI tracking?

Instead of simply showing you how you performed last week, quarter or year, you should be able to recalculate the impact of any changes in real time. The software you choose should keep you one step ahead of your plans by enabling planners to make decisions that advance your business goals.

5. Can the software optimize for more than one KPI simultaneously?

You have many KPIs, so why settle for software that only helps you achieve one? The best planning systems incorporate multiple, company-defined KPIs and can be further configured to consider multi-faceted KPIs. Dynamic planning software will also allow you to give KPIs different “weights” so when you have to choose between, say, cost and on-time delivery, the system knows which to prioritize.

6. Can the system accommodate varied resources?

Your system should be able to help you find and schedule the best available resources for each job – from hard assets with varying types, sizes and capacities, or the human element where skills, location or qualifications are a factor.

7. Can the software handle real-time disruptions?

Breakdowns, traffic delays, employee illness – they are as common as they are unavoidable. To ensure the speediest, most effective response, your software needs to be able to take information from across your operation, provide you with real-time alerts, support you in immediately rectifying disruptions, and communicate updated plans and information to everyone concerned.

8. Does the software allow collaboration?

For true optimization and efficiency, all your planners need access to the same data. A dynamic end-to-end planning environment – one that integrates seamlessly with your existing systems – enables sharing of up-to-date information, flags conflicts and facilitates cooperation between all users.

9. How does the software solve planning puzzles?

Traditional solutions use a collection of rules – heuristics – to develop a logistical plan. However, these rules are no match for the optimization provided by algorithms – precise, mathematical instructions that help you increase asset utilization and shave costs.

10. Are the vendor’s claims backed up by evidence?

Many software providers claim that their software is the answer to your supply chain woes. But do they really do what they claim to do, and if so, how well do they do it? Savvy investors demand proof. What numbers support their claims? Has their technology won awards? Who are their customers, what do they say and would they be willing to say the same to you?

Invest in a solution that works for you. Talk to us about planning that maximizes resource utilization, efficiency and profit.