



FIFTIFY

Warehouse Management System for Multichannel Sellers

WHITEPAPER · WAREHOUSE OPERATIONS

The WMS Buyer's Toolkit

A practical evaluation kit for growing e-commerce and distribution businesses.

WHAT'S INSIDE

- 12-point readiness self-assessment
- Feature checklist (must-have / nice-to-have / advanced)
- Vendor scoring matrix — fillable template
- Total Cost of Ownership worksheet
- Red flags & vendor interview questions
- 90-day implementation roadmap



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How to use this toolkit

This toolkit gives you a practical, end-to-end evaluation framework for choosing the right warehouse management system. Print it, share it with your team, or fill it in digitally as you compare vendors. Each section is designed to stand on its own — skip ahead to the parts most relevant to your current stage.

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HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

Most decisions in this guide benefit from input from both operations leadership and floor staff. The vendor scoring matrix and TCO worksheet are most useful when filled in side-by-side for 2–4 shortlisted vendors.

1 Executive Summary

The five things that actually decide WMS success

Most WMS purchases fail not because the software is bad, but because the buying process focused on the wrong things. Teams compare feature lists, watch generic demos, and pick the vendor with the best sales rep — then discover six months later that the tool does not match how their warehouse actually runs.

This toolkit was built to fix that. The frameworks inside are the same ones we use with Fiftify customers when they outgrow spreadsheets and need real warehouse control. They are deliberately practical: every section produces a concrete output you can put in front of a vendor or a budget owner.

The five decisions that matter most

- 1. Operational fit before feature count.** A WMS with 200 features is worse than one with 40 features that match your daily flow. Map your receipt → putaway → pick → pack → ship sequence first; then evaluate.
- 2. Integration depth, not integration count.** "100+ integrations" means nothing if the one you need is shallow. Test your real ERP, ecommerce, and carrier connectors with actual orders during the demo.
- 3. Total cost across 3 years.** License fees are usually less than 40% of true cost. Implementation, integrations, hardware, and change-request fees often double the sticker price.
- 4. Adoption beats sophistication.** A picker who refuses to use the scanner is more expensive than any missing feature. Always run the demo with line staff, not just management.
- 5. Vendor support is half the product.** Response times, named CSMs, and release cadence matter as much as the software itself. Ask 3 references how the vendor handled their worst incident.

QUICK WIN

If you do nothing else from this toolkit, run the 12-point self-assessment on page 4 with your operations lead. Most teams discover their real bottleneck is not the one they thought.



2 Do You Need a WMS Right Now?

A 12-point self-assessment for operations leaders

Check every statement that is currently true for your operation. Then use the scoring guide at the bottom of the page to decide whether WMS investment is urgent, warranted, or premature.

SELF-ASSESSMENT — CHECK ALL THAT APPLY

- We ship more than 100 orders per day across at least one channel.
- Our SKU count has grown by 30% or more in the last 12 months.
- We use spreadsheets, paper, or a basic tool to track stock on the floor.
- Stockouts or overselling have cost us at least one customer in the last quarter.
- Picking errors and short shipments are a recurring issue (>2% of orders).
- We sell across two or more channels and they do not share stock in real time.
- Cycle counts require a full or partial warehouse shutdown.
- Onboarding a new picker takes more than one week to reach normal output.
- We cannot tell, right now, how many open orders are late.
- Returns sit unprocessed for more than 48 hours before being restocked.
- We are planning to open a new warehouse, channel, or 3PL relationship in the next 12 months.
- Our finance team gets stock numbers from us that do not match what they expected.

0 – 3 boxes

Premature. A WMS will create more friction than it solves. Focus on tightening your spreadsheet workflow and SKU naming first.

4 – 7 boxes

Warranted. A lightweight WMS or inventory platform will pay back within 6–12 months. Prioritize ease of adoption over advanced features.

8 – 12 boxes

Urgent. Errors are already costing you real money. Move quickly, but use the vendor scoring matrix on page 7 to avoid a rushed bad choice.

3 WMS Features Checklist

Sorted by priority and business stage

Use this checklist as a screening tool when you receive vendor product sheets. Most teams need every **must-have** item, most **nice-to-have** items, and only the **advanced** items that match their specific industry or scale.

MUST-HAVE — BASELINE FOR ANY GROWING OPERATION

- Real-time stock visibility by SKU, bin, and location
- Barcode scanning across receipt, putaway, pick, pack, and ship
- Multi-channel order sync (e.g., Shopify, Amazon, eBay, Etsy)
- Cycle counts that do not require a warehouse shutdown
- User roles and permissions by warehouse function
- Mobile-first picker app (iOS and / or Android)
- Native integration with at least one major shipping carrier
- Returns processing with restock-to-sellable workflow

NICE-TO-HAVE — ADD AS YOU SCALE

- Wave, batch, and zone picking strategies
- Slotting recommendations based on velocity data
- Labor productivity dashboards (picks per hour, fills per shift)
- Lot, serial, and expiry tracking
- ERP connector (NetSuite, SAP B1, Microsoft Dynamics, Odoo)
- Carrier rate shopping at the pack station
- Configurable pick paths and bin logic by warehouse layout
- Inbound ASN (Advanced Shipping Notice) support



Advanced features

These features rarely matter for businesses under \$20M annual revenue or fewer than three warehouses. Treat them as differentiators, not requirements.

ADVANCED — ENTERPRISE / SPECIALIZED	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Multi-site inventory rebalancing and inter-warehouse transfers
<input type="checkbox"/>	3PL billing logic with per-client SLAs and access controls
<input type="checkbox"/>	AI-assisted demand forecasting and replenishment
<input type="checkbox"/>	Voice-directed picking
<input type="checkbox"/>	Automation integration (conveyor, AS/RS, AMRs)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Compliance reporting (FDA, GMP, ISO, HIPAA where relevant)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Custom workflow builder with no-code or low-code logic
<input type="checkbox"/>	Native EDI support for retail and big-box customers

Quick view: which features matter at your stage

Stage	Order volume	Priority features
Starter	< 100 / day	Stock visibility, barcode scan, multi-channel sync, mobile picker app
Growth	100 – 1,000 / day	Wave / batch picking, ERP connector, labor dashboards, returns flow, slotting
Scale	1,000 – 5,000 / day	Multi-site rebalancing, ASN support, carrier rate shop, lot / expiry tracking
Enterprise	> 5,000 / day	3PL billing, automation integration, EDI, AI forecasting, custom workflow builder

4 Vendor Scoring Matrix

A weighted, fillable template for objective comparison

Score each vendor 1 to 5 on every criterion, then multiply by the weight to get a weighted total. The weights below reflect what matters most for a typical growing e-commerce operation — adjust them to fit your priorities before scoring.

EVALUATION CRITERIA Score 1 (poor) – 5 (excellent)	VENDOR 1	VENDOR 2	VENDOR 3	VENDOR 4
Operational fit to our daily flow <i>weight x 3.0</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Integration depth (ERP / commerce / carrier) <i>weight x 2.5</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ease of adoption for floor staff <i>weight x 2.5</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Total 3-year cost (lower is better) <i>weight x 2.0</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Vendor support quality & response time <i>weight x 2.0</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Scalability (sites, SKUs, channels) <i>weight x 1.5</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reporting & analytics depth <i>weight x 1.5</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Implementation timeline & complexity <i>weight x 1.0</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
WEIGHTED TOTAL →	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

HOW TO USE

Maximum possible score is 80 (sum of weights x 5). A vendor scoring under 50 is unlikely to succeed in your environment regardless of features. Aim for the top vendor to score at least 60.

5 Integration Readiness Checklist

Audit your data before talking to vendors

Bad data ruins WMS implementations more often than bad software. Run through this checklist before your first vendor demo — every "no" answer is a project risk you should resolve first.

INTEGRATION & DATA READINESS

- Every SKU has a unique, stable, machine-readable code
- Units of measure are consistent across catalog, ERP, and warehouse
- Bin / location naming follows a single, documented scheme
- Barcode labels are present and scannable on at least 95% of stock
- Open orders, backorders, and on-hand counts agree across systems within 5%
- Our ERP exposes the data we need via API or scheduled exports
- Our ecommerce / marketplace channels can push orders via API or webhook
- We have decided which system owns stock (the source of truth) post-WMS
- We know our top 5 carrier shipping volumes and current rates
- We have current pick, pack, and ship times to compare against post-implementation
- We have a designated internal owner with at least 50% time freed for the project
- Floor staff have been told a WMS is coming and consulted on top pain points

DON'T SKIP THIS

Teams that audit data before vendor selection finish implementation 2–3 months faster on average — and they get significantly better demos because vendors can show real flows with real data.



6 Total Cost of Ownership Worksheet

The numbers vendor sales pages rarely add up for you

License fees are usually 30–50% of true 3-year WMS cost. Fill this worksheet for each shortlisted vendor — the cheapest license often becomes the most expensive total. Numbers shown are illustrative only.

SOFTWARE LICENSING	USD / YEAR
Per-user or per-site license (annualized)	\$ _____
Premium modules (advanced reporting, automation, etc.)	\$ _____
Annual licence inflation (typical 5–10%)	\$ _____
IMPLEMENTATION & SETUP	USD / YEAR
Initial implementation services (one-time, ÷ 3)	\$ _____
Data migration & cleanup	\$ _____
Custom integration development	\$ _____
Training (online + on-site sessions)	\$ _____
HARDWARE & INFRASTRUCTURE	USD / YEAR
Mobile scanners / handheld devices	\$ _____
Label printers and consumables	\$ _____
Wi-Fi upgrades / coverage on the warehouse floor	\$ _____
ONGOING & HIDDEN	USD / YEAR
Vendor support tier upgrade (if needed)	\$ _____
Change requests / custom workflow edits	\$ _____
Internal staff time on the project (1–2 FTE ÷ 3)	\$ _____
Connector / marketplace transaction fees	\$ _____
3-YEAR TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP	\$ _____

7 Red Flags & Vendor Interview Questions

Spot trouble before it becomes a 6-month rebuild

Red flags during the sales process

■ Demo uses canned data only.

If a vendor cannot demo with your SKU list and order patterns, they probably cannot configure for them either.

■ "Yes, we can do that" without specifics.

Every "yes" should come with: standard feature / custom config / paid customization. Get it in writing.

■ Implementation timeline of "a few weeks."

Realistic timelines for a growing operation are 8–16 weeks. Anything shorter usually means corners get cut on data or training.

■ Pricing that depends only on user count.

True cost scales with orders, integrations, and sites. A flat per-seat price often hides ramp-up fees.

■ Reference customers all in different industries.

Ask for references in your category (food, fashion, electronics, 3PL, etc.) at similar volume. If they have none, you are the experiment.

■ Release notes hidden or rare.

Healthy SaaS WMS vendors ship at least monthly. Ask to see release notes from the last 6 months.

Questions to ask every vendor on the shortlist

- What does a typical day-2 problem look like for your customers, and how do you handle it?
- Walk me through your most recent failed implementation. What went wrong, and what changed?
- What is your average customer's order volume? Where do we fit on that distribution?
- If we need a workflow change post-launch, who builds it — us, you, or a partner — and what does it cost?
- What is your support response time at our subscription tier? Can we see last quarter's actual numbers?
- What happens to our data if we cancel? Format, timeline, cost.
- Can we talk to a customer who left your platform, not just current ones?

8 90-Day Implementation Roadmap

A realistic schedule for a growing operation

Most B2B SaaS WMS implementations land between 60 and 120 days for businesses shipping 100 – 2,000 orders per day. This roadmap is the middle of that range, with the most common milestones and the tasks that actually move the timeline.

PHASE 1 Days 0–21	PHASE 2 Days 22–45	PHASE 3 Days 46–70	PHASE 4 Days 71–90
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data audit & SKU cleanup• Stakeholder kick-off• Bin / location mapping• Carrier & ERP credentials	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• WMS configuration• Integration build & test• Sandbox order flows• Train-the-trainer sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pilot with one zone or channel• Daily issue triage• Adjust pick paths & rules• Refine reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Full warehouse rollout• Decommission legacy tools• Post-go-live KPI review• Continuous improvement plan

PILOT, DO NOT BIG-BANG

Roll out to one product category, channel, or warehouse zone first. Two weeks of real-world data in a pilot catches more issues than two months of UAT.

9 About Fiftify

When you are ready to talk to a real WMS

Fiftify is a warehouse management system built for multichannel sellers. We give you a single source of truth for stock, orders, and listings across Amazon, eBay, Shopify, Etsy, and more — with the warehouse control of a real WMS, not a stitched-together inventory app.

- **True WMS, not just inventory tracking.** Receipt, putaway, pick, pack, ship — managed on the floor, not in a spreadsheet.
- **Multichannel from day one.** Stock, orders, and listings stay aligned across every channel without spreadsheet exports or manual syncs.
- **Automation that scales.** Rules-based actions for pricing, restock, and listing health let small teams operate like big ones.
- **Built for growth-stage sellers.** Designed for the 100 – 5,000 orders/day range where most generic WMS vendors are either too rigid or too thin.
- **Real onboarding support.** Every customer gets a real human, not a knowledge-base link.

Ready to evaluate Fiftify?

Get started in minutes with a free account, or talk to our team about a guided trial fitted to your operation.

<https://app.fiftify.com> · Free plan available

For more guides, templates, and resources for warehouse operations and multichannel selling, visit fiftify.com.