



Contract Packager Evaluation Checklist

36 questions to ask before choosing a contract packaging partner

How to Use This Checklist

- During facility tours — Ask questions and record responses
- On evaluation calls — Use as a structured interview guide
- For RFP processes — Send to vendors and compare responses
- Compare vendors — Reference answers included for benchmarking

Vendor Being Evaluated:

Evaluation Date:

Your Name:

✓ Check boxes as you ask each question • Type notes in the fields provided
Save this PDF to keep your evaluation notes

Operations

For VP/Director of Operations

Q1. What certifications do you hold? (SQF, FDA, AIB, SEDEX, Allergen)

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** SQF Level 2, FDA, AIB (Level of Excellence), SEDEX, Allergen Control Program.

Q2. Can you share current service metrics?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** 98.98% fill rate, 1.47 complaints per million packages.

Q3. What is your standard turnaround time?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** 10 business days standard. Rush available with coordination.

Q4. What is your production capacity?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Weekly: 1.5M multipacks, 405K kits, 7K displays. ~60% utilization.

Q5. Can we schedule a plant tour?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Yes. Plant tours available and encouraged.

Q6. What are your quality check procedures?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Incoming, first article, hourly in-process, end-of-run inspections.

Q7. How do you verify incoming products meet specs?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Supplier approval, documentation review, physical inspection.

Quality & Compliance

For Quality/Compliance Leaders

Q8. How quickly can you complete a mock trace?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Within 4 hours. Verified twice yearly via SQF Product Trace.

Q9. Can I speak directly with your compliance manager?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Yes. Compliance Manager directly accessible to customers.

Q10. What does your traceability system look like?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Electronic lot code tracing from inbound through finished goods.

Q11. Who is responsible for food safety?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Dedicated Compliance Manager overseeing all programs.

Q12. How accessible is your compliance team?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Directly accessible. Critical issues escalate immediately.

Supply Chain & Logistics

For VP/Director of Supply Chain

Q13. What systems can you integrate with?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Any system accepting EDI. Major ERP platform integration.

Q14. What is your geographic service area?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Northeast/Mid-Atlantic from MA. National possible.

Q15. Do you have backup capacity for surge?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Partner relationships + ~60% utilization for surge.

Q16. How do you communicate shipping status?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Proactive updates at milestones. Immediate delay notification.

Q17. What real-time visibility do I have?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Real-time tracking, QA photos, online documentation.

Reporting & Communication

For All Decision Makers

Q18. What does standard reporting look like?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Customized to your priorities. Built around YOUR KPIs.

Q19. How often do you send production updates?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Proactive at milestones. You hear wins AND issues.

Q20. Do you offer dashboards or tracking?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Yes. Live tracking, shared workbooks, online QA docs.

Q21. How do you handle communication when issues arise?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Immediate escalation with clear ownership.

Procurement

For Procurement Manager

Q22. How do you validate suppliers?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Annual site visits, third-party audit certificates required.

Q23. How long can you lock pricing?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** 6-month price locks available.

Q24. Are there indexes for material cost changes?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Yes. Can tie to industry indexes for corrugated/films.

Q25. How do you manage inventory (min/max)?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Established collaboratively for mutual flexibility.

Q26. What's your pricing model?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Per-unit, fully-loaded. No hidden fees.

Q27. Are there setup fees or hidden costs?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** No hidden fees. All-inclusive pricing.

Partnership

For Any Decision-Maker

Q28. Can we speak with customer references?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Yes. References available upon request.

Q29. Who will be our main point of contact?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Your GM. Direct access, not a call center.

Q30. What is your financial health?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Independently owned 72 years. Not PE-backed.

Q31. What documentation after each run?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Complete QA records, lot traceability, photos. Online.

Q32. What's ramp-up timeline to full production?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** 2.5 weeks typical. Faster for simpler projects.

Q33. How do you handle rush projects?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Rush capabilities with advance coordination.

Q34. What if demand drops below forecast?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** We work with you. Partnership = flexibility.

Q35. How do you approach service innovation?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Biweekly innovation meetings per customer.

Q36. What's your business continuity plan?

Notes:

✓ **IP Reference:** Partner backup, insurance, communication protocols.

■ Red Flags to Watch For

Be cautious if a vendor shows any of these warning signs:

- Vague answers about trace timing (retailers require 4-hour traces)
- Can't name a direct compliance contact
- No real-time order visibility
- Only communicates reactively (you chase for updates)
- Won't share service metrics (transparency is table stakes)

Need Help Evaluating?

Industrial Packaging has helped CPG brands with contract packaging for 72 years.

Our answers above are real — we're happy to prove them on a call or plant tour.

■ industrialpackaging.com/services/contract-packaging • ■ industrialpackaging.com/outsource-with-ip