

Before you compare suppliers, answer these.

This is the checklist we use to turn a site problem into an engineering brief both sides can work from. It is the same framework running on our current project — an Australian warehouse automation requirement, in expert review with PDQ Robotics. Use it before any product or supplier comparison.

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01 / THE PROBLEM

Start from the operation, not the equipment

No supplier can price a problem that has not been stated. These answers decide whether the project is measurable at all.

- ☐ Which process is failing today — throughput, labour cost, accuracy or safety — and how is it measured?
- ☐ What are current volumes, average and peak, and what growth must the solution survive over three to five years?
- ☐ Which constraint binds first: space, labour, systems or capital?
- ☐ What has already been tried, and why did it fall short?

02 / SITE AND FACILITY

Site conditions decide what is buildable

These constraints filter the shortlist long before product selection.

- ☐ Aisle widths, clear height, floor flatness and load rating — are these measured, not estimated?
- ☐ Power capacity, charging locations — and is network coverage verified in every operating zone, including corners and mezzanines?
- ☐ Which fire, egress and safety rules limit where equipment can sit, move or charge?
- ☐ What are the shift patterns and crew levels, including nights and seasonal peaks?
- ☐ What can be modified physically — and what genuinely cannot?

03 / SYSTEM INTERFACES

Most delays start at the interface

In warehouse automation, the equipment is rarely the unknown. The interface between existing systems and new ones is.

- ☐ Which system owns task allocation — WMS, WCS, or the fleet manager?
- ☐ What interfaces exist today — API, flat file, middleware — and who is able to expose them?
- ☐ What happens to in-flight tasks when a network handoff drops?
- ☐ Which record is the source of truth: order, inventory or location?
- ☐ Who may change an interface after go-live, and how is the change tested before release?

04 / INTEGRATION OWNERSHIP

Someone must own the seams

When three vendors deliver three subsystems, failures live between them. Name the owner before signing, not after a breakdown.

- ☐ When fleet, WMS and WCS come from different vendors, who owns integration?
- ☐ Who is accountable for a failure that spans two vendors?
- ☐ What is the escalation path at 03:00 on a Sunday?
- ☐ Which party signs off each subsystem, and against what evidence?
- ☐ What are the commercial terms when responsibility is shared?

05 / ACCEPTANCE CRITERIA

"Passed the pilot" is not a definition

An acceptance criterion is a measurement, a period and an owner. If it cannot be written that way, it cannot be enforced.

- ☐ What does "passed" mean: peak throughput, availability at full crew, or accuracy?
- ☐ Over what period, and under which conditions — normal weeks, peak, or stocktake?
- ☐ Measured by whom, with what data, and recorded where?
- ☐ If the target is missed: remedy, retest, or exit?
- ☐ Which criteria are contractual, and which are aspirational?

06 / AFTER DEPLOYMENT

The record of what actually happened

Deployment is where the assumptions get tested. Recording the outcome is what makes the next project cheaper to define.

- ☐ Who records planned versus actual after go-live?
- ☐ Which assumptions in the brief proved wrong, and how quickly was that discovered?
- ☐ How does that record flow into the next site or the next phase?
- ☐ If you scoped this again tomorrow, what would you change?

What this checklist is not

- ☐ Not a procurement document, and not a vendor list.
- ☐ It does not choose technology. It makes requirements comparable.
- ☐ Answered honestly, it will disqualify some options early. That is the point — it is cheaper before a purchase order than after.