

The Label Supplier Switching Checklist

Everything worth gathering before you request a quote from a new label manufacturer — and how to time the transition so production never feels it.

The short version: a physical sample of your current label — ideally a short length of roll — substitutes for nearly everything below. A competent manufacturer reads the dimensions, material, finish, adhesive, core size, and winding direction straight off it. Tick what you can; let the sample cover the rest.

1 Your Label Itself

- ☐ **A physical sample** — a short length of roll beats a single loose label; the roll reveals core size, unwind direction, and liner.
- ☐ **Artwork files, if you have them** — print-ready vector (.ai or PDF) is ideal, but not required.
- ☐ **Your spec sheet, if one exists** — size, material, adhesive, finish. No spec sheet? That's what the sample is for.

You do NOT need your original dies or plates. Die libraries cover thousands of common shapes — most switches carry no tooling wait and often no tooling charge. Plates are made fresh from artwork.

2 Your Colors

- ☐ **Pantone (PMS) numbers** for your brand colors, if you know them.
- ☐ If you don't, a clean printed sample lets the supplier match against Pantone references directly. Make sure they match PMS spot colors — not a CMYK approximation.

3 Your Equipment Requirements (machine-applied only)

- ☐ **Core size** (commonly 3")
- ☐ **Maximum roll diameter** your applicator or printer accepts
- ☐ **Unwind direction** — which edge of the label comes off the roll first

Hand-applying your labels? Skip this section entirely.

4 Your Volumes & Cadence

- ☐ **Annual usage per SKU**, even a rough number — this drives accurate pricing and the right print process.
- ☐ **Typical order quantity** and how often you reorder.
- ☐ **Seasonal spikes** the supplier should plan capacity around.

5 Your Compliance Requirements

- ☐ **Barcode types** and any retailer routing guides (GS1-128, UPC, SSCC).
- ☐ **ANSI/ISO barcode verification** before shipment — if you ship to major retailers, you need this.
- ☐ **Industry-specific needs:** FDA-compliant materials for food contact, GMP for supplements, DSCSA serialization for pharma, GHS for chemicals.

6 Questions for the New Supplier

- ☐ Do they **run their own presses**, or broker the work?
- ☐ What's their **standard lead time** — and can they rush?
- ☐ Do they **verify barcodes to ANSI/ISO standards** before shipping?
- ☐ Can they handle your **substrate and adhesive requirements**?
- ☐ Do they **keep your dies and plates on file** for reorders?
- ☐ What does their **proof and approval process** look like? Nothing should print until you've signed off.
- ☐ Do they have **experience in your industry**?
- ☐ **Who will you actually talk to?** One point of contact who knows your account beats a ticket queue — especially mid-transition.

7 Timing the Switch — So There's No Gap

- ☐ **Don't stop ordering from your current supplier.** Keep your normal reorder cadence while the new supplier quotes, matches, and proofs your label.
- ☐ **Get the committed lead time in writing.** (At CLS: about two weeks from artwork approval, rush available.)
- ☐ **Place your first order so it arrives while you still have inventory.** Overlap, don't hand off — you switch the day the new labels are on your dock and approved.
- ☐ **Confirm your specs are kept on file** — dies, artwork, and materials should live with the new supplier so every reorder is identical and faster.

Done this way, the risky part of switching disappears: at no point are you without labels, and at no point has anything printed that you haven't approved.

Ready to price the alternative?

Send us your current label — a sample, artwork, or just specs — and we'll quote it within one business day. No obligation.

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