

Predicted Lead Time:  
17 Days (Min 12; Max 25)

PO Accepted Apr 14	Production Started Apr 21	Pre-ship Check-in May 5	Target Shipment May 12	Estimated Delivery May 18
		Upload QA Doc	No Delay Expected	

# Your 2025 Holiday Supply Chain Checklist

Cut costs, meet demand, and deliver on time during peak season



# Don't let your holiday margins get buried in chaos.

The 2025 peak season is shaping up to be one of [the most high-stakes yet](#). While consumer demand is holding steady, so are expectations for fast shipping, accurate inventory, and flawless fulfillment — all in a [cost-sensitive economy](#) where every dollar counts. For retail and consumer brands, the pressure is on to deliver big without overspending.

But there's good news: most holiday headaches can be avoided with a few smart moves made early. That's why Sage Supply Chain Intelligence pulled together this tactical guide — not a generic playbook — but a practical, expert-backed checklist built for today's supply chain realities.

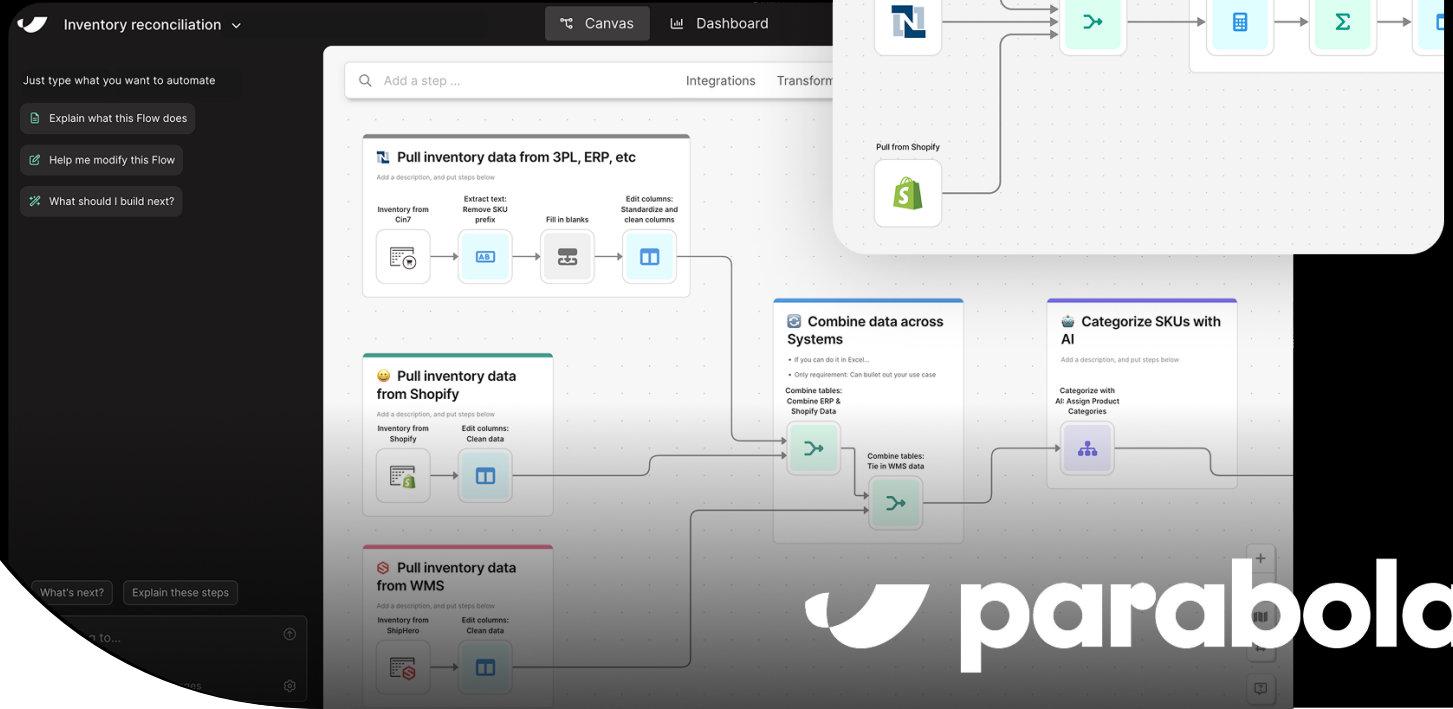
Inside, you'll find essential action items handpicked by industry leaders — from demand planning to fulfillment, and risk mitigation. Each one is designed to help you streamline operations, reduce costs, and build resilience into the first mile of your supply chain, long before the first Black Friday, Cyber Monday (BFCM) order rolls in.



So, if you're looking to get ahead of the curve (and your competitors), this is the time to start.

Because holiday readiness isn't just about surviving Q4 — it's about setting up your operations to thrive well into the new year, and beyond.

# Get ahead of ops fires with automated reporting & alerting



## 1 Clean up your data flows before holiday chaos hits

The biggest risks during peak season aren't always late carriers or warehouse delays. More often, it's broken or manual workflows hiding in plain sight.

Every brand has them. Spreadsheets that need to be cleaned by hand. Inventory counts that don't match across systems. Reports that take hours to build. These cracks get wider when order volume surges—and small mistakes can snowball into big problems.

Now's the time to pressure test your workflows. Pick one core process, like inventory reconciliation or order auditing, and run it as if it were Cyber Monday. Where are

the gaps? What's still manual? What could be automated now to avoid headaches later?

The most prepared brands aren't the ones with the biggest budgets. They're the ones who fix the boring stuff early and let systems do the heavy lifting. See how Rhone [automated their workflows](#) before they became peak season problems.

**Key Takeaway:** Don't wait for peak volume to fix broken workflows. Stress test your operations now.

**“Inventory Planner helped us optimize our availability across 26+ stores and a large portfolio of products. Being able to have the right stock in the right place at the right time is linked with an improvement in sales.”**

**Maggie Vorstenburg**

Global Head of Merchandising, **Astrid & Miyu**



**Inventory**  
PLANNER by Sage



## 2 Start Peak Planning with Your Inventory, Not Your Ads

It's tempting to kick off peak season prep by focusing on promotions and ad spend—but without the right inventory in place, even the best campaigns can backfire. To avoid stockouts and overstock headaches, successful brands start with demand planning.

Here's how to take a smarter approach this peak season:

- Forecast by location & SKU: Use historical sales data (including prior peaks), current trends, and marketing calendars to forecast demand accurately per SKU and location.
- Factor in lead times: Align purchasing with supplier lead times and build in buffers for delays, especially during Q4 when supply chains are strained.
- Prioritize bestsellers & bundles: Double down on what

you know sells—replenish proven winners and pre-assemble bundles that boost average order value and streamline fulfillment.

- Set reorder points now: Automate reordering triggers before peak hits to avoid stockouts and reduce the risk of human error when things get busy.
- Plan promotions around stock: Ensure your marketing calendar aligns with your inventory availability, not the other way around.

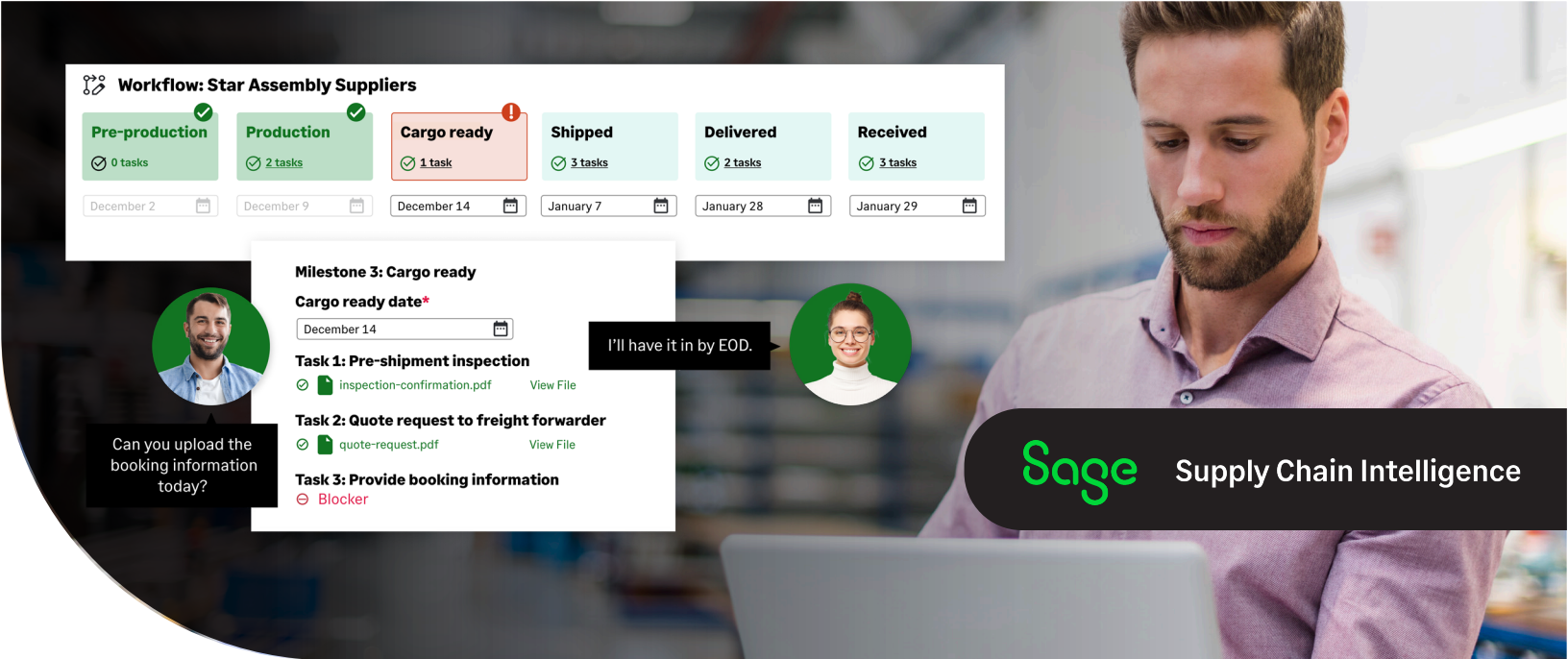
Planning inventory first means your marketing will land with product ready to ship—keeping your customers happy and your revenue flowing.

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**Key Takeaway:** You can't sell what you don't stock—forecast first.

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### 3 Control first-mile costs with visibility and smarter sourcing

Before a package ships, most supply chain costs are already locked in. The [first mile](#) — where purchase orders, supplier timelines, and inbound logistics live — is also where hidden inefficiencies pile up fast. If you wait until October to fix them, you're already too late for peak season.

Sage Supply Chain Intelligence works with hundreds of consumer brands to cut costs before peak hits. Here are four proven ways to do this:

#### 1. Invest in real-time dashboards and milestone tracking

When you can't see what's happening across POs and suppliers in real time, you're stuck reacting — paying premiums for expedited freight, scrambling to fulfill, or losing customers to stockouts. Real-time dashboards and milestone tracking turn lagging updates into proactive alerts so your team knows how to prioritize their tasks.

#### 2. Automate communications and alerts

Manual updates, spreadsheet workarounds, and team follow-ups all add up. In peak season, they become liabilities. Brands that automate supplier communication, delay alerts, and freight tracking [reclaim close to 1,000 hours per year](#) — equivalent to 50% of one full-time employee. With fewer manual tasks, your team can focus on

decision-making, not data cleanup.

#### 3. Diversify your supplier network before disaster strikes

[Supplier concentration](#) in one region is a cost risk — especially when tariffs, strikes, or shortages hit. Supplier diversification sharpens your negotiating position, improves lead times, and ensures you're not bound to a single vendor when the crunch comes. Start identifying [alternate suppliers](#) and geographies now before Q4 locks you in.

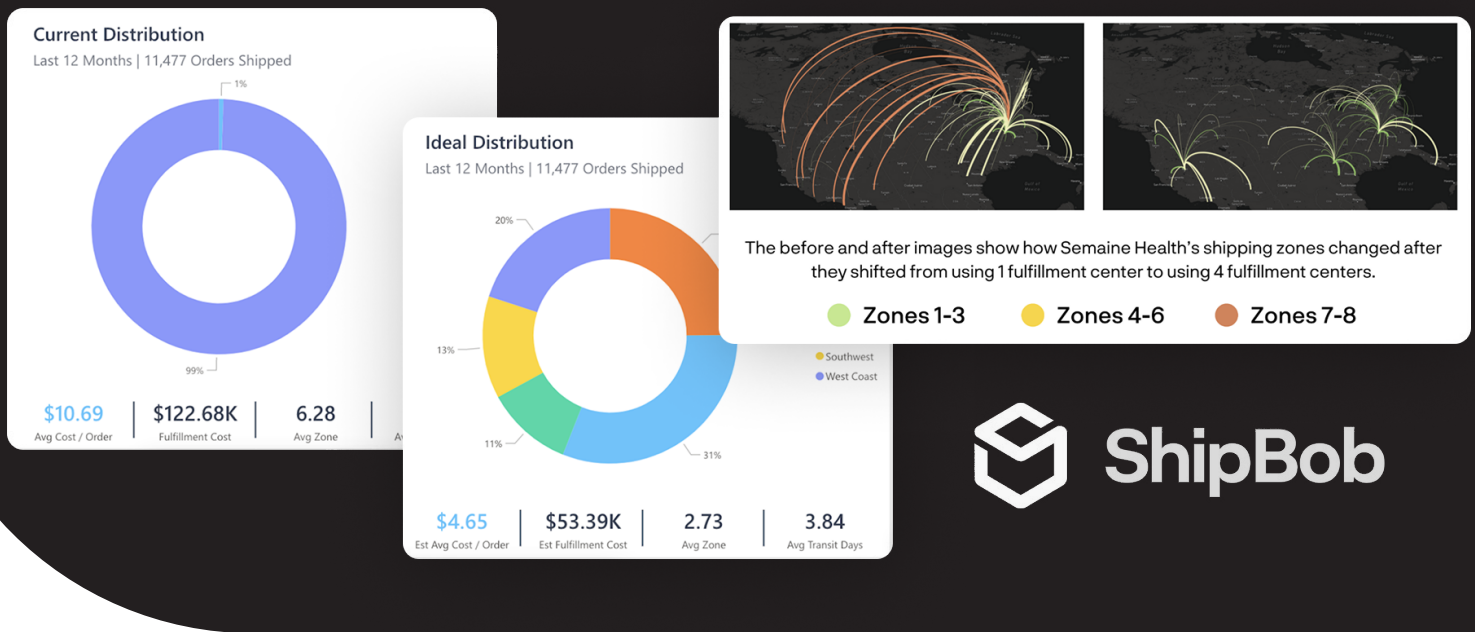
#### 4. Make faster decisions with intelligent reporting

Your ability to respond during peak season depends on what you can see in the moment. [Real-time reporting tools](#) that tie supplier performance, PO milestones, and freight timelines into one view allow teams to spot risks early and act decisively.

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**Key Takeaway:** First-mile decisions impact every downstream result, from margins to customer experience. Get visibility now, not later. Automate where you can. Diversify early. And use real-time insights to move faster than the chaos.

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## 4 Strategically position your inventory for cost-effective, fast shipping

The sooner you get a fulfillment partner in place, the better your chances of having a smooth peak season and getting ahead of potential supply chain issues. In addition to understanding if your 3PL has any peak season blackout dates, what their cutoffs are, and if they have SLA extensions, getting your products stored in more than one warehouse across different regions helps you automatically ship from the fastest, most cost-effective location, while reducing risk if a warehouse has to shut down or a carrier is unable to pick up due to severe weather, keeping orders going out and customers happy.

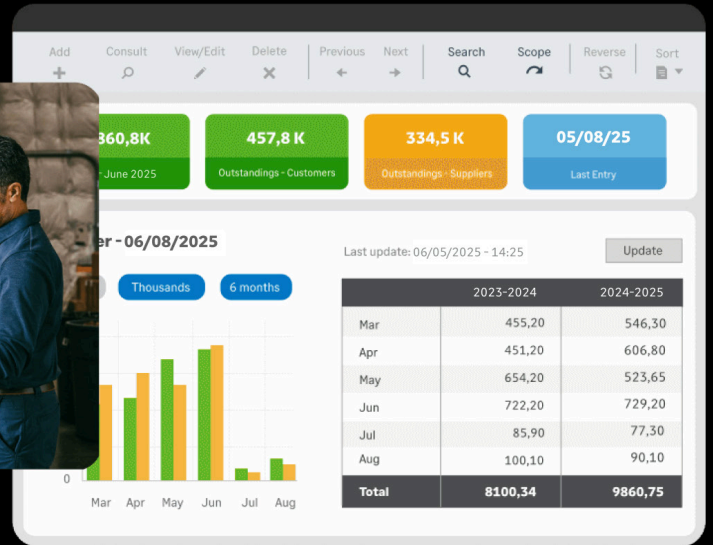
Our Place was able to leverage ShipBob's network of warehouses in different regions of the US, as well as intelligent distribution and replenishment recommendations, to save **\$1.5 million**, while also extending their holiday shipping cutoffs to capture **hundreds of thousands of dollars** in additional revenue per day leading up to Christmas. Semaine Health **saved \$2/order on fulfillment costs** by going from a single fulfillment center to splitting inventory across 4 in different regions (also cutting transit times by a third).

To choose the right locations, you need to follow your data. For example, the ShipBob dashboard includes an out-of-the-box report to help brands calculate their ideal split

of inventory to optimize for shipping costs and times, comparing each brand's most recent distribution of orders shipped to a more ideal distribution that would save them the most money.

Additionally, to minimize wait times and cross-border complexities for your customers abroad, you may even store inventory in more countries. **25% of brands** plan to fulfill orders in a new country in 2025, and getting it sorted now is critical as you'll need the proper business registrations set up to sell and ship from each country.

**Key Takeaway:** Partnering with a scalable, multi-location fulfillment provider before peak season can reduce shipping costs, transit times, and risk, while improving customer satisfaction, even allowing you to ship closer to carrier's cutoffs since your inventory will already be closer to more of your customers.



## 5 Strengthen your ERP for the peak season

As your business continues to grow, you need to have greater confidence that you have a powerful system allowing you to meet your customers' needs on time and in full. It may mean it's time to invest in upgrading to a more powerful solution.

Companies like yours can gain visibility across their business with a trusted ERP like Sage 100, connecting finance, procurement, sales, inventory, and fulfillment with actionable, real-time data in one robust system.

Others may need to strengthen their incoming supply chain visibility to avoid unexpected stockouts. In all cases, these solutions need to be integrated to provide a single source of truth.

### 5 ways to prepare for this holiday season:

- Ensure strategic alignment across teams: Run reports and customize dashboards to avoid potential bottlenecks. Act fast based on seasonality and year-to-date quarterly operations.
- Streamline workflows: Tailor approval workflows and setup automated alerts across teams and functions.
- Automate Inventory Control: From purchase orders to the warehouse, enhance accuracy and flow, as well as customer satisfaction.
- Utilize Strategic Insight to control Costs: Whether it's tariffs, or fluctuating holiday demand, gain the agility

you need with powerful forecasting.

- Optimize your supply chain: Sage 100 and Sage Supply Chain Intelligence seamlessly integrate to provide real-time visibility for proactive supply chain management and improved supplier relationships.

Confidently control costs and avoid stockouts with an integrated finance and operations platform—built for peak season and beyond.

**Key Takeaway:** According to Retail Customer Experience, two-thirds of consumers will log off an e-commerce retail site or leave a physical retail store when an item they want to buy is out of stock. Worse is accepting orders, retailers can't fulfill—those customers rarely return. Accurate inventory and strong supplier ties help prevent this.



**“A business and a person is only as good as the tools it uses. You can have the best employees in the world but if they’re spending their time plugging in data, it doesn’t make sense. You need a tool like Brightpearl to help you along the way.”**

**Sean Bowman**

VP of Finance, **Dan-O’s Seasoning**

**Brightpearl**  
by Sage

+

**DAN-O’S**  
— SEASONING —



## 6 Your peak season bottleneck isn't sales—it's operations

Every brand wants more sales during peak season—but more orders also mean more room for error. Late shipments, overselling, and clunky manual processes can quickly turn a record-breaking sales day into a customer service crisis.

Here are a few practical ways to get ahead of those challenges:

- Automate the repetitive stuff: Reduce pressure on your team by automating tasks like order routing, invoicing, and shipping updates.
- Keep inventory in sync: Make sure your stock levels are updated in real time across all channels and locations to avoid overselling or stockouts.
- Get clear on what's happening, where: Access real-time insights into inventory, orders, and fulfillment

so you can spot and resolve issues quickly.

- Plan for flexibility: Set up workflows that let you switch fulfillment locations or reroute orders if things change mid-peak.
- Stress test your stack: Simulate a high-volume period now to identify gaps in your systems or workflows before the real pressure hits.

Operational friction costs more during peak season. Getting operations right before the rush means fewer headaches and smoother customer experiences when it counts.

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**Key Takeaway:** Peak success isn't about selling more—it's about fulfilling faster, smarter, and without fail.

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“Inventory is insurance. You’re not just buying product—you’re buying optionality.”

## 7 Profit isn’t a forecast—it’s a plan

A Q4 strategy for brands that want to be around in Q1

Most brands still treat Q4 like a gamble—place a bet, cross your fingers. But with the stakes raised in 2025 (economic uncertainty, tariffs, etc), it’s not about maximizing sales. It’s about surviving volatility while protecting margin.

That starts by shifting from forecasting demand to forecasting exposure. What will your business look like if tariffs double in October? If you sell 40% more than expected—but at a loss? If you get stuck with seasonal bundles you can’t move until July?

### To stay ready, every brand should:

#### Model a base case and best case.

Buy inventory for your base, not your dream. Then ask: if I miss my upside, can I afford to carry the extra units? If not, don’t buy them. It’s better to stock out intentionally than sink cash into false hope.

#### Treat inventory like insurance.

Don’t hold everything everywhere. Keep 2–3 weeks of stock

in your U.S. FC and stage the rest in Canada. Drip inventory down weekly. Delay tariffs. Stay flexible.

#### Run failure simulations—not fire drills.

Paint realistic worst-case scenarios: a team outage, carrier strike, tech blackout, a viral TikTok surge on your lowest-margin SKU. Let your team solve, not you. You’ll quickly surface gaps in process and ownership.

#### Pull peak work forward.

Pre-bundle, pre-kit, and pre-align on promos by October. If your FC is still ingesting inventory on Nov 20, you’re already behind.

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**Key Takeaway:** Q4 is not about perfection—it’s about preparation. Profit comes from foresight, not forecasts. In 2025, don’t aim to win Q4. Aim to survive it profitably.

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## **Holiday readiness starts at the first mile — but it doesn't stop there.**

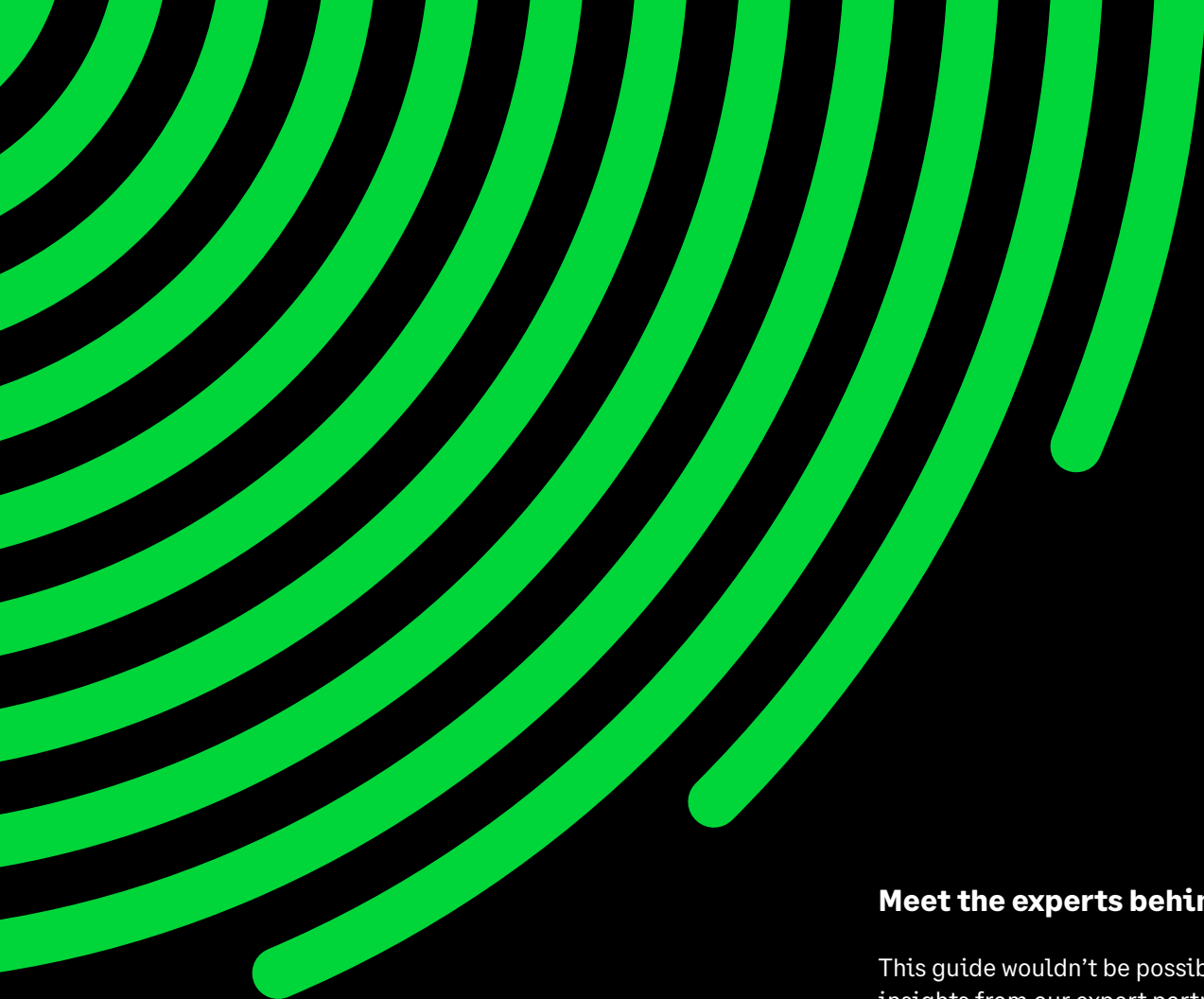
Reading between the lines of these expert tips, there's a clear takeaway for consumer brands: Getting your supply chain holiday-ready doesn't require an overhaul — but it does take focused action on the right steps, early enough to make a difference. The strategies in this guide aren't just seasonal fixes — they're foundational moves that build long-term resilience, cost efficiency, and operational confidence.

Whether you're tightening up demand forecasts, rethinking packaging costs, or automating post-purchase experiences, every tip in this guide is meant to unlock real business impact. And when you pair those moves with the right technology and support from world-class partners, you don't just get through the holidays — you get better at managing your supply chain every day after.

Sage Supply Chain Intelligence is here to help consumer brands move faster, spot issues sooner, and take the guesswork out of the first mile. With one hub for purchase orders, supplier communication, and real-time milestone tracking, your team has the visibility and control it needs to stay ahead — even during the busiest season of the year.

So take a moment to review the checklist. Share it with your team. And if you need help executing any of the strategies inside, we're here — ready to make your first mile a competitive edge this holiday season.

**Sage**



## Meet the experts behind the guide

This guide wouldn't be possible without the insights from our expert partners. Together, we're helping consumer brands build smarter, more resilient supply chains for the 2025 holiday season and beyond.

**Brightpearl**  
by Sage

 ShipBob

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[Talk to a Supply Chain Strategist](#)

Want help implementing these tips? Let's chat.

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