Test your supplier.

Supplier partner check – vending machine or real partner?



Illustrative image – not product or certification evidence.

TL;DR / WHAT MATTERS

1. A supplier that only drops boxes and sends invoices is a postal service with a margin. A partner makes protection better, safer and cheaper.
2. Services to expect: fit testing, wear trials, training, site walks, stock management, cutting duplicate lines, returns and end-of-life routes.
3. The real test: a good partner asks about the task first – and will talk you out of the wrong product, even when it is the more expensive one.
4. EU, from 9 December 2026: a distributor that can't name its supplier or an EU responsible company within one month of a request can be held liable.

Partner or vending machine?

Tick what your current supplier already does for you.

Task / workplace

Reviewer / team / date

Tick ready items. Record each gap or N/A on page 3; assign actions on page 4.

- [ ] Has offered or carried out fit testing for tight-fitting respirators, and keeps the records.
- [ ] Offers samples and wear trials before you standardise on a product.
- [ ] Trains wearers on correct use, inspection, storage and replacement.
- [ ] Has walked your site and told you honestly what is actually worn.
- [ ] Keeps the right products and sizes in stock, so nobody goes without.
- [ ] Helps you cut duplicate product lines.
- [ ] Warns you when a standard or regulation changes.
- [ ] Can tell you in writing, within a month, who made each product and who brought it into the EU.

KEEP IN MIND

The cheapest price per box can be the most expensive relationship. Count wrong purchases, waste, unworn PPE and incidents too.

Put it to work.

ASK THE TEAM

When did our supplier last question an order – or talk us out of one?

Record what you find for your main supplier. Repeat for others where needed.

Supplier / contact / products covered

Services offered so far (fit test, trials, training, site walk)

Questions asked about our tasks before quoting

Traceability: manufacturer / EU importer named in writing?

Stock, sizes and range – gaps or duplicates

Their response to our request (fit-test day, wear trial or site walk)

Action plan

ASK – WATCH – DECIDE

1. Ask your supplier for a fit-test day, a wear trial or a walk round your site.
2. Watch how they respond – and ask who made and imported your ten most-used products.
3. Decide: keep, develop or replace the supplier – and review again in six months.

OUR PRIORITY ACTION

_____

_____

Owner: _____ Due: _____

Review date: _____ Checked by: _____

Evidence it worked / remaining gap:

_____

READ MORE / TECHNICAL REFERENCES

PPEQuest: Your PPE Distributor Should Be a Pain in Your Backside
PPEQuest Briefing: New EU product liability rules start on 9 December
EUR-Lex / Directive (EU) 2024/2853 on liability for defective products

Sources checked 12 Nov 2026. Planning aid: confirm local requirements, product instructions and competent assessment. Not a certificate.