

The 2026 Boutique 3PL Conference Playbook



Slotted

Why Most 3PL Conference Lists Don't Work

The "standard" conference list is optimized for:

- Mega-providers
- Massive booths
- Brand awareness budgets

For boutique and mid-market 3PLs, this often leads to:

- High spend
- Low signal
- Little measurable ROI

You don't need a \$200k booth or a week in Vegas.

You need to be where founders are and where the tech is accessible.

This playbook prioritizes ROI, relevance, and real conversations.

How to Use This Guide

Pick the Right Circuit

- ↳ Lead Gen
- ↳ Ops & Tech
- ↳ Peer & Policy



Match Conferences to Your Strength

- ↳ Industry focus
- ↳ Service specialization
- ↳ Growth stage



Attend With Intent

- ↳ No wandering
- ↳ No "spray and pray"
- ↳ Clear goals per show

The Lead Gen Circuit

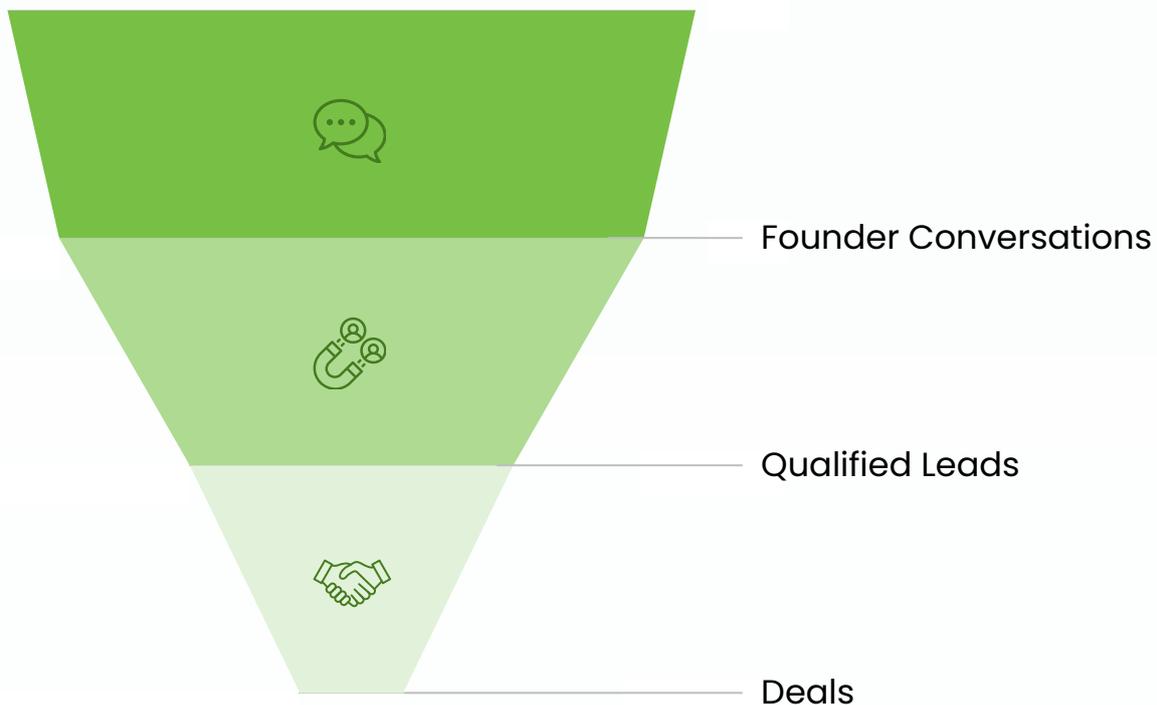
These shows are for hunting.

Attendees include:

- Brand founders scaling past DIY
- Operators frustrated with being “just a number”

These brands value:

- Responsiveness
- Flexibility
- Founder-level access



NRF: Retail's Big Show

📅 January 11–13 | NYC

✓ Enterprise retail ✓ Massive tech

Expo West

📅 March 3–6 | Anaheim

✓ Food ✓ Beverage ✓ Beauty

Prosper Show

📅 March 10–12 | Las Vegas

✓ Amazon FBM / Prep

Sellers Summit

📅 April 8–12 | Nashville

✓ 8-figure DTC founders

SubSummit

★ GOLD MINE

📅 May 13–15 | Kansas City

✓ Subscription box brands

Home Delivery World

📅 May 20–21 | Nashville

✓ Last-mile focused brands

The Ops & Tech Circuit

These shows are for building.

Focused on:

- Robotics
- WMS & integrations
- Process efficiency

Goal:

- Operate like a global provider without global-provider overhead

Manifest Vegas

📅 February 9–11 | Las Vegas

✓ AI ✓ Robotics ✓ Future-tech

MODEX

📅 April 13–16 | Atlanta

✓ Conveyors ✓ AMRs ✓ Hardware

WERC

📅 May 17–20 | Jacksonville

✓ Ops benchmarking

PARCEL Forum

! *UNDERRATED ROI*

📅 September 14–16 | Orlando

✓ Small parcel strategy

The Peer & Policy Circuit

These shows are for surviving and scaling responsibly.

Focused on:

- Labor
- Insurance
- Legal exposure
- Industry credibility

These rooms matter when:

- You're past scrappy mode
- You're building durability

RILA LINK

 Feb 1-4 | Orlando

✓ C-suite retail networking

IWLA Convention

 March 29-31 | San Antonio

✓ Law

✓ Labor

✓ Insurance

CSCMP EDGE

 October 4-7 | Nashville

✓ Strategic supply chain leadership

Slotted's *Pro Tips* for Boutique & Mid-Market 3PLs

How to extract ROI without burning time or budget:

01

The Anti-Booth Strategy

Key Points:

- Don't buy a booth
- Buy an attendee pass
- Stay in the lobby track
- Founders talk to operators not vendors

Being an attendee makes you a peer. A booth makes you a vendor.

02

The "Tech Duo" Strategy

Key Points:

- Attend tech shows with your Warehouse Manager
- Split responsibilities:

Owner: partnerships & pricing *Ops:* integrations & durability

- Avoid six-figure tech mistakes

03

The Specialist Wins

Key Points:

- Cold chain
- Organic certification
- Specialized kitting
- Underserved niches = pricing power

Recommended Shows

Expo West
SubSummit

04

Small Parcel Is Your Biggest Lever

Key Points:

- APARCEL Forum = margin unlock
- 3% shipping reduction > most sales wins
- Ops insight beats pitch decks

Operational leverage beats sales theater.

Attend Fewer Conferences. Get More From Each.

The goal isn't visibility
It's fit, leverage, and durable growth.

Conferences should support:

- Better deals
- Better ops
- Better partnerships

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