



GUIDE

Five steps to scanner success

This guide makes essential reading for warehouse and other logistics businesses looking to embed advanced barcode scanning capability into their operations. It walks you through five key procurement questions to ask yourself on route to finding the right scanner solution for your specific needs.



Introduction

Machine-readable data has come a long way since the first barcode was used to pass a pack of Wrigley's through the till in Troy, Ohio, back in 1974. Thanks to the pace of IT evolution, there are unprecedented amounts of data available to us today. But while the potential is amazing, the logistics can seem daunting.

Who can you trust to advise on what information you actually need to capture, as opposed to what data is available? You don't want to under- or over-spec. Both can easily happen.

You need to be sure all outlay for scanning equipment pays back in measurable upsides – and that you're as future-proof as possible.

Every logistics operation is different, requiring a bespoke approach to scanners – but there are broad principles that apply pretty much everywhere.

This scanning guide outlines the five key considerations that impact the procurement process and provides helpful tips. It covers the questions you need to ask yourself and your suppliers as you scope out the ideal scanner requirements for your workplace.

Rather than lose you in jargon and specs, much less propose an off-the-shelf solution we happen to offer, JLT wants to leave you better informed to make the right choices for your business and workforce when the time to invest in scanners comes – whoever you choose to go with.



The five key considerations when scoping scanners

- 1 Ask why**

Working in a logistics environment often means going back and forth among piles of boxes everywhere, making it quite easy to lose sight of something important. Using the right scanners can greatly facilitate your workforce's job by improving the information control and data-gathering process.
- 2 Identify the challenges**

Issues like stack accessibility, damaged barcode labels and human error are common in a logistics workplace. Using rugged scanners eliminates 2/3 of these problems already. Further investigation is needed to optimize for your workplace.
- 3 Choose the right equipment**

There are different types of barcode scanners, and your choice must take your business environment into account. Always ask yourself how tough and powerful your scanners need to be to perform well in the given working conditions. User friendliness is another key consideration.
- 4 Ensure it works**

The larger your logistic deployment, the harder it can be to have all IT devices working seamlessly with all the accessories the operators use. Boost the productivity of your workforce and operations by employing the best software management tool for your business. Don't forget to make sure that your workforce feels comfortable using the equipment provided, too.
- 5 Future-proof your business**

Choosing a barcode scanner goes well beyond deciding which scanning technology is best for your business. What you should really be looking for is a reliable supplier to trust as a long-term partner who will take care of your accessory needs way into the future.



Why embed advanced barcode technology into your operations?

1 The obvious answer is enhanced information gathering, with increased accuracy and at speed. With the right technology in place, you're able to know more about what's going on across your operation at all times.

Point a modern scanner at a pile of crates or boxes and it'll tell you exactly what's in each one, from up to 30m away. You know what comes in, where it's come from and where it's going. That translates into both productivity (less time spent auditing stock) and confidence (you know what's where, and when something isn't where it should be).

There's a data trail for everything, allowing greater control and minimizing pilot error. Security is enhanced too: it's far harder for anything to go missing.

But all these benefits come with their own challenges.



What are the main scanning challenges in a warehouse environment?

2 The more industrial the workplace, the more challenging it is to get accurate data via a barcode.

Things are not always easily accessible: a stack may be meters high or concealed behind a dozen similar stacks; the barcode may be hidden, damaged or elusive.

The productivity and security benefits depend on uninterrupted data capture, so a faint, scratched or otherwise damaged barcode can slow things down. Dust and dirt can affect legibility, and all kinds of hazards specific to your workplace may present themselves.

Much depends on the quality of the scan engine. The right device, built for the environment, should be up to the task of decoding tricky or clustered codes.

Then there's the human element. People make mistakes and have lapses in attention. Will your equipment be able to handle this?

Finally, all the various aspects and features need to join up seamlessly. No point upgrading element X when element Y is stuck in the dark age. Then again, if it can be made to integrate, why throw away workable stuff?

We recommend taking bespoke advice from people who scope scanners for a living – all day, every day, across all manner of client operations.

Book a meeting with our friendly expert Greg [here](#)

What to look for when choosing scanning equipment?

3 Overall, there are two main aspects to consider when you are choosing your perfect scanning equipment: how well the scanner performs in your specific environment, and how tough it is.

Performance



You'll need a scanner that works intuitively, not just when perfectly aligned. So, make sure to look for an **omnidirectional device**.



It should work both **across distance and at close range** – the latter is not a given with an extended range model, so if you need both capabilities, be careful.



You'll need to deal with **damaged, dusty or clustered barcodes** with one scan. The best devices can handle this; others struggle.



Integrated scanners incorporate the tech into a tablet, which can free up a hand, while stand-alone pistol-grip scanners may be a better option for working with gloves.

In general, **pistol-grip scanners** are much faster and can handle much more data than standard integrated scanners. You can shoot from the hip, scan quickly, and normally more. The emphasis here is therefore on speed.

On the other hand, some integrated scanners are of higher quality. They are designed for in and out inventory scanning or asset management. We're talking fewer scans per minute, but a more stable operation with less chances of droppage.

Ruggedness



You'll need devices that can cope with accidents – falls, drops, tumbles – along with **accidental misuse or careless handling**.



You may need to allow for extreme **temperature fluctuation**, chemical/liquid spills, or scanning equipment being left in a harmful environment.



Contaminants on hands and surfaces will often affect a less rugged device. If a handheld scanner will need to be used with **gloves**, be sure to add that to the spec.

JLT devices that work with gloves include the JLT3608SR, JLT3608ER, JLT3678SR, and JLT3678ER in both cordless standard and extended range.

You can learn more about what to look for when buying rugged devices in our other guide, here: [How to choose and buy the right rugged computers for your business](#)

Theory and specs aside, it's critical that you test the actual device in the actual environment before committing to a purchase. Any reputable supplier should be able to arrange this.

TOP TIP: Check out our [‘try before you buy’](#) scheme.



How can I make sure that my scanners will work with my existing infrastructure?

4 Seamless integration across your operation, with no interoperability glitches between devices, is vital to ensure continuous uptime for your workforce. Although most installations are pretty straightforward today – just add a scanner and the software is already there – when you have 100 units, the picture can look a little different.

In larger operations, you are likely to have a bulk charging station. So, at the start of a new work shift, it is not guaranteed that each scanner is paired with the same device as during the last shift. This means accessories need to be capable of working seamlessly across multiple parts of your operation!

In fact, you might never have the same scanner connected to the same computer, so instead of pairing each scanner with each device each day via Bluetooth, you want to be sure that your accessories can handle the whole operation, as quickly as possible, no matter where they are in the warehouse.

This is where software like JLT's own ForkBeard can come into play (ask our sales reps for more information). This tool is designed to enable users to handle and pair scanners to devices more easily, with minimal training and miniscule loading time. Just point the scanner at the barcode on the device, and let the technology do the rest! The scanner will pair automatically with the device via the barcode.

A good supplier can help you identify the right software tools that integrate perfectly with your existing Warehouse Management System (WMS) or Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system.

Accessories such as scanners shouldn't be a burden to your existing systems! They should be powerhouses; helping boost productivity, efficiency, and worker comfort all at once.

The latter must not be overlooked. As well as your equipment working seamlessly, you also want your staff to work efficiently with the equipment you've purchased.

Most hardware these days is pretty intuitive, but if you have a mix of first languages among your staff, special training may be worth considering.

And as with most areas, attention to training needs will pay dividends – although finding the time can be a challenge. Your supplier should be happy to help with this as well.

What should I look for in a scanner supplier?

5 Don't buy barcode scanners solely on up-front price. Remember that you're buying a relationship.

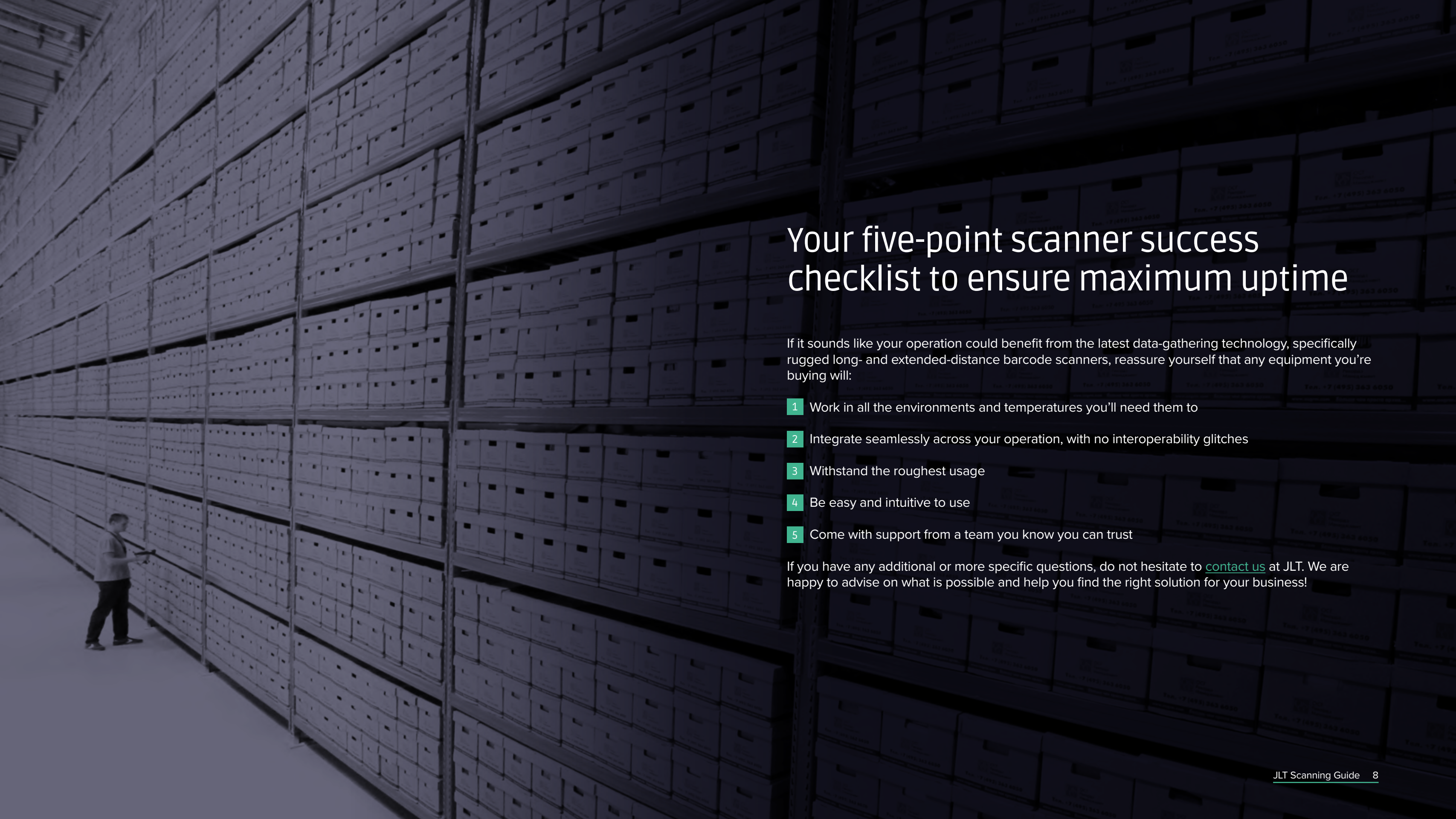
Most critically, you're looking for a partner prepared to take the long-term view. All being well, your data-gathering equipment will drive efficiencies from the heart of the operation for years to come, and you'll need to be sure you're supported. Software changes regularly; technology moves on; your own needs evolve.

Choose a partner who's been around long enough to develop a reputation for reliability. They should be trusted by the best organizations in relevant fields and operate at the leading edge of technical development – whether or not your own requirement encompasses that at this stage. It may soon.

You need a partner to take time to understand the needs of your particular business. They should be on hand for any scanner issues to ensure minimal downtime. You'll need to check they're plugged into the leading software providers, so any updates are provided as and when necessary.

Above all, you need a partner who does the thinking for you, keeping your operation up to speed as scanning technology and your requirements evolve and leaving you to concentrate on the core of your own business.





Your five-point scanner success checklist to ensure maximum uptime

If it sounds like your operation could benefit from the latest data-gathering technology, specifically rugged long- and extended-distance barcode scanners, reassure yourself that any equipment you're buying will:

- 1 Work in all the environments and temperatures you'll need them to
- 2 Integrate seamlessly across your operation, with no interoperability glitches
- 3 Withstand the roughest usage
- 4 Be easy and intuitive to use
- 5 Come with support from a team you know you can trust

If you have any additional or more specific questions, do not hesitate to [contact us](#) at JLT. We are happy to advise on what is possible and help you find the right solution for your business!



JLT – 25+ years of making data communications work

Our story starts in 1994. The Internet was new, industrial computers were basic and 3G was still a dream. Over the following decades, JLT pioneered the rugged computing market. By taking design and quality to new levels, we brought the possibilities of computing to industries where a typical office machine might last just minutes. We think every business should be able to utilize the power of communication technology without restrictions – anytime, anywhere.

Today we are one of the leading companies in the rugged computer market and have shipped over 100,000 units worldwide. Our mission remains the same as ever: we're here to empower customers' business success by enabling hassle-free data communication in challenging environments.

Warehousing presents a range of challenges, including the need to minimize downtime and the difficulty to maintain seamless wireless interoperability across fleets of devices. We match these demands through the most dependable computers, accessories and enabling services that go the extra mile.

JLT computer gear is built to the highest rugged quality standards. This starts with the casing, but what's inside the armour is equally important, and our integrated scanner engines are the smartest on the market. Partnering with JLT also means long-term device and integration support is on hand. We build our equipment to last and we like to keep it going – as well as in tune with all the latest software. We are your one-stop-shop rugged IT provider, the perfect integrated solutions partner!

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