

PLAYING IT SAFE: A CHECKLIST FOR CHOOSING AN INFLATABLES VENDOR



Let's face it: Inflatables are an investment, not an impulse buy. That's why it only makes sense to purchase inflatables from long-standing companies who have proven track records with design quality, on-time delivery, customer service and more. But honestly, how would you know? If you contacted an inflatables company (or they contacted you), how could you determine with a fair amount of certainty that your project would turn out exactly the way you wanted? Based on years of hearing tales from clients who came to Landmark after using the other guys, we've compiled a checklist of things to consider, things to make sure of and things to avoid like the plague. Using our inside knowledge, you'll be able to make a more confident decision on the vendor that's right for you.

Things To Consider

While answering "no" to any of these is no cause to sound an alarm, you would do better to work with a vendor who does/offers everything below.

___ **Has the company asked about the factors of your campaign or the primary use of the inflatable?** This could have a profound effect on how the balloon performs, the size, shape and more.

___ **Do you like the concept illustration (quote sketch) the vendor provided?**

___ **Is the sketch from the same company that will build your inflatable?** If not, what assurances do you have that you'll get the same caliber of creativity?

___ **Does your point of contact have a long history with the company?** How long has your contact been employed and what position do they hold? Being forced to change representatives in the middle of a project isn't the end of the world, but having your rep quit or be fired mid-stream certainly can complicate and delay matters.

___ **Are all needed accessories provided?** Do UL-approved blowers, 4000# rated nylon tethers and other needed accessories come with the inflatable or do those cost extra?

___ **Are they trying to sell you what they want you to buy?** Don't be pushed around. You're paying for your inflatable and it should be exactly what you want and need, not what the vendor is trying to get rid of.

Things To Make Sure Of

If you find yourself answering "no" to one or more of these, you'll want to tread carefully. Each of these questions will show you about the level of quality provided by the vendor as well as their ability to stand behind their products.

___ **Do you like the inflatables pictured on their site?** What you see on the company's website should be a representation of the best they have to offer. If you aren't pleased with what you find online, chances are good you won't be pleased with the final product they deliver.

___ **Do they offer a warranty?** How long is the warranty? What does it cover?

___ **Is the company's location stated on their website?** Will you be able to reach them when needed?

___ **Has the business been operational for a significant amount of time?** Can they prove it? Isn't it awful that you even need to worry about that? Unfortunately, we've heard some horror stories from clients that now cause us to advise you to ask. Can the vendor provide customer testimonials or media coverage that shows they've been in business as long as they claim?

___ **Do they use top-quality construction practices?** Without double-stitched seams and internal tethering you run a serious risk of incurring damage to your inflatable, even with normal wear and tear.

Things To Avoid Like the Plague

If even one of these questions has a "no" answer, run like the wind! These are warning signs that almost always lead to a poor performing inflatable and an overall bad experience.

___ **Does the vendor provide referrals?** If they are unable to offer a minimum of three recent referrals, don't bother working with them. If they do offer referrals, be sure you call each one.

___ **Do the images on their site belong to them?** Again, it's a shame you even have to ask, but you really should. There have been numerous cases of vendors who copy images from other websites. If the vendor can't verify the images on their site are from projects they created, end your conversation right there.

___ **Do their claims seem realistic?** There are certain factors that come into play with every inflatables project. Lead times that are far faster than others or pricing that is exceptionally lower than competitors' bids should send up a red flag.

___ **Are their salespeople professional?** Using hard-sell tactics and bashing competitors to try and gain business is not only unprofessional, it is oftentimes dishonest. Companies that participate in these sales practices usually carry that behavior over into other areas of their business, too. This should be a deal-breaker.

We understand that by educating our clients, everybody has a better experience. If you'd like more information on how to ensure your inflatables buying process goes smoothly, visit http://www.landmarkcreations.com/tips_tricks/ and read the section under "Things to Consider Before Ordering."

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