The Inspector's Blueprint

How to ruthlessly evaluate custom poly mailer quotes and verify manufacturing quality.



A Zigpac Technical Companion Guide

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THE ILLUSION OF IDENTICAL QUOTES

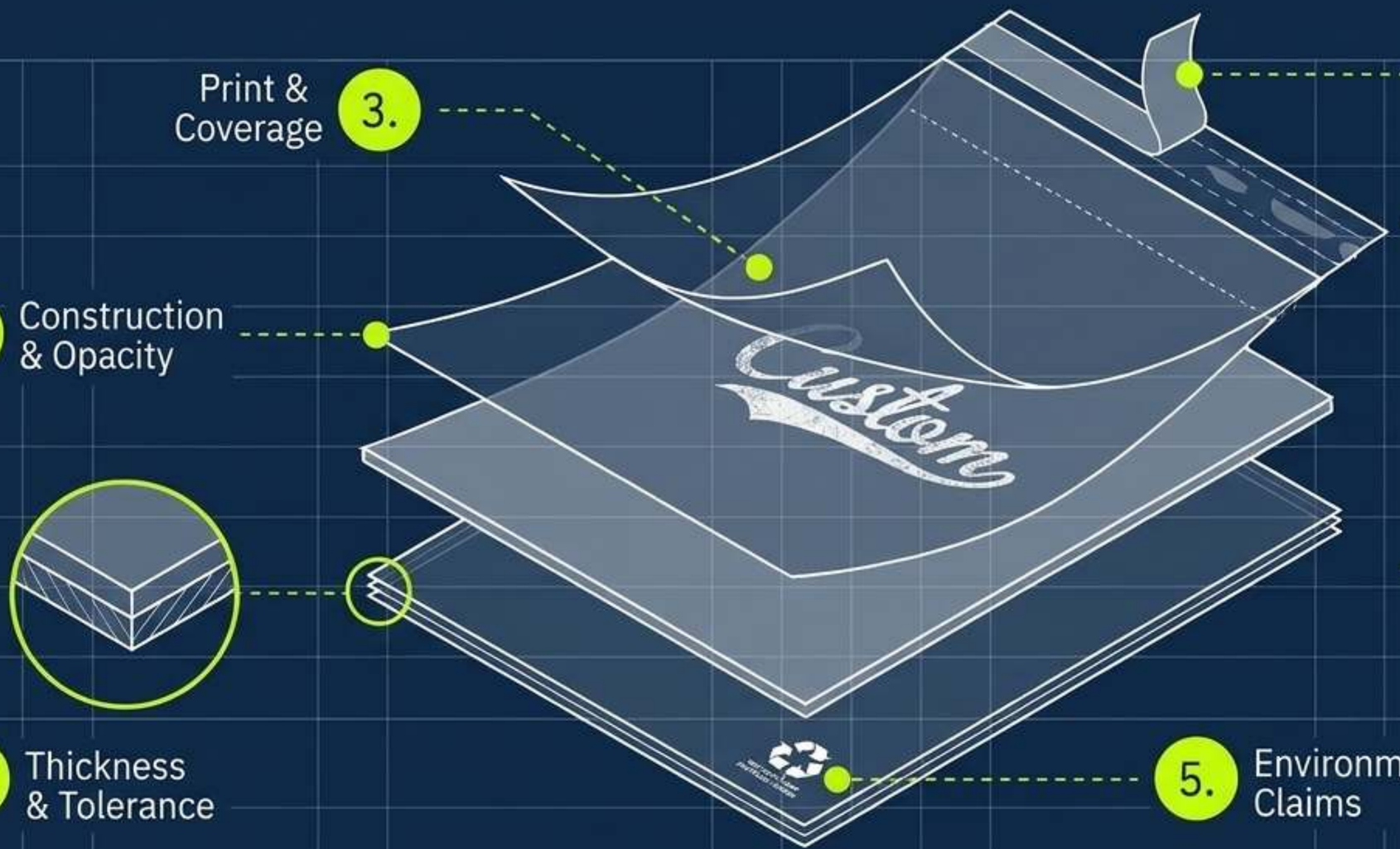
Three standard fields—size, a mil number, and a unit price—hide the variables that decide if your mailer survives a fulfillment shift. The true cost of guessing shows up on the packing line.

SIZE: 10x13 | THICKNESS: 2.5 mil | PRINT: Custom | PRICE: $0.15



If a quote cannot be checked against a physical sample, it is not a basis for comparison.

ANATOMY OF A VERIFIABLE QUOTE



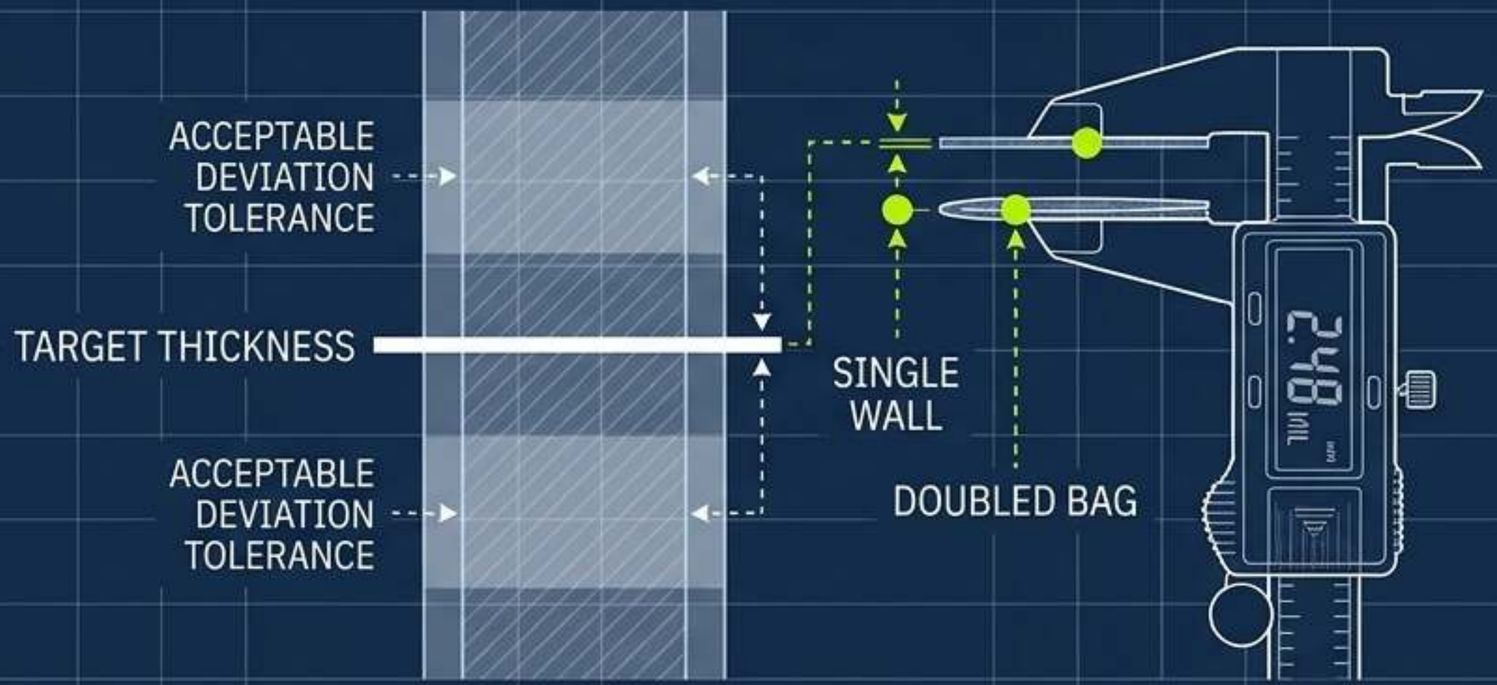
1. Thickness & Tolerance
2. Construction & Opacity
3. Print & Coverage
4. Closure Mechanics
5. Environmental Claims
6. The Physical Sample Test

CHECK 1: THE ILLUSION OF THE “MIL”

1 mil = 25.4 micrometers (µm)

2.0, 2.5, and 3.0 mil are market reference points, not load ratings.

USPS sets no minimum mil.



DIAGNOSTIC CHECKLIST

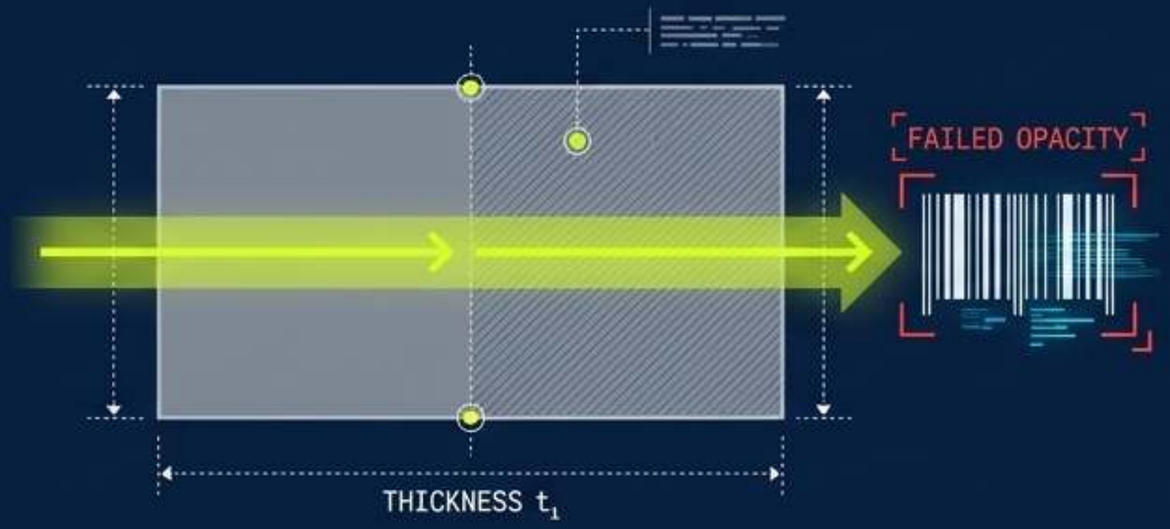
- **Measurement Basis:** Is the quote for a single wall or the doubled bag?
- **Tolerance:** What deviation from the nominal value is accepted?
- **Method:** Is the film measured to standard (e.g., ASTM D6988)?

RED FLAG: A naked ‘mil’ number without a stated tolerance is meaningless on a quote.

CHECK 2: CONSTRUCTION & OPACITY

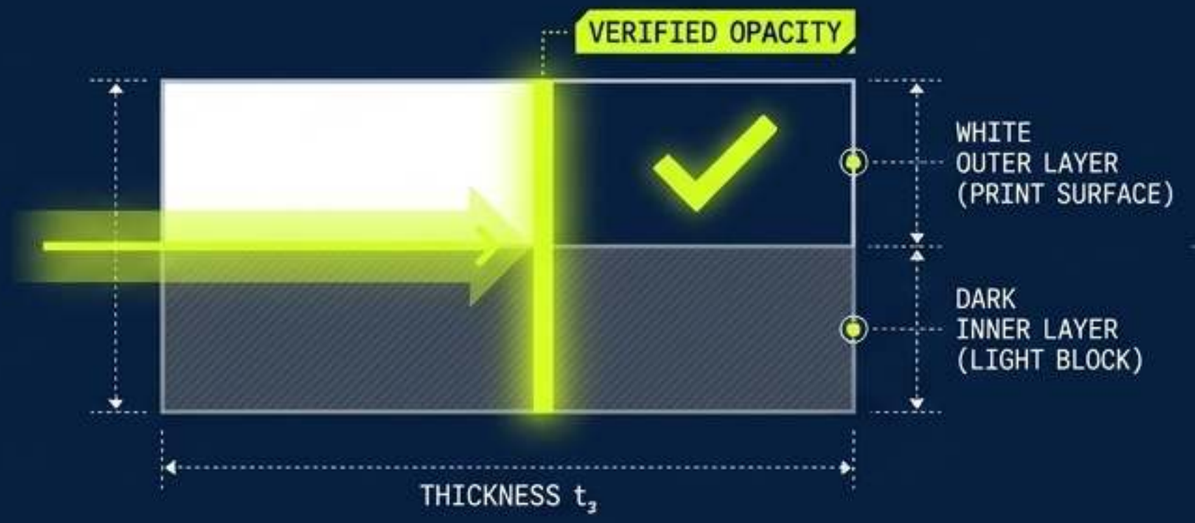
SINGLE-LAYER

Extruded from one resin melt. Pigment mixed throughout. Privacy requires heavy pigment.



CO-EXTRUDED

Multiple layers in one pass. White outer layer for clean print; dark inner layer (grey/black/silver) blocks light.



DIAGNOSTIC CHECKLIST

- ☑ Does the stated thickness refer to the full multi-layer film?
- ☑ Are all layers polyethylene (PE)?

  Note: APR guidance treats all-PE films differently than films with non-PE layers for recycling.

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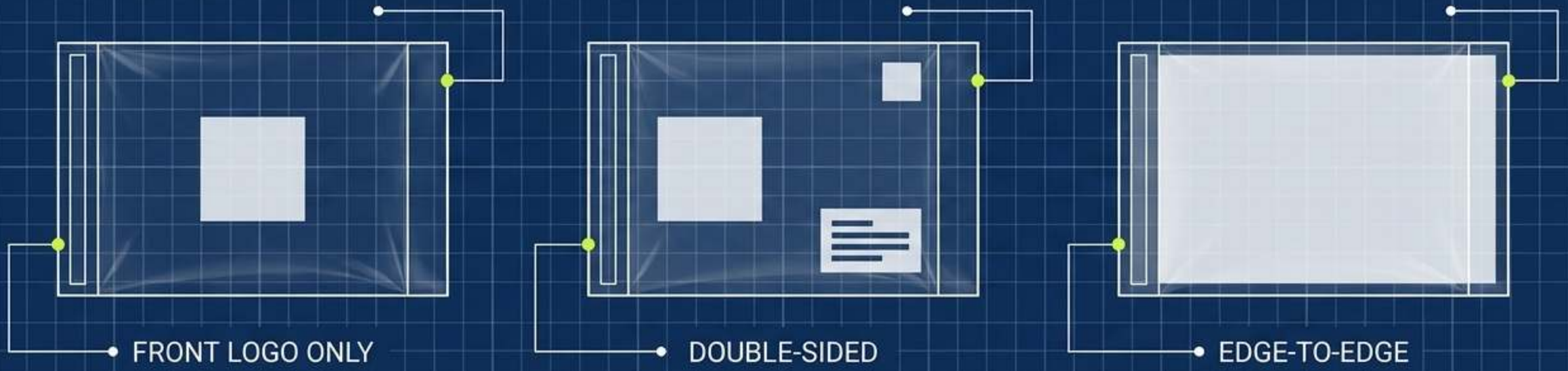
CHECK 3: PRINT METHOD & COVERAGE

METHOD BREAKDOWN

Flexographic: Requires separate plates per color/side, setup spread across run.	**Digital:** No plates, high volume cost.	**Gravure:** Engraved cylinders, massive runs.

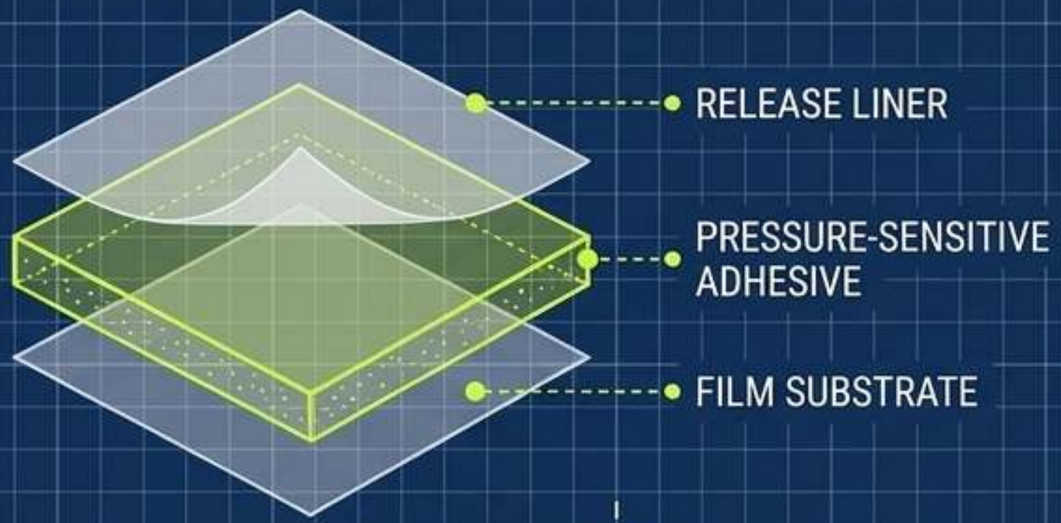


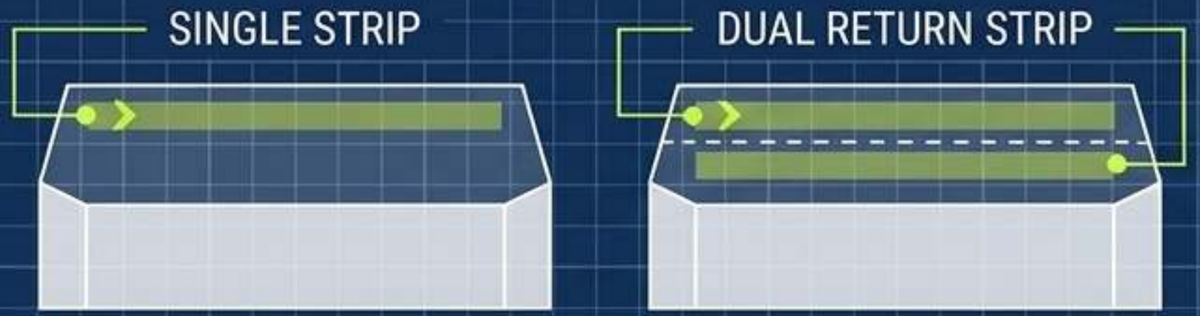
DIAGNOSTIC CHECKLIST

- ✓ Is coverage front-only, double-sided, or edge-to-edge?
- ✓ Are plates charged separately? Are they reused on reorders?
- ✓ How are Pantone brand colors handled on tinted vs. white film?

CHECK 4: CLOSURE MECHANICS

Core Concept: Seal failures originate from incompatible adhesives or poor packing-line pressure.





DIAGNOSTIC CHECKLIST

- ☑ What is the strip width and adhesive type?
- ☑ Is it tamper-evident?
- ☑ Is a secondary return strip required?
  (Note: Zigpac lists these separately as Custom Returnable Poly Mailers).

THE WAREHOUSE TEST PROTOCOL



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CHECK 5: NAVIGATING ENVIRONMENTAL CLAIMS

The Rule: Environmental claims create legal risk for your brand, not the supplier.

"Recyclable" Claim

Filter 1: FTC Green Guides (16 CFR § 260.12)

Are facilities available to 60%+ of consumers? (Polyethylene fails)

Filter 2: California SB 343

Restrictions on chasing arrows

Result: Store Drop-off

Do NOT use Curbside Bin

DIAGNOSTIC CHECKLIST

- ☑ Is recycled content Post-Consumer (PCR) or Post-Industrial (PIR)?
- ☑ Are there transaction documents tied specifically to your batch?

RED FLAG: The #4 LDPE resin code is an identification code, not a recycling claim (ASTM D7611).

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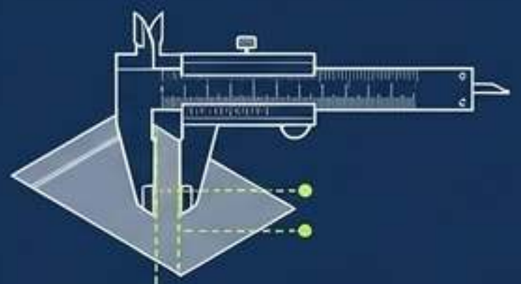
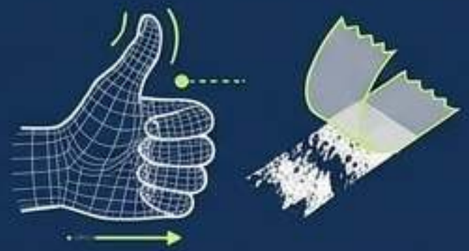
CHECK 6: THE PHYSICAL SOURCE OF TRUTH

An **eProof** confirms layout. It cannot show how ink sits on polyethylene. A physical sample is your only evidence of production reality.

LAB REPORT



MEASURE:
Single wall against stated tolerance



RUB RESISTANCE:
Rub print firmly, apply packing tape and pull



OPACITY TEST:
Hold empty bag over dark text under strong light



ODOR TEST: Open sealed sample after days to check for garment-transferable odor

THE RULE OF APPROVAL: Never skip from artwork straight to bulk production. (Zigpac offers free eProofs and physical samples for US$5–30).

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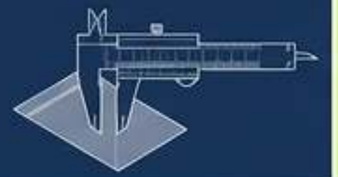
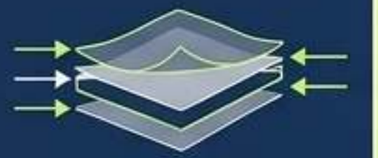
The Supplier Evaluation Scorecard

Criterion	What to look for on paper	How to test physical sample	Red Flag
Thickness	Nominal mil, basis, tolerance	Single-wall readings 	A mil number with no tolerance
Construction	Single vs Co-Ex, layer colors	Inner/outer color match 	“Premium film” with no construction stated
Opacity	Privacy method	Dark text readability under light 	No opacity method stated
Print	Method, ink colors, coverage	Rub and tape test 	‘Custom print’ with no coverage details
Cost	Bags, plates, freight broken out	N/A 	A single all-in number that cannot be split

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The Unit Price vs. Landed Cost Matrix

To compare suppliers fairly, rebuild every quote into the same five lines. A low unit price with plates, freight, or duties left out will consistently cost more than a higher, transparent quote.

Supplier A

$0.15 Unit Price

- ⚠ + Plate fees per color
- ⚠ + Mandatory premium samples
- ⚠ + Uncalculated freight

Supplier B

$0.18 Unit Price

- ✓ Plates included/itemized
- ✓ Accurate freight
- ✓ All-in cost

⚠ **Check if setup charges recur on reorders**—this radically alters the cost of your second run.

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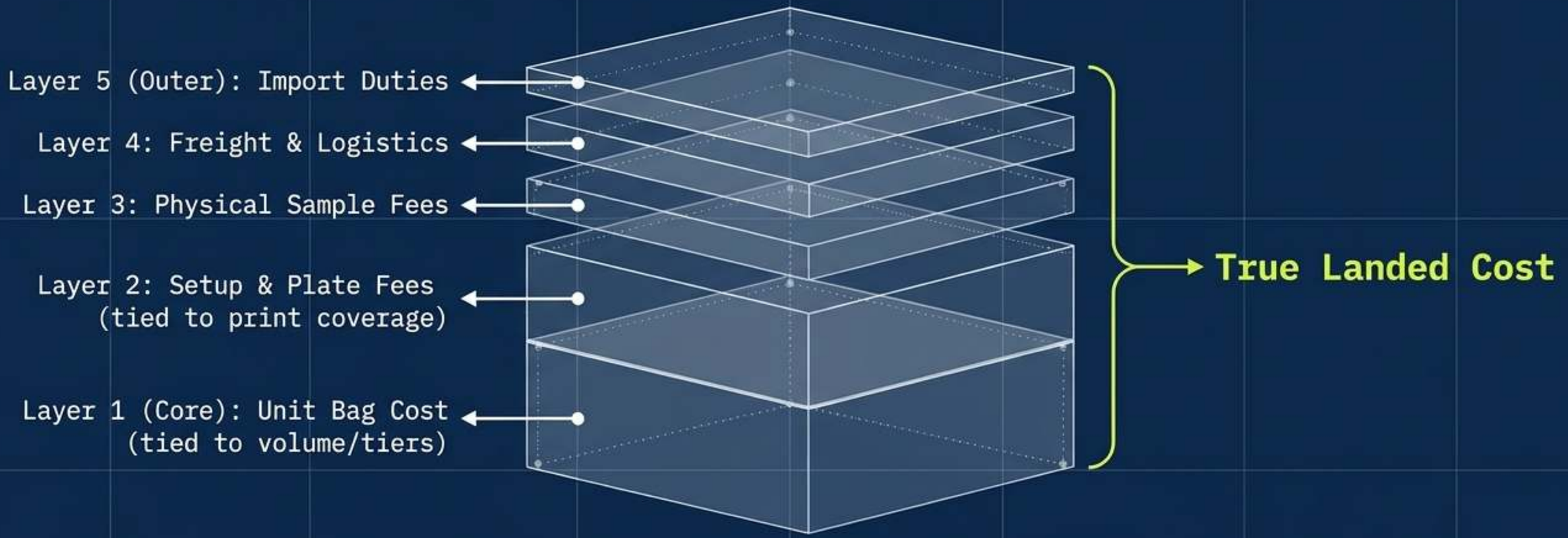
Synthesis: Anatomy of a Landed Cost

You cannot verify a unit price without a physical sample.
You cannot verify a landed cost without a transparent quote.



Baseline pricing context (Nov 2026): Zigpac listed tiers scale from US$0.28 at 500+ pcs to US$0.08 at 10,000+ pcs (final price relies on product-specific quote). Volume fundamentally alters the base layer.

The Bulletproof RFQ Checklist

When you are ready to request a quote, send these exact parameters to ensure your landed cost is accurate and verifiable:

- [ ] DIMENSIONS & LOAD: Packed product size and heaviest item weight.
- [ ] VOLUME: Quantity and expectation of future reorders.
- [ ] ARTWORK: Color references (Pantones) and exact coverage (Front/Double/Edge).
- [ ] CLOSURE: Single strip or secondary return strip? Automatic packing equipment model (if used).
- [ ] LOGISTICS: Final destination for accurate freight/import calculation.
- [ ] COMPLIANCE: Any intended environmental claims (for pre-artwork document verification).

Zigpac provides final MOQ, precise schedule (standard 7-10 days), free eProofs, and physical samples to verify every single line.

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