

EXPERT INSIGHT

5 TIPS TO IMPROVE ECOMMERCE SHIPPING

This guide explores methods to improve your shipping and grow your business.

Introduction

Customer expectations for online purchasing and delivery continue to grow and evolve in today's market. At the same time, customer acquisition costs are rising at a record pace and driving down margins for many Ecommerce businesses.

As a result, merchants are seeking cost-effective ways to improve shipping processes and differentiate their delivery experience to meet heightened consumer demands. They understand that a flexible, customer-focused experience is critical for keeping customers, increasing sales and remaining competitive. In this eBook, we'll explore five tips to improve your Ecommerce shipping.

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Introduction

TIP #1

Automate Manual Shipping Processes

Automation helps eliminate the time and costs associated with recurring, manual shipping processes, which are often error prone. This can quickly make a positive impact on your operations and your bottom line.

Automating procedures will enable your company to:

- Reduce time spent fulfilling orders
- Decrease errors (incorrect addresses, wrong products, etc.) and the manual effort required for corrections (rekeying address data)
- Reduce time to ship
- Select the cheapest shipping option while maintaining service levels your customers expect

Using automation to transform shipping

Automated solutions increase efficiency and simplify decision-making. Here are examples of how automated tools can be used to improve your shipping operations:

- Connections into your Ecommerce platforms and sales channels automatically pull order information to process shipments and label creation, and push order status data back.

- Automated order management allows presets and rules to be applied to shipments based on business-specific rules created by your organization. Here are some rules frequently applied:
 - **Set carrier below certain order total:** specifies carrier service (e.g. First Class Mail) for orders below one pound to residential addresses
 - **Apply rules for high value goods:** automatically sets shipping insurance above a certain order total value; reduces manual checks and secures higher value shipments in case of damage/loss etc.
 - **Set defaults for international commodities:** reduces throughput time for international shipments that require additional data and can take more processing time

Automated systems make shipping more efficient, more profitable and more customer-focused. Simply put, automation can help your Ecommerce business scale and grow.

TIP #2

Apply Multi-Carrier Strategies to Save Money and Delight Customers

Like every cost center in an organization, the shipping operation is tasked with being cost-efficient. Having multi-carrier strategies in place can actually reduce a company's transportation costs while also building business by offering customers more options to meet their service expectations.

Leveraging access to multiple carriers

When developing multi-carrier strategies, companies should determine the best service options available for their customers. With access to multiple carriers, you have more opportunities to influence your customer's buying experience. Here's how:

- Shipping technology allows you to see all shipping options and compare available rates from various carriers – all on one screen. This enables you to automate “rate shopping” and quickly identify the most cost-efficient delivery option for your customer.
- When using a multi-carrier strategy, you can search a variety of carriers to identify specific service options meeting your customers' needs. Here are some of the most common service requests:

- **Fastest delivery**
 - Same-day express and overnight delivery help meet time-sensitive customer expectations and service commitments
- **Lowest cost service**
 - When speed isn't a priority, rate shopping can help you increase margins
- **Sustainable shipping**
 - Identify carriers with eco-friendly transportation strategies (buying carbon offsets, fixed delivery days, order consolidation, etc.) to meet customer requirements
- **White glove service**
 - Access experts in shipping specialty goods, including fragile, valuable, and sensitive items may be required for some industries
- **International expertise**

TIP #3

Pick, Pack & Ship Like “The Big Guys”

Because time is money, it's critical to ensure your fulfillment process is efficient. The quicker you get a package into a box and prepared for carrier pick-up, the sooner customers will receive your products and you can exceed their expectations.

Reducing your time to ship not only helps meet your customers' expectations on delivery times, it also serves as a valuable metric for lowering your shipping costs.

While expediting fulfillment is key to customer satisfaction, it's also important to ensure that each task is performed accurately. Mistakes typically result in delayed or missing packages, which can damage customer relationships and negatively impact future sales.

Streamlining fulfillment processes

What can you do to drive a better pick, pack and ship process for your customers? Prioritize the following tasks for quick results that can deliver substantial efficiencies for your business.

- Take advantage of bulk / batch shipping to process multiple orders at a time.
- Leverage barcode scanners to find orders that have been picked, reducing time spent on manual data entry.
- Use an automated connection with carrier systems to decrease manual data entry time for printing shipping labels.
- Automatically update order details and tracking information for customers to set delivery expectations accurately.

TIP #4

Buy Insurance for Shipments Above a Certain Order Value

Once you've implemented the tasks previously outlined for improving fulfillment, the chance of making a mistake within your site will be minimal. But, there is still a chance that items can get lost and damaged during delivery.

Purchasing insurance will provide benefits beyond the declared value coverage included by carriers. Without additional insurance, shipping costs aren't covered for lost, stolen or damaged shipments.

Capitalizing on insurance benefits

By buying insurance for higher value orders, your company can realize both financial and customer service benefits.

- If an insured shipment is damaged, lost or stolen, the total order value will be refunded, including the value of items plus shipping costs, which can be significant for high-value products.

- You are assured of receiving the total refund and are more confident that claims will be paid out promptly when you buy insurance. This gives you confidence to ship the replacement order quickly, making customers very happy and reflecting positively on your brand.
- Purchasing insurance can help take the guesswork out of shipment status for your customers. If an insured shipment encounters problems during delivery, customers can access the tracking page to get accurate information and timely updates.

TIP #5

Use Post-Purchase Touchpoints to Build and Strengthen Customer Connection With Your Brand

In today's market where brands are facing historically high customer acquisition costs, it's more important than ever to ensure your customers are happy so they will keep coming back.

How can you retain current customers and attract new ones in this rapidly changing environment? By engaging them after purchase and throughout the delivery experience.

In addition to increasing post-purchase touchpoints such as newsletters, emails and social media outreach, you can also stay engaged with customers while their shipments are in transit. This can help build brand awareness and increase cross or up-selling opportunities.

Enhancing customer engagement

Shipping technology solutions offer multiple ways to customize and brand the delivery experience. Here are a few effective, yet simple tactics to differentiate your company and increase engagement with customers.

- Apply your logo and brand colors on packing lists and shipping labels.
- Use customized tracking pages versus using standard carrier pages and emails.
- Send branded email and text notifications to communicate shipment tracking status.

Getting Started

The five strategies outlined in this document provide guidance on how to improve your shipping and grow your business.

Online shipping tools are easy to implement and are available for companies needing different levels of automation. You can typically find free offerings on the market and many can be set up in less than 10 minutes.

There are many providers in the market today. So, it's important to make sure they can meet your requirements. Here are some things to consider when selecting a provider:

- Do you meet monthly shipping charges or minimum volume commitments?
- Are fees for customer support included for free, or is there an extra charge?
- Can you speak to real people if wanted?
- Will they support you when your business is growing?

Ultimately, by applying the five strategies, you can transform shipping from a basic operational function into a profit center contributing to your company's growth.

Ready to learn how Descartes ShipRush can help to streamline ecommerce operations? Learn more at www.shiprush.com

About Descartes Systems Group

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Descartes (Nasdaq:DSGX) (TSX:DSG) is the global leader in providing on-demand, software-as-a-service solutions focused on improving the productivity, performance and security of logistics-intensive businesses. Customers use our modular, software-as-a-service solutions to route, schedule, track and measure delivery resources; plan, allocate and execute shipments; rate, audit and pay transportation invoices; access global trade data; file customs and security documents for imports and exports; and complete numerous other logistics processes by participating in the world's largest, collaborative multimodal logistics community. Our headquarters are in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada and we have offices and partners around the world.

Learn more at www.descartes.com, and connect with us on [LinkedIn](#) and [Twitter](#).

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