



SELLERCLOUD'S BIG BOOK OF E-COMMERCE INSIGHTS

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Contents



Use Sellercloud's Zapier Integrations to Automate and Customize Your E-commerce Workflows **13**



Increasing Prices During an Emergency – Know the Difference Between Protecting Your Margins and Price Gouging **47**

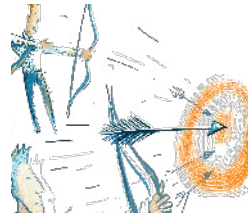
Memaila is the Convenient and Personal Alternative to Cumbersome CRMs **19**



Sellercloud's RMA Flexibility Makes Your Returns Workflow Manageable **53**



Work Smarter with Powerful Business Intelligence **25**



Add a Repricer to Your E-Commerce Workflow to Boost Sales and Save Time **57**

8 questions to ask before switching to FBM for FBA sellers **31**



When Times Change, Your Listings Need to Change With Them **63**



Be Prepared for the Ways Pandemic Scars Like the Coronavirus Affect E-commerce **37**

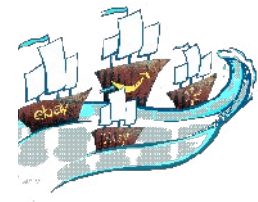


How to Prepare Your E-Commerce Business for Walmart+ **69**

When the Taxman Cometh, Sellercloud's TaxJar Integration Makes Things Simple **43**



E-Commerce Industry Gains Projected to Last Beyond Coronavirus Pandemic **75**





Spiking Demand for Warehouse Space is the Next Big Challenge for E-Commerce Sellers **79**



Apply the Inventory Turnover Formula to Assess Your E-Commerce Business **113**

7 Top Zapier Automations to Streamline Your E-commerce Workflows **85**



Eliminate Shipping Errors that Cost Your E-Commerce Business Time and Money **119**



Amazon's Transparency Brand Service Is Your Partner Against Counterfeit Claims **93**

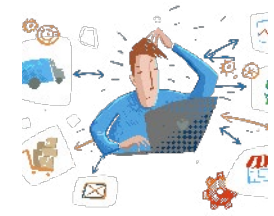


EDI vs. API – The Differences Matter in E-Commerce **123**

5 Reasons Your E-commerce Business Needs to Sell on Walmart Marketplace **97**



Replace Your Patchwork of E-Commerce Solutions with a Unified Platform **129**



Voice-Based Shopping is Not a Fad – Is Your Product Catalog Compatible? **101**



3 key ways to boost your conversion on Walmart.com **135**

Optimize Your E-Commerce Listing Images for Social Media Sales **107**



Top 10 Things Online Merchants Can Do to Make This Holiday Season a Success **139**





Shipbridge Streamlines Your Omnichannel E-Commerce Fulfillment **147**



Use Familiar Modern Technology to Optimize Workforce Productivity **185**

5 Key Reverse Logistics Strategies for Processing E-Commerce Returns **153**



Customer-Facing Inventory Visibility is a Modern E-Commerce Necessity **189**



Put-To-Light Technology Makes Your Warehouse Workflow Scalable and Efficient **159**



The Time is Right to Expand Your Omnichannel E-Commerce Internationally **193**

Warehouse Inventory Cycle Counting Saves Your Business Time and Money **167**



5 Ways to Save Money by Taking Care of Your Inventory **199**



Video is the Next Big Thing in E-Commerce Marketing Strategies **173**



8 Best SEO Strategies for Boosting Your Brand's E-Commerce Traffic **203**

12 Considerations When Creating Your Perfect E-Commerce Return Policy **179**



3 Hot E-Commerce Product Niches and Where to Sell Them **211**





5 Ways to Build and Boost Your Brand with E-Commerce Marketplace Listings **217**



CCPA Compliance is Critical for Your E-Commerce Business **253**

How Much Warehouse Space Does Your E-Commerce Business Need? **223**



Amazon FBA vs. FBM: How to Choose the Best for You **259**

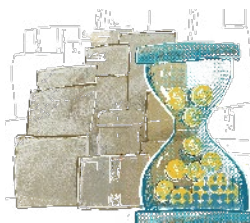


Forget 4PL and 5PL: Running Your Own Warehouse is Possible and Affordable **229**



Upgrade your E-commerce Business's Unsecure SMTP Email to an API-Based Platform **271**

Removing Dead Stock Must Be More than Just a Spring Cleaning **235**



5 Marketing Tactics That Will Get You Banned From E-Commerce Marketplaces **277**



Best Practices for Optimizing Your Warehouse Layout **239**



Walmart Fulfillment Service (WFS) Gives FBA Sellers a Viable New Option **285**

Make Improving Your Amazon Order Defect Rate a Priority **247**



Choose the Right Shopping Cart to Optimize Your E-Commerce Sales **293**





Google's Shopping Graph
Uses AI to Surface Your
E-Commerce Listings **299**



Increase Your E-Commerce Sales
by Uncovering Hidden Secondary
Audiences **337**

7 Common Mistakes to Avoid
When Expanding into B2B
E-Commerce **305**



6 Essential Warehouse Roles
Your E-Commerce Business
Needs to Hire **313**

Eliminate Your Costly E-Commerce
Backorders and Boost
Omnichannel Success **319**



How to Keep the Container
Shipping Crisis from Hindering
Your Business **325**

The Simplest Way to Boost Your
eBay Listings **331**





A Message to You

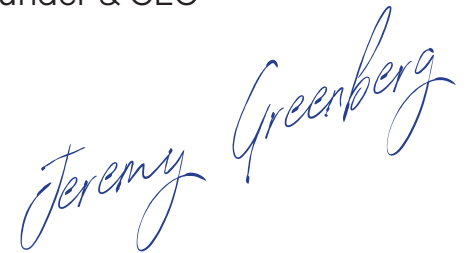
Sellercloud was founded with a mission - to help e-commerce businesses succeed. This has been our goal from the beginning and continues to guide our goals and objectives.

Over the last 12 years, Sellercloud has developed into a robust ecommerce management platform supporting and empowering thousands of ecommerce businesses. Our team of over 100 people works closely with our clients to ensure that their changing needs are met by our solutions.

The goal of this book is to share knowledge that we have gathered over the last year, in a concise and clear way. I hope that you find this book informative and insightful. We look forward to a bright and profitable future for our community of ecommerce entrepreneurs.

Wishing you a successful 2022!

Jeremy Isaac Greenberg,
Founder & CEO





FEBRUARY 18, 2020

Use Sellercloud's Zapier Integrations to Automate and Customize Your E-commerce Workflows



A big part of running an e-commerce business is finding ways to get a variety of apps, services, and people to work smoothly as a cohesive unit. As your company grows, the trickier this proposition becomes. There's more of everything: data to analyze, employees to manage, information to share, invoices to track, leads to follow, and tasks to complete. The odds are that you have a slew of unique applications and systems in place to keep everything running smoothly.

That said, all of this work takes time and resources. The more complex your workflows become, the more plugins and APIs you wind up needing to synchronize and coordinate.

It bears mentioning that we at Sellercloud take pride in our efforts to support clients with their automation needs. We routinely help customers build out custom digital features like workflow business rules and plugins. However, we have jumped at the opportunity to put more of that customization directly into the hands of our customers.

As part of our mission to help our clients grow, we have recently rolled out an invite-only integration with the automated productivity tool Zapier (pronounced zap-ee-er) to make all of the various elements of your business work together more seamlessly and creatively. This intuitive tool removes much of the complexity surrounding your business's digital workflow without the need for programming expertise.

As a Sellercloud user, you already have the power of Zapier at your fingertips. Using our REST API, we have built a Zapier integration that is ready for you to take advantage of. Simply click this link and you are ready to start!

How Zapier Works

Zapier is an automation platform that connects an ever-growing list of over 1,500 apps. Users can create "Zaps" that quickly and easily synergize the functions of their favorite web-based tools.

The process relies upon a network of "Webhooks"- automated messages that push useful data from one application to another – to trigger entire sequences of time-saving actions.

For example, when an event happens in Sellercloud, it can trigger other applications to do things like record data, issue notifications, and even adjust inventory records. It also works in reverse: Zapier can be told to use events in other apps to trigger actions in Sellercloud.

Let's take an e-commerce example: say someone places an order through a Google Form. Zapier can then instantly trigger the following actions:

- Creation of a new order in Sellercloud.
- An appropriate note is placed on the order.
- The customer's contact information is automatically added to the appropriate fields in your email marketing app.
- An email receipt is created and sent to the customer.

- A notification is sent to your warehouse or 3PL provider to begin the physical order fulfillment.
- A SMS reminder is created for the customer and set to trigger whenever the status of the order changes.
- A customer appreciation email containing a survey is triggered to send once the status of the order changes to "delivered."

This is just the tip of the iceberg. Zapier's list of webhook integrations is both deep and versatile. As a result, there are countless ways that can streamline some of your most tedious workflows and help you to innovate powerful new ones.

A Little Creativity Goes a Long Way

As with all automated productivity tools, there is an inherent degree of trial and error. You will obviously need to test out your commands and conditional logic routines before relying upon them in your business's workflow. Nevertheless, with a little imagination and tinkering, you may find ways to turn this initial time investment into massive time savings.

To make things simpler, Zapier has created their Paths tool as an intuitive way to create complex, powerful automations through long chains of rules and if-then conditions. Ordinarily, this could be quite an overwhelming process, but Zapier streamlines things with a series of pull-down menus that are pre-populated with the triggers, rules, Boolean terms, commands, and application functions required to compose the customized workflows you dream up – no complicated programming

knowledge required! The end result is a series of paths that trigger different workflows, depending upon if and how certain conditions are met.

Here are some examples of some Zapier "Zaps" you could create:

- **A file is uploaded to queue a large, new job in Sellercloud.** You can set automated status updates via email or a messaging platform like Slack to notify appropriate team members of the progress of the job as it is processed.

Taking things a step further, entire portions of the job may be automated. For instance, the actual queueing of the job itself could be initiated by a Zap.

- **A customer is due to reorder from you but has not yet done so.** You can create a path to trigger when a customer has not ordered for a set period of time. One way to do this would be to create a Zap tied to the first time a new order is placed. You can have Zapier Zap the customer's information to Klaviyo so that this app is prepared to send future follow-up emails (Even though Sellercloud doesn't have a native integration with Klaviyo, Zapier makes this option accessible). After a stretch of customer inactivity, Zapier can trigger Klaviyo to generate and send a unique coupon code to the customer. If no order is placed within a few days, a Slack or Gmail message can be triggered to send to whomever is in charge of corporate outreach to schedule a follow-up call with the customer.

If an order is placed, a Zap can add an additional row to a Google sheet to help you track the success rates of your Klaviyo campaigns.

- **A customer responds to a follow-up survey.** Not only can you populate survey responses into a Google sheet and extract contact information into a mailing list, but you can also set Zapier to trigger a series of tasks depending upon the nature of the responses. If positive, a thank you email can be sent with a discount offer and a link to post a public positive review. If negative, a customer service representative can automatically be notified and a follow-up call can be scheduled automatically.

Specific response values can further direct the notifications. For instance, if a customer complaint contains the word “shipping,” the complaint can be directed to your logistics manager. If a customer mentions an employee by name, the employee and/or the relevant supervisor can be automatically notified through Gmail or a Slack message.

- **You have several social media channels, but you are not using them to effectively drive more business.** You could use Zapier to trigger a promotional post on your social media channels for a specific product when you receive new inventory. Once the purchase order is marked as received in Sellercloud, the posts can go live to announce to your customers that you are ready to take orders.

Depending upon your business, there are likely any number of tasks that could be streamlined with Zapier. By integrating the versatility of Sellercloud’s e-commerce growth platform with Zapier’s intuitive automation tools, you can optimize your company’s workflows in a seemingly infinite array of new ways.

For more on our Zapier integration and other ways Sellercloud can increase the efficiency of your e-commerce business, contact us directly.





Read it online:





super
affordable



highly
accessible



works for
everyone



seamless
and simple

MARCH 5, 2020

Memaila is the Convenient and Personal Alternative to Cumbersome CRMs

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems have become an accepted part of running a modern business. To remain competitive, companies of all types and sizes need the ability to interact with customers, offer support, manage leads, and handle communication in an efficient and timely manner. An effective CRM should consolidate these communication tasks in such a way as to save time, manpower, and (ultimately) money.

The problem is that CRMs tend to introduce as many problems as they solve:

- **CRMs are impersonal.** In today's world, customers know the difference between interacting with a sincere person and an automated system. The former can lay the groundwork for true customer loyalty. The latter never will. Whether it's a templated email or a scripted phone call, no one wants to feel like they are just a data point in a system.
- **CRMs are often loaded with extra features and bloat that you probably don't need.** Somewhere along the way, CRMs began branching out into areas such as help desk support, call center maintenance, and marketing data mining. The problem is that although a one-stop-shop for all this seems great on paper, many of these components are underwhelming compared to dedicated alternatives. They may bolster a CRM's feature list, but they seldom prove to be superior to the platforms they promise to replace.

- **Running an effective CRM requires constant, diligent maintenance.** To maximize the value of centralized customer data and communication, every CRM user is responsible for keeping data accurate and up-to-date. Not only is this time consuming, but it is also highly susceptible to human blunders. Mistyped contact info, incomplete notes, and poor field customization can render the benefits of a traditional CRM system moot.

Spending the time and money on a CRM overloaded with inefficiencies and features that you don't need doesn't make a lot of sense. That said, you do need a plan for how to respond to customers quickly and efficiently. So, what's the alternative?

Memaila streamlines customer interaction

In the e-commerce space, it's important to have an efficient and timely protocol for customer interaction. The ability to respond to a lead, handle a customer complaint, or simply answer a product-related question quickly and effectively can earn you big points when it comes to both customer and brand loyalty. Having accurate customer data handy while doing so makes life even easier.

CRMs aim to do this task, but they rely upon clunky interfaces and web-portals that exist in their own self-contained ecosystems. Operating them requires training and patience. Maintaining them requires all stakeholders to commit to a tireless attention to detail. This all

adds up to time and money spent in areas other than selling and shipping orders. In addition, the largely automated nature of CRM systems means that even quick and effective customer interactions tend to lack the humanity and personal touch customers are seeking.

Memaila changes all of that with a fresh approach. The genius is in its simplicity:

- The customer sends a message to a provided company email.
- Memaila distributes that email to all the assigned stakeholders in their corporate and/or personal email inboxes.
- Anyone can respond to the customer directly from his or her own inbox.
- Memaila converts the response from the employee's email address to the official company account and sends it to the customer.
- At the same time, the response and thread are sent to everyone on the team, effectively stopping undesired additional responses from within the team.

Memaila provides you with a Team Inbox system that can be managed by anyone on your team and from any device. Set-up is quick. CRM-style maintenance is essentially negated. Messages and responses are logged automatically and shared team-wide— no additional data-entry is required.

Rather than requiring employees to learn entirely new systems to access and respond to customer messages,

Memaila delivers these messages to the business and/or personal inboxes of all the relevant stakeholders in your company. Every response from your team is routed back to the customer via the chosen corporate address.

This feature means that if a team member is out of the office before an issue is resolved, it is easy for another colleague to pick up where he or she left off so that no customer is left waiting. Since all the responses are coming back from a single corporate email address, the customer is given the impression that their issue is being cared of by your company, not being shuffled around between employees.

Memaila even allows you to create custom distribution flows so that specific emails are funneled to designated teams or individuals. For example, incoming emails that include terms like 'tracking' or 'shipment' can be disbursed to your logistical team, while emails containing the term 'warranty' can be diverted to your customer service department. Creating or adjusting these Memaila workflows is intuitive and efficient. Adding, editing, or removing team members takes seconds (and you don't need an IT expert to make it happen).

With Memaila, you and your employees are equipped to handle customer communication anywhere, anytime, and from the same devices that you carry everywhere. No awkward web portals or slow servers to access— just the same inboxes that you all access daily with a swipe, tap, or click.

Memaila integrations are tailored for e-commerce businesses like yours

Another area where Memaila truly shines is in how well it integrates with the tools and services you already depend on. Not only does Memaila make it simple for your team to distribute and manage customer messages, but it can also automatically pull in the information you need to ensure your customer interactions are accurate, personal, and useful.

When a customer message arrives, Memaila automatically procures the pertinent customer data from the relevant tools and marketplaces. This information is then attached to emails as they are distributed to your team, ensuring that everyone has access to all the necessary information to satisfy your customers. When replies are sent, the information is removed – the client never sees the data.

These integrations relieve the tedium of traditional CRM data entry and help your business mitigate the errors that come from relying on manually-maintained databases. Even better, Memaila does all of this without the need for any complex scripting or programming knowledge. The integrations have been designed from the ground up to be user-friendly and efficient.

- **Sellercloud data (including customer profiles, order histories, active shipment information, and tracking numbers) are all attached as a part of each distributed Memaila message.** This feature means that everyone who receives an incoming customer message

has access to all of the pertinent information to respond knowledgeably and correctly the first time.

- **Slack works similarly to any traditional email inbox added to Memaila.** You and your team can use Slack to receive and reply to external email messages with all the same Team Inbox features available to email accounts. For businesses already enjoying Slack's robust communication toolset, Memaila integration is an especially intuitive and turnkey experience that will improve your customer service capabilities without the need to learn an entirely new CRM system in order to do so.
- **Amazon notoriously firewalls direct seller-customer communication.** Memaila integration makes the process more direct and convenient. Once you connect your Memaila account to your Amazon seller account, your team can receive and reply to Amazon customer messages directly from their email or Slack accounts.

When a message arrives in your Amazon inbox, Memaila gathers the order and customer details and then forwards it on to your team's mailbox. Anyone on your team can then reply directly through Memaila—on any device—without ever having to leave their inboxes.

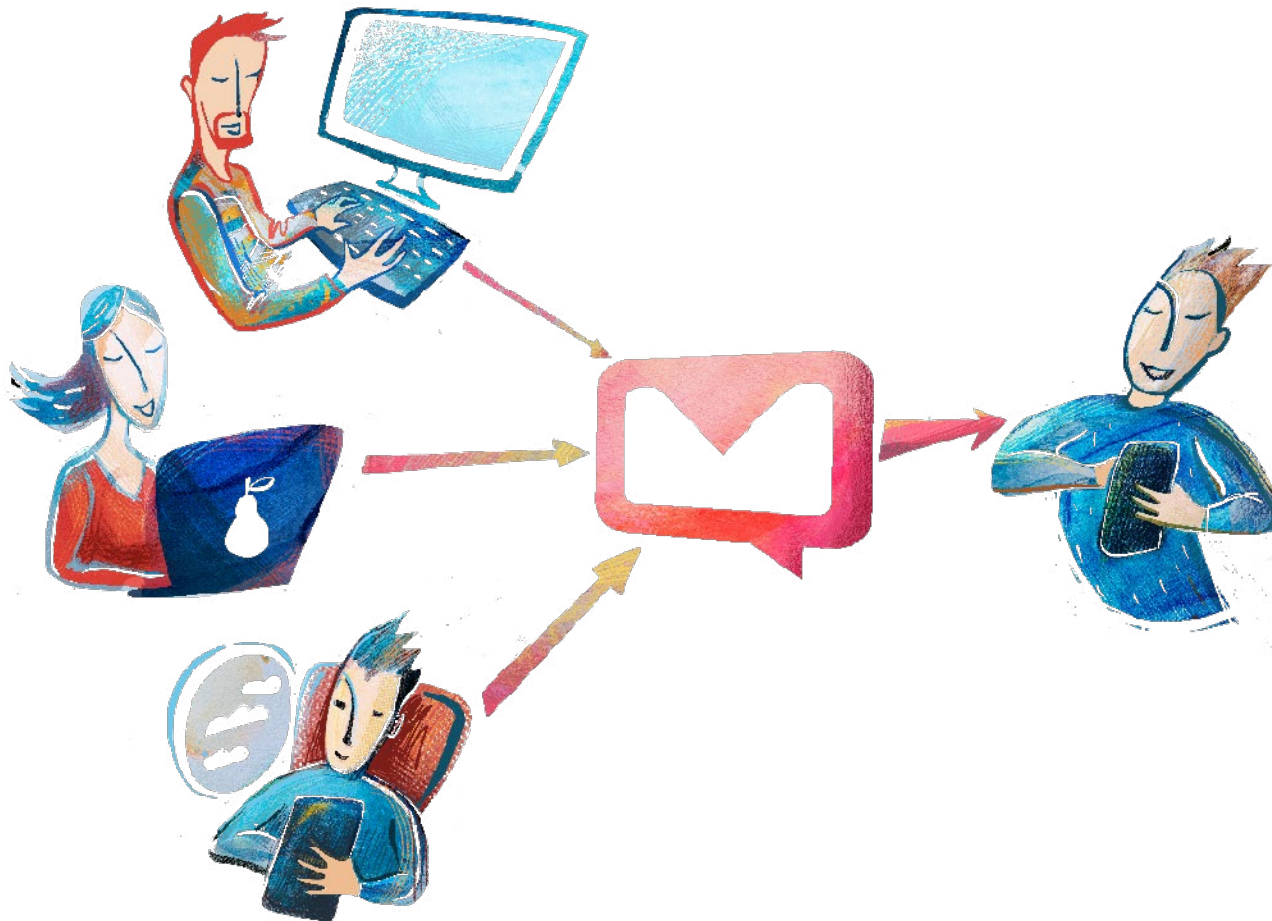
- **eBay, similar to Amazon, has its own way of handling communications between sellers and customers.** While customer email addresses are available to sellers, eBay sends customer inquiries to sellers using unique, generated addresses. Memaila circumvents this anonymity layer by using the eBay user ID to access the customer's full information profile within

Sellercloud. This feature surfaces all the relevant information your team members would need to respond to the customer in one convenient email thread from the inboxes they are most comfortable using.

In each of these cases, Memaila makes interacting with your customers convenient, efficient, and intuitive. You and your team have the information and data you need to interact with customers in a way that makes them feel understood and valued— not like another ticket in the queue.

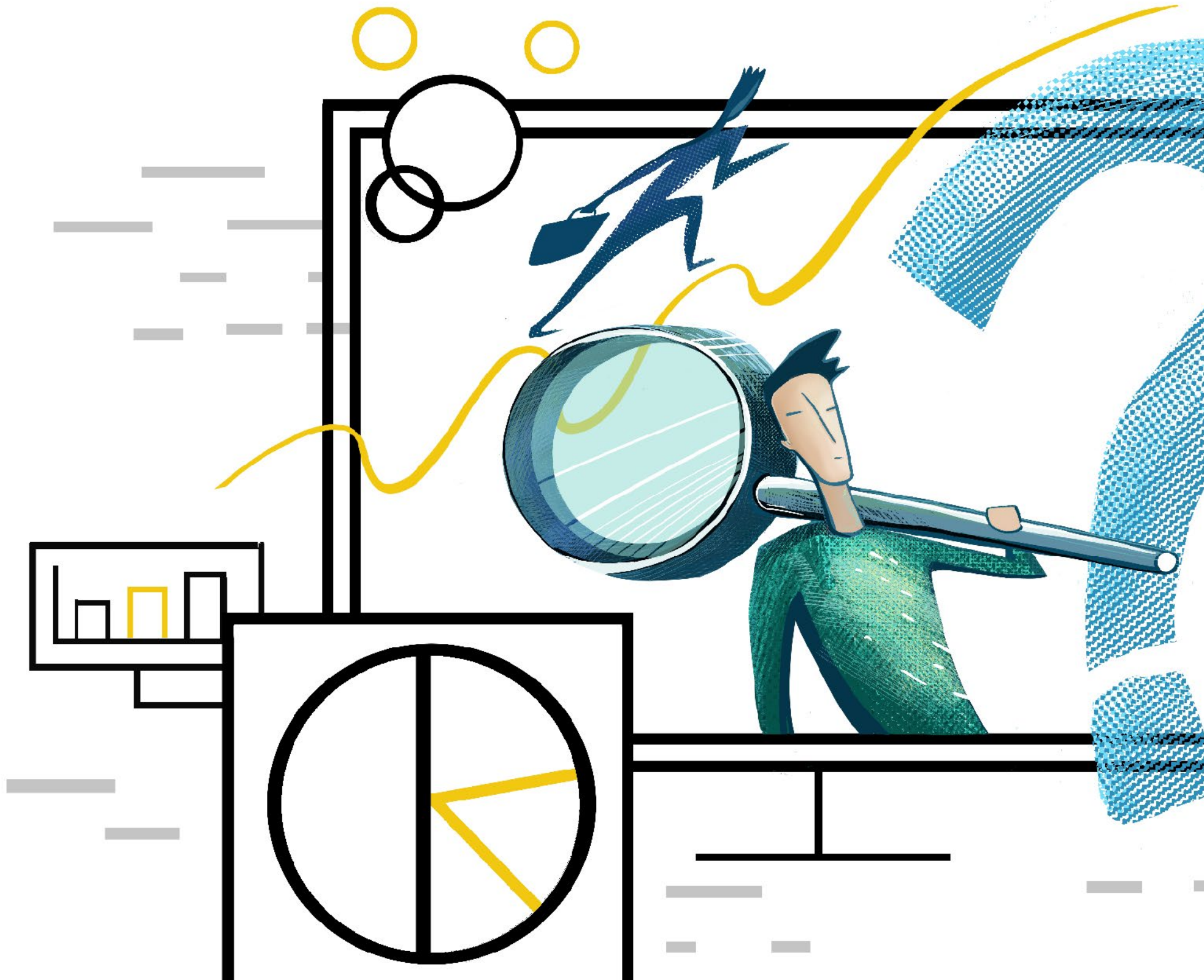
Just as Sellercloud is the optimal way to handle your channel management and order tracking, Memaila is the optimal way to streamline your customer communication workflows.

Leave the hassles and frustrations of a bloated CRM behind. Contact us directly to discuss how Memaila's simplified, yet powerful feature set can help everyone on your team better serve your most valuable asset— your customers.



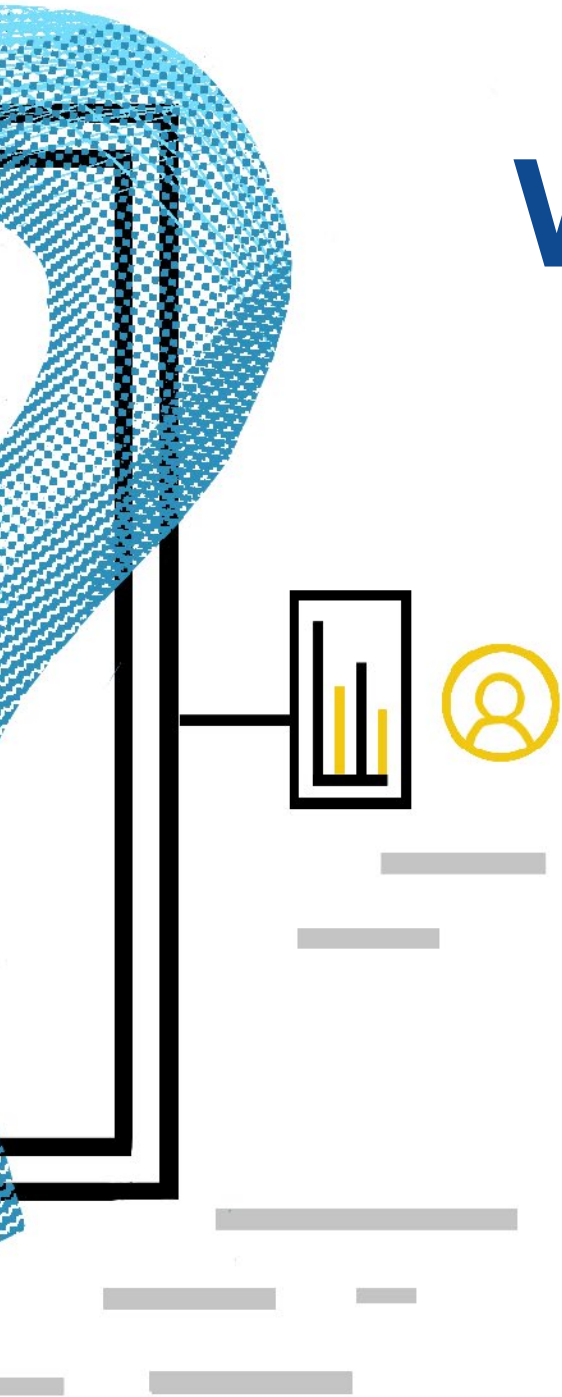
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APRIL 7, 2020

Work Smarter with Powerful Business Intelligence



In any business, there is only so much success to be found “following your gut.” When it comes to the competitive world of e-commerce, it is the attention to detail that yields predictable success and growth. The key is knowing which details to focus on and then leveraging that knowledge to make informed decisions.

First, you need the data. Sellercloud provides users with useful and accurate metrics from across their supply chains, marketplaces, and fulfillment workflows. Figures like cost of goods sold (COGS), quantity sold by channel, and profit and loss allow you to drill down into the realities of your company’s performance. Ideally, this information should form the foundation of how you will set, advance, and monitor your future business goals.

With the right business intelligence data, you can effectively identify your products with the highest return rates compared to their sales volumes. You can make more effective predictions of sales growth patterns – forecasting future monthly, quarterly, and yearly earnings.

To commit to this level of data-driven decision making, you need access to ways to clearly and precisely surface information about your company’s key performance indicators. Doing so makes it easier to collaborate with your team to digest the micro- and macro-level implications of what your data is actually telling you. As a result, decisions about every aspect of your e-commerce business – including elements such as purchasing,

marketing, hiring, and strategic partnerships – can be rooted in quantifiable terms.

Microsoft’s Power BI is a fully-featured business analytics tool that can help you to reach these ends. What’s more, integrating your Sellercloud data with Power BI is seamless.

Power BI Painlessly Surfaces the Data You Need in Real-Time

Power BI is a feature-rich business intelligence platform that can be wielded to perform a wide array of useful functions. Typically, the most immediately useful component of the Power BI package is its data reporting feature set.

Power BI is, first and foremost, a scalable data analytics program. One you bring information into the tool, you can create customized dashboards and reports to bring your data to life. Complex relationships between crucial business variables can be calculated and modeled in meaningful ways to help you make targeted and informed decisions.

Additionally, Power BI includes secure, cloud-based data hosting capabilities. This aspect allows all of your business’s decision makers to access key performance indicators and analytics in real time from any desktop or mobile device. Thus not only does your team have cutting edge, AI-driven insights, but they have them all whenever they need them and wherever they are.

Power BI Makes Data Shareable and Actionable

As businesses grow, they often become more departmentalized. While startups often require a few employees to wear all the hats, more mature businesses tend to form teams dedicated to specific aspects of their respective companies. As both the day-to-day and big-picture responsibilities are distributed across more people with more specialized roles, there among to be a deliberate plan for effectively communicating and acting on data.

Power BI's robust reporting features are tailored to these types of needs. Its toolset allows for real-time data monitoring and analysis that can be shared securely both internally and externally. This feature combined with its highly customizable presentation options, make it possible to communicate essential information safely and clearly across your entire organization.

What's especially valuable for Sellercloud users is that Power BI provides a clean, accessible way to monitor and surface all of your sales, inventory, logistics, and fulfillment data in a way that everyone on your team can use to make better data-driven decisions.

For instance:

- Your marketing team can measure the effectiveness of a particular campaign or identify seasonal trends in sales revenue.

- Your human resources department can look for productivity trends to celebrate or address.
- Your logistics manager can compare the order turnaround times across multiple 3PL partners.
- Your sales team can identify low-performing listings and slow-moving inventory so that they can be re-priced or removed.
- Your inventory manager can keep tabs on dwindling stockpiles and identify the average lead time needed to reorder and/or supply.

These are just a few ways in which the combination of Sellercloud data and Power BI's robust query functions can lead to a more agile, data-driven decision-making workflow in your e-commerce company.

Taken a step further, Power BI pairs natively with Microsoft's automation and custom app development platforms to create even more time-saving workflows to boost your business's overall productivity.

Sellercloud's Power BI Integration Makes Improving Your Data-Driven Decision-Making a Fantastic Experience

Microsoft designed Power BI to be a tool that is both powerful and accessible. For businesses already familiar with other Microsoft stalwarts like Excel and SQL Server, the barrier to entry for getting the most out of Power BI is especially low.

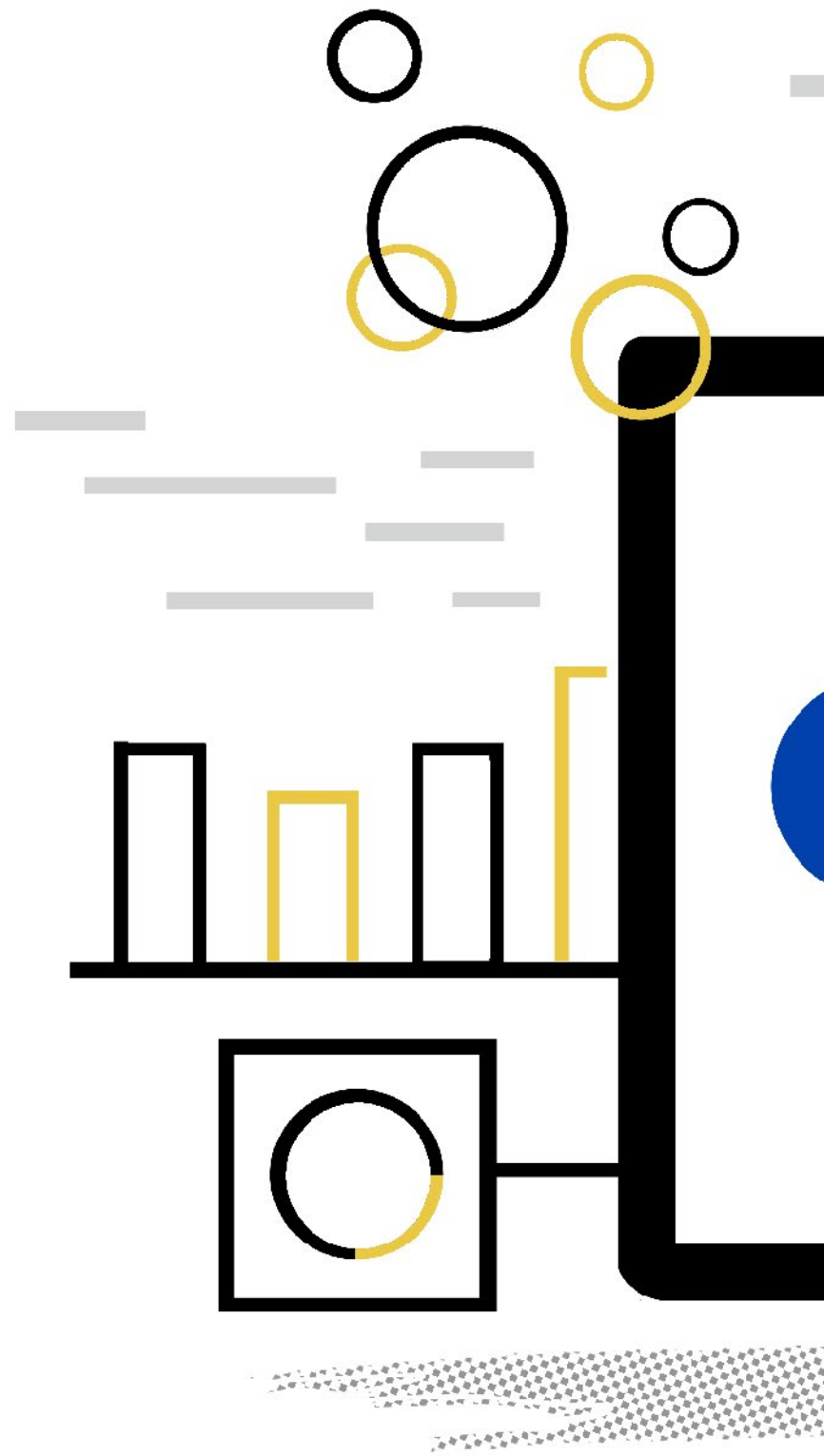
Sellercloud, as a true software as a service (SaaS) platform, can help you with the technical side of setting up

the custom Power BI dashboards, reports, and analytics. We even offer the option for dedicated server hosting with full database read access. This function means you can reap all the benefits of a fully-featured business intelligence platform without any of the stress of creating it from the ground up.

On the other hand, for those looking for more of a DIY approach, we have both a technical guidebook and a growing Git Repository to help you get the most out of interfacing Power BI with your Sellercloud data. These supports will help either your tech team or a third-party Power BI expert make sure your business data and analytics are perfectly customized to match your business's needs.

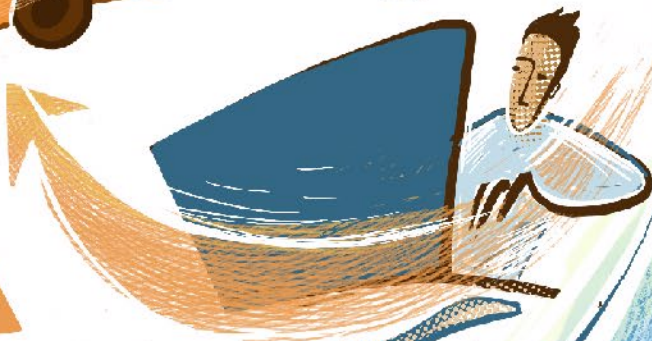
Whether you opt to dive on your own or want to enlist our help, we are prepared to support you every step of the way. For more about how to add Power BI into your Sellercloud experience, contact us directly.

Read it online:





FBA



APRIL 15, 2020

8 questions to ask before switching to FBM for FBA sellers



This is a guest post from Michael Krakaris.

With Fulfillment by Amazon (FBA) restricting inbound deliveries and delaying outbound shipments of all non-essential products, staying on the fulfillment program has become a risky fulfillment strategy for Amazon sellers.

However, while the alternative method, Fulfillment by Merchant (FBM), is open to all Amazon sellers, many are questioning whether now is the right time to make the switch.

Ask these 8 questions before switching to FBM to help investigate the key differences and highlight which method is right for your business now and in the future.

Recap: What is Fulfillment by Merchant (FBM)?

FBM stands for Fulfillment By Merchant and is the alternative fulfillment method to FBA for Amazon sellers. Under Fulfillment By Merchant, the seller becomes responsible for fulfilling orders received through Amazon. You can do this in one of two ways: in-house or outsourced.

1. In-house FBM

In-house FBM involves storing, picking, packing, and shipping Amazon orders yourself.

2. Outsourced FBM

Outsourced FBM involves using an outsourced fulfillment partner to manage orders for you in much the same way Amazon FBA does.

Tip: Integrate Sellercloud and Deliverr to fulfill your orders easily through Deliverr.

8 question to ask before switching to FBM

Changing fulfillment methods is a big decision, requiring a lot of thought. However, Amazon FBA's current COVID-19 restrictions make this a decision you must consider now.

Let's see if you're ready.

1. Are you still operating?

E-commerce businesses are not immune to the effects of COVID-19. If your employees or productivity have been negatively impacted by the coronavirus, self-isolation, childcare issues, or lockdowns, then it's probably not the right time to be adopting in-house FBM.

Stick with FBA or look for an outsourced FBM partner. If your business recovers while the FBA restrictions are still in place, you can make the switch at a later date.

2. Are you selling essential items?

Amazon FBA is currently prioritizing inbound receipt and outbound deliveries of essential items from the following categories:

- Baby products
- Health and household (including personal-care appliances)
- Beauty and personal care
- Groceries
- Industrial and scientific

- Pet supplies

If you sell within these categories, you will likely remain unaffected by FBA's current limitations. However, double check the Restock Inventory page in Seller Central and your active listings to see if your products or delivery estimations are impacted.

If you sell non-essential items, you're likely to be affected by the current FBA restrictions and should consider FBM if you want to maintain stock levels, delivery speeds, and customers throughout the pandemic.

3. Are you selling seasonal or expiration-dated products?

FBA only accepts products with a remaining shelf life of 90 days plus consumption or application, and it imposes high fees for returning any unsold inventory.

Coupled with the current FBA delivery estimations of up to one month and the restrictions on restocking non-essential products, these constraints are of particular concern to sellers with seasonal or expiration-dated products.

If this is you, then FBM allows you to overcome the issues by allowing you to:

- Deliver items quickly and before any expiration date.
- Use fast shipping speeds to attract customers to seasonal products.
- Restock items that are currently performing well.

4. Are your products underperforming?

If your products are underperforming for a reason other than FBA's inventory and shipping speed restrictions, then switching to FBM won't change things. Instead, you must identify and fix the root cause of your product's underperformance.

If your products are underperforming because of FBA's current inventory and shipping speed restrictions, then switching to FBM can help. You can restock products and recommence fast delivery times using your own storage space and shipping carrier.

If your products are underperforming because of changes in purchasing behaviour, then switching to FBM can help you introduce new product lines. You can source and stock items that cater to current market needs and use fast delivery speeds to attract customers and increase sales.

5. Can you manage fulfillment in-house?

Adopting FBM in-house requires resources. Specifically, you need:

- Space to store your stock.
- Space, materials, and time to package orders.
- Employees to manage the fulfillment process.
- Software to manage inventory and track shipments.

During the current pandemic, sourcing these necessities is difficult, if not impossible. If you don't already have the resources for FBM in-house, then you should continue using FBA or use an outsourced fulfillment provider.

Tip: Deliverr's network is currently working at full capacity. Read fulfillment network updates [here](#).

6. Can you ship faster than FBA?

Fast delivery is still important to online shoppers. In fact, with many shoppers unable to leave the house, it's changed from "important" to "critical."

However, moving to FBM and failing to maintain your usual delivery speeds can have more negative consequences than remaining on FBA. You could lose your Prime badge, customers, and reputation.

Therefore, before switching to FBA, it's important that you're set up to achieve 2-day deliveries in-house, or you're using a fulfillment provider that can guarantee 2-day deliveries for you.

7. Do you sell on other sales channels (or are you thinking about it)?

Multi-channel FBA is notoriously expensive, but many use the service out of convenience and speed.

If you use multi-channel FBA, the current delivery delays will affect shipments for other sales channel orders. This tendency could have negative consequences for your inclusion in other fast shipping programs.

Likewise, if you're thinking of expanding to other sales channels to capture the Amazon shoppers looking elsewhere for their quick-delivery fix, multi-channel FBA will not achieve the delivery speeds required.

Therefore, FBM becomes a must for anyone selling on platforms such as Walmart, eBay, or Wish.

8. How is your competition fulfilling items?

While you might be tempted to stick with FBA and ride out the storm, your competitors could use this behaviour as an opportunity to steal your search result ranking, buy box position, and Amazon customers.

Competing on Amazon is crucial for maintaining customers, generating sales, and emerging from the pandemic with your business intact.

FBM allows you to do this by using fast delivery and well-stocked inventories to:

- Rank highly in the search results
- Win the Buy Box position
- Convert customers

Switching to FBM

The pandemic isn't going to last forever, and your commitment to FBM doesn't have to either. Switching to FBM doesn't have to be a long-term strategy. If it doesn't work out for you, you can switch back to FBA once the crisis is over, and they've lifted their restrictions.

Use this circumstance as an opportunity to try something different for your business that can help you to survive the pandemic and could even prove a more efficient and cost-effective way to fulfill your Amazon orders.



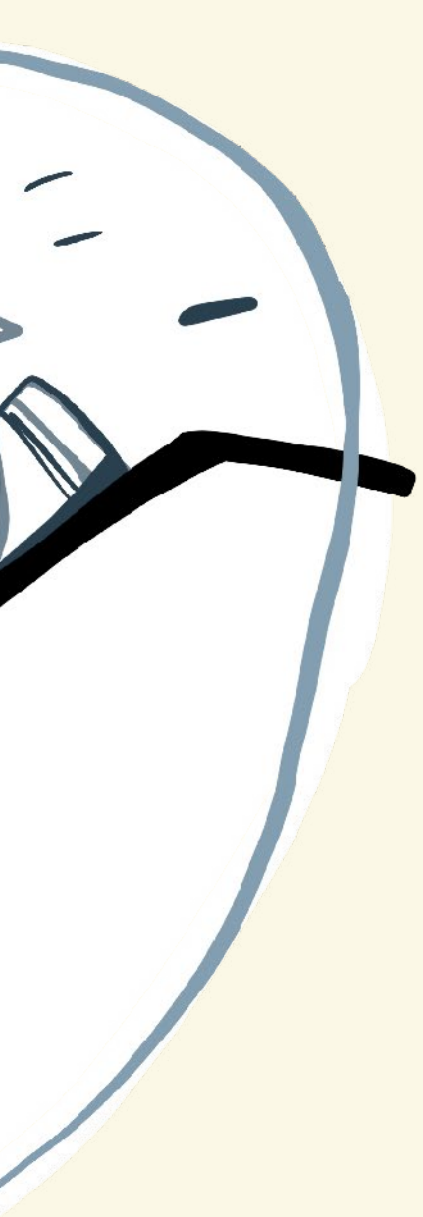
Read it online:





APRIL 21, 2020

Be Prepared for the Ways Pandemic Scares Like the Coronavirus Affect E-commerce



The coronavirus is grabbing international headlines as it has emerged as a growing pandemic situation. When health scares like this arise, they create ripple effects throughout the global economy. Online sellers are not immune. As e-commerce has developed into a truly worldwide retail ecosystem, it is important to recognize how a health crisis of this magnitude can impact the market on both the micro and macro levels.

It doesn't matter how large or small your e-commerce business is; you can anticipate that coronavirus will affect at least some aspect of how you do business in the coming months – and possibly beyond. The key with this (or any other health-related economic concerns) is to be prepared and flexible.

Know the Geographic Reach of Your E-Commerce Business and Plan Accordingly

One of the benefits of modern e-commerce is that marketplaces have become truly global. For many products, it is not only possible to ship merchandise to international customers, but it can be cost-effective as well. In times of international crisis, however, this possibility becomes a more challenging proposition. If a significant portion of your customer-base is international, be prepared to weather the storm should their purchase numbers start to decline.

The problems exist in the other direction, too. It is important to acknowledge that when global health scares pop up, American customers may become especially leery

of purchasing products from overseas. Risk-averse consumers are likely to make purchases that are the least likely to come from or be handled by potentially contaminated regions. Make sure you and/or your customer service team are prepared to field questions about the path of your supply chain and fulfillment services.

As time goes on, conditions may escalate to the point where all international trade is subject to additional restrictions. In these cases, it is probable that inspections of imports and exports will face extra scrutiny – processes which can lead to lengthy (and costly) fulfillment delays. Stay on top of your inventory tracking so that you know exactly when and where your shipments get held up. Have a plan for communicating this information both in your listings and with your customers.

For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the USPS has restricted imports and exports from specific countries and has also taken steps to restrict the flow of certain goods. Medical supplies, certain technological components, and certain protective equipment cannot be shipped overseas.

Unexpected delays or order cancellations are one thing, but not being able to assure customers about where their orders are is another. Sellercloud's inventory tracking features make it easy to surface this information on a per-order basis. You can even take advantage of our integration with the automated productivity tool, Zapier, to automate the communication of either all or particular tracking notifications.

Another important consideration involves how your inventory is produced in the first place. If significant portions of your supply chain originate from other countries, an international health emergency may mean that you struggle to maintain the inventory you need to keep up with your typical consumer demand.

Overstocking is not usually a wise business move – paying carrying costs on merchandise that may not be selling in the short-term will certainly impact your cost of goods sold (COGS) calculations. That said, in extreme cases, it may be worth acquiring extra inventory to protect against not being able to do so later. Evaluate your costs and inventory data in Sellercloud to estimate the inventory you need to hold in order to reliably fulfill orders through stretches of uncertainty.

Even if you are an American seller who only sells and ships to domestic customers, Global health crises can still have an effect on your e-commerce business. Thankfully, Sellercloud offers you the versatility and integrations that can help you mitigate the potential losses.

Be Proactive, Not Reactive

When you know the challenges, you can plan for them. Sellercloud makes it easy to develop and execute contingency plans should there be any unexpected hiccups in any part of your e-commerce fulfillment workflow.

- **Diversify your marketplace exposure.** Even in the best of circumstances, it makes smart business sense to sell your merchandise across multiple marketplaces.

When there is the potential for business to slow, the more potential customers you can get your listings in front of, the better. Sellercloud boasts dozens of first- and third-party marketplace integrations, making it easy to cast a wider net to sell your products without necessarily having to create entirely unique inventory workflows for each.

- **Anticipate workforce impacts.** A health emergency means there is a high likelihood that you will have employees who are unable to work. This circumstance could be because of their own health issues, the need to care for a loved one who is ill, or even child-care issues. One strategy to offset these impacts is to focus the workforce you have on your higher-profit items. Sellercloud offers reporting features that make it easy to identify and target these listings.
- **Consider utilizing third-party logistics (3PL) providers.** Typically, the closer your products are to their prospective customers, the smoother the order fulfillment process goes. If international sales are a meaningful part of your e-commerce business plan, it may be worth partnering with a 3PL or other fulfillment program to store portions of your stock in the regions where they will eventually be delivered. Should there be shipping complications down the road, you will have fewer hurdles to clear if orders have shorter distances to travel. Sellercloud partners with several domestic and international 3PL companies that can help you add this safeguard into your fulfillment planning.
- **Have a solid plan for returns.** Many marketplaces and logistics companies have strict rules about returns

– what can be returned and how RMAs are handled. When health concerns arise, these policies are likely subject to change. Many companies will seek to protect their fulfillment staff by becoming more stringent with what, if anything, they are willing to handle as a return. Be sure to know what these rules are so that you can properly inform your customers before a potential issue.

- **Explore alternative shipping plans.** Most e-commerce businesses have shipping partnerships that they rely on. However, emergency situations can quickly create the need to be more flexible. While you probably have your preferred shipping partners, it doesn't hurt to establish some backup options.

For instance, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Amazon FBA has all but shut down for sales other than products deemed essential. Some sellers have had continued success with the program, while others have had issues getting inventory in and out of Amazon warehouses. On the customer end, Prime members have seen shipping delays of days – even weeks – on most orders. As a work-around, merchants who have been able to fulfill orders on their own have had success opting to use the Seller Fulfilled Prime program or securing their own logistical alternatives. In situations like this, Sellercloud's integrations with multiple shipping companies from around the world can help you seamlessly turn orders into delivered products.

Reach out to new vendors. Although overstocking may boost your confidence in being able to fulfill orders in

challenging moments, it isn't always the most cost-effective method. The extra warehousing expenses associated with excess inventory can add up quickly. If your business is adversely affected by quarantined, undermanned, or closed suppliers, you need to be ready to make adjustments quickly. Depending on your material and/or product needs, Sellercloud's vendor integrations may be your ticket to getting your stalled supply chain moving again. Sellercloud features flexible integrations with several vendors, wholesalers, and distributors to help you get the inventory you need to meet your clients' demands.

Your Business May Experience Some Upticks, But Don't Get Too Excited

It's no secret that when people are staying inside, there's a greater chance they will place online orders. When health scares like the coronavirus hit, people become less willing to go to crowded shopping malls or other brick-and-mortar retail outlets. Browsing and shopping from home becomes an attractive way to pass the time and scratch the consumerism itch.

Likewise, customers may become more apt to order common items that they would normally run to the store for. Depending upon what your e-commerce business sells, this tendency may give your business a notable bump. This behaviour may be especially true if you sell health or wellness related merchandise. Items like masks, gloves, and antibacterial products skyrocket in popularity when health crises take root.

Don't get carried away, though. There are certainly more challenges than pleasant surprises on the horizon. It is foolish to stake your hopes of a financial boom on a pandemic like the coronavirus.

Instead, the best thing you can do is to be prepared for the unknown. Sellercloud is here to help ensure that you

have the tools to make the necessary changes in order to adjust, adapt, and succeed in the face of this or any other crisis. Contact us directly for more on how our stable of integrations – spanning all areas of e-commerce – can put you in the best position even in the most trying of times.



Read it online:





JUNE 2, 2020

When the Taxman Cometh, Sellercloud's TaxJar Integration Makes Things Simple



Back in 2017, *South Dakota v. Wayfair Inc.* made it the law of the land that all online sellers are expected to collect sales tax on every transaction. This rule can be a confusing and time-consuming proposition for e-commerce sellers. Every state has its own tax rates and regulations that must be meticulously followed. Failure to follow these guidelines and document your compliance means stiff penalties should you face a state audit.

In response to these sales tax changes, most online marketplaces have added tools and features to help their sellers out. However, every marketplace is different. The way sales tax funds are charged, collected, and recorded can vary. This fact means that there is still legwork on your end to consolidate the records of your tax obligations, sort out your filing requirements, and send off your payments and paperwork in time to meet government deadlines.

Sellercloud's TaxJar integration solves each of these headaches for you by folding convenience and compliance features directly into your existing e-commerce management workflow. As certified TaxJar partners, Sellercloud helps you to confidently maintain your business's sales tax compliance.

TaxJar Handles Sales Tax Compliance So You Don't Have To

One of the most impressive TaxJar features is its ability to interface with the marketplaces where you sell. Just like Sellercloud, TaxJar offers native, API, and

third-party integrations with a wide array of e-commerce marketplaces and shopping carts. For Sellercloud users, these connections allow you to automate both your sales tax billing and collection across all of your listings.

This feature is made possible through the way Sellercloud integrates with a growing list of sales channels that go beyond TaxJar's native integrations. For instance, while TaxJar doesn't natively integrate with popular specialized marketplaces like Newegg, Wish, or Reverb, Sellercloud does. Similarly, TaxJar offers a limited number of natively-supported shopping cart services (Shopify, Magento, and Volusion to name a few), but Sellercloud offers a much larger variety. Through Sellercloud's integration with TaxJar, you can use TaxJar's features to process orders across any of the marketplaces or shopping carts supported by Sellercloud.

TaxJar relies upon what it refers to as "rooftop-level" assessments to make sure that sales tax rates correspond to where each purchase is being made. This attribute ensures that every sale is assessed with the proper tax rate, customers are charged accordingly, and every transaction is recorded for filing purposes. TaxJar stays on top of sales tax matters, sale-by-sale, so you don't have to.

Another helpful TaxJar compliance feature is how it actively monitors your tax status in each state to ensure that you are prepared as you approach (or cross) economic nexus thresholds. Simply put: when your

gross sales cross these state-specific dollar amounts, you are responsible for collecting and remitting sales tax to said states. In most cases, you are also responsible for registering for state-specific sales tax permits. The fact that TaxJar remains committed to sales tax compliance nationwide means no surprise expenses and obligations associated with crossing these nexus levels.

TaxJar Automates the Tax Filing Process

There's more to taxes than just collecting the payments. Reporting these figures to states is perhaps even more taxing (pun intended). Being sure that the right forms are completed, payments are transferred to their appropriate destinations, and your business is fully complying with each state's sales tax nexus laws can make even the most seasoned accountant groan.

Thankfully, TaxJar takes the pain out of the process. Not only does TaxJar provide users with accurate tax data and useful reporting features, but it also auto-completes and securely e-files the majority of your required sales tax documents. This feature saves you the time and stress of potentially filing fifty states' worth of sales tax forms and payments on your own.

Adding TaxJar to Your Sellercloud Workflow is Easy and Seamless

Sellercloud's TaxJar integration has always been popular with our users. We have been working in partnership with TaxJar for several years and have routinely

coordinated and reviewed our integrations with them. However, since the South Dakota v. Wayfair Inc. decision, it has become exponentially more helpful. E-commerce sellers have more to worry about in tax compliance than ever before. Thankfully, the combination of both Sellercloud and TaxJar's native integrations with leading e-commerce marketplaces makes the process especially simple.

While sales tax compliance can seem daunting, adding TaxJar to your Sellercloud business workflow is not. It only takes a few steps to link your TaxJar and Sellercloud accounts. Once configured, our TaxJar integration keeps your sales and tax data aligned on an order-by-order basis. In the case of a refund, Sellercloud can send the collected sales tax payment back to TaxJar on your behalf. All of these figures can automatically be added into your business's profit and loss calculations, instantly increasing the accuracy of your financial reporting data.

In addition, you can use TaxJar to calculate sales tax amounts for phone or wholesale orders using our waytopay.me platform. These orders can be run through TaxJar to ensure that you give accurate prices and collect the correct amounts from customers.

What's more, the entire process is totally customizable. You can choose which specific marketplaces and sales channels to integrate with TaxJar. You can even configure TaxJar to only collect sales tax from specific states and not from others.

Of course, you can also take advantage of all of the aforementioned TaxJar features – accurate sales tax collection, nexus alerts, automated filing, and reliable record-keeping.

Ready to cross sales tax concerns off your list? Contact us directly for more information about getting started with our TaxJar integration.



Read it online:



JUNE 9, 2020

Increasing Prices During an Emergency – Know the Difference Between Protecting Your Margins and Price Gouging





Whether it's in response to a natural disaster or a global pandemic, people's buying habits undoubtedly change. In these times, it is common to see prices rise on certain products and commodities – whether it be due to scarcity or market volatility. It's Economics 101: when supply is low and demand is high, things typically cost more.

But in times of emergency, people panic. The pressure and uncertainty can cause people to act impulsively and make decisions they normally would never make. \$20 for a gallon of milk? \$50 for a bottle of sanitizer? Some sellers see crisis as an opportunity to increase prices of essential goods and services to unreasonably high levels. After all, if people are willing to pay exorbitant amounts for staples like, say, toilet paper, why not let them?

This phenomenon is considered price gouging. On most major e-commerce marketplaces, it is enough to get your account suspended and/or terminated. In most states, it is against the law and can lead to stiff fines and penalties. In the court of public opinion, it can do irreparable damage to your brand.

Whether you think that you can get away with it or not, price gouging as an e-commerce seller is not worth the risk that it poses to your business.

Price Gouging – The Risks are Real, and so are the Consequences

In times of crisis, it can be tempting to start inching up your prices to compensate for slowing or lost business.

In most cases, you are actually free to do so. That said, marketplaces and states limit how much you can raise your prices during a declared state of emergency. Some states, like California, limit price increases to specific percentages. Other states are vague – relying on terms like “increases that grossly exceed” what a product typically sells for.

Once a state of emergency is declared (either nationally, statewide or locally depending upon each state's statutes), most states with price gouging laws on the books empower their Attorneys General to start paying particular attention to incidents of suspicious markups. Many of these states have created useful web forms that allow citizens to file accurate and complete claims against specific sellers and retailers.

- By the same token, the major third-party marketplaces all have their own price gouging policies:
- **Amazon** has its own “Fair Pricing Policy” to prevent price gouging and any other pricing practice that, in their view, “harms customer trust.” Violators can be punished in a variety of ways, including listing removal, suspension, and even account termination.
- **Walmart** has a similar third-party seller pricing policy that “will automatically unpublish items that are priced substantially in excess of prices recently offered on Walmart Marketplace or on competing sites, or that appear to be the subject of price gouging, or other unfair or abusive pricing practices.”
- **eBay** is in an interesting spot. As a digital auction house, its sales model is all about selling to the highest

bidder. If someone is willing to pay an exorbitant price, it is his or her prerogative to do so. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, eBay has opted to ban the sale of certain safety products (both in auction and traditional marketplace listings) as an act of good faith against artificially inflated prices.

If you increase your prices during times like these, be prepared for claims to be filed against you – both from states and marketplaces. Even if you are found not to be price gouging, the heightened sensitivity to it amongst the general population can draw negative attention to your business.

Raising Prices During an Emergency

The good news is that buyers aren't going to opt for a more expensive product if your prices remain steady. This situation means that you aren't ever actually competing against price gougers. Depending upon what you sell and how stable your logistics partners are, you may be able to continue business as usual.

However, the reality is that sometimes emergencies actually do increase your overall cost of goods sold (COGS). Supply chain disruptions, limited shipping options, and labor shortages can make it more expensive to fulfill an order than it would typically cost. Under normal circumstances, you would likely pass these COGS increases on to the customer. But if you were to do this in a crisis, would that make you a price gouger?

Technically, no. You are free to increase your prices to compensate for these additional costs but be sure to do so within the acceptable limits of the states and marketplaces where you sell. If you are unable to do so without crossing price gouging thresholds (specific or perceived), you may be better off delisting a product for the short term to avoid taking losses.

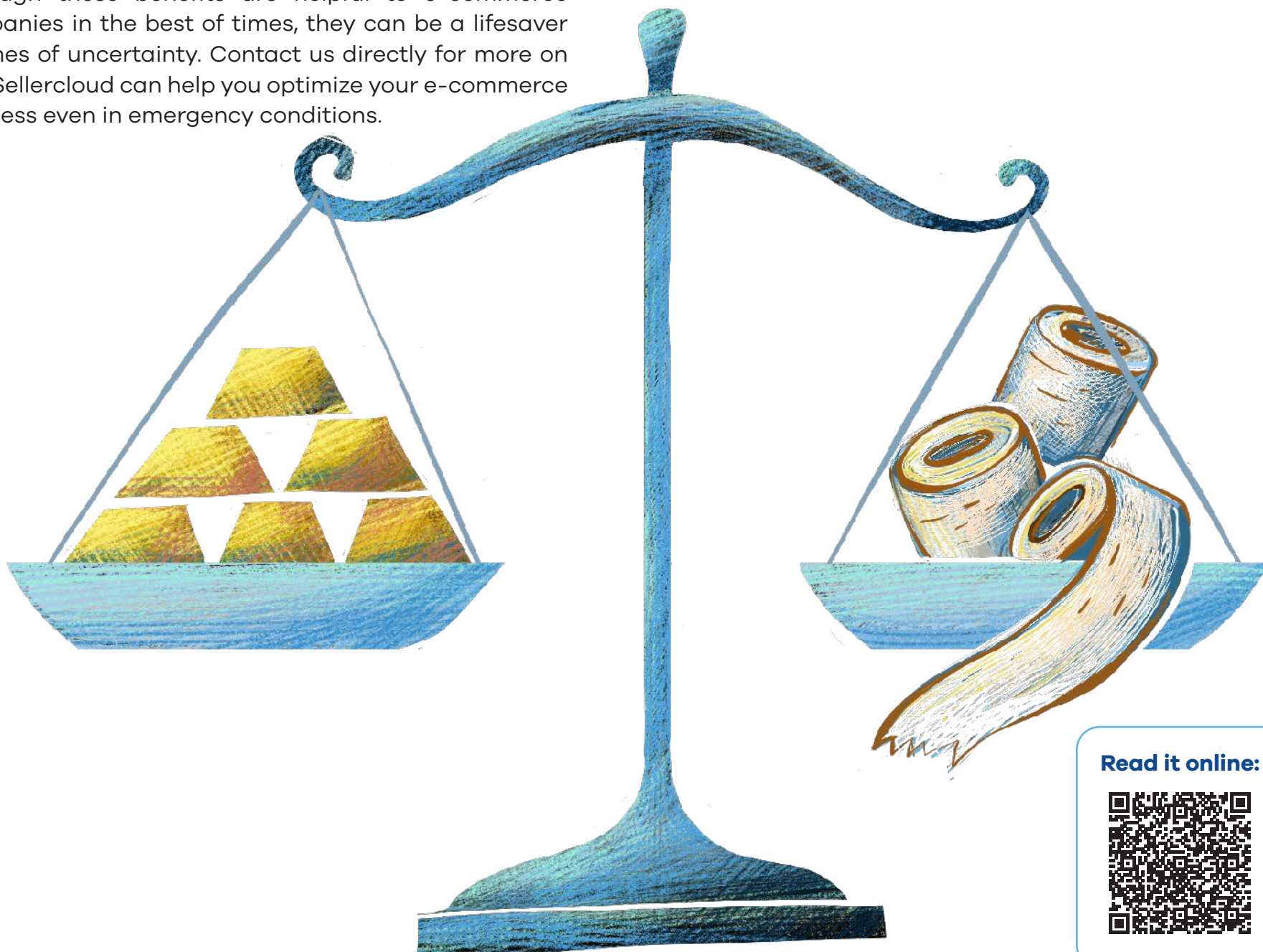
So How Should You Handle Price Changes During an Emergency?

The number one thing to remember is that even though you do have relative freedom in how you price your products, you are responsible for the choices that you make. Claiming ignorance of the issue will not spare you the legal and/or public relations consequences.

Thankfully, the Sellercloud e-commerce management platform equips you to manage all aspects of your inventory – even in times of emergency. To start with, Sellercloud makes it simple to manage prices across multiple marketplaces. As an added benefit, our automated pricing safeguards allow you to set limits and automatic order holds to ensure that you don't sell products for too low a value.

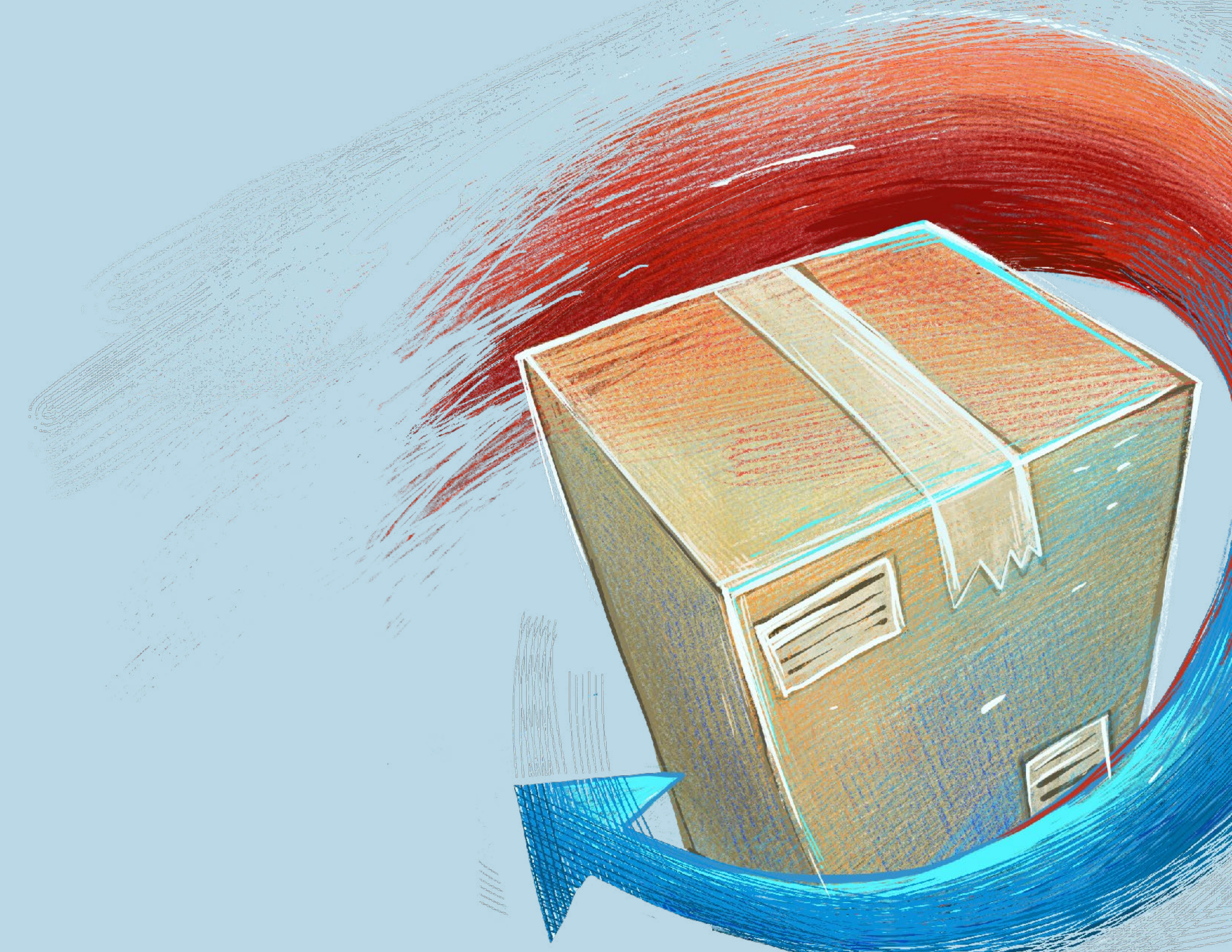
Furthermore, Sellercloud makes it easy to identify bottlenecks and price spikes in your supply chain and logistical workflows. Although your options may be limited in a crisis, our stable of integrations provide potential alternative shipping, supplier, and fulfillment options that may help you keep costs (and in turn, your prices) down.

Although these benefits are helpful to e-commerce companies in the best of times, they can be a lifesaver in times of uncertainty. Contact us directly for more on how Sellercloud can help you optimize your e-commerce business even in emergency conditions.



Read it online:







JUNE 17, 2020

Sellercloud's RMA Flexibility Makes Your Returns Workflow Manageable

Returns are an unavoidable challenge when operating an e-commerce business. Studies have shown that customers are notably more likely to return items purchased online than items purchased in brick-and-mortar stores.

As a seller on third-party marketplaces, you need to be prepared to meet the RMA expectations of both the customers and the marketplaces themselves to remain in good standing. What's more (as evidenced by recent events), online marketplace return policies can change quickly and with little notice.

This challenge of handling RMAs inevitably escalates during times of increased online consumer activity (e.g., holidays or pandemics). This occurrence means that during the times when you are selling and shipping high volumes of merchandise, you are likely to see higher numbers of returns coming back as well. If you are unprepared, this circumstance can put a strain across your entire business – from customer service to fulfillment.

Thankfully, Sellercloud offers you the flexibility and versatility to process RMAs efficiently and reliably. Creating and managing RMAs is streamlined so that all of the relevant information in the returns process remains up-to-date in real time, and all stakeholders are kept in the loop.

Furthermore, our platform can help you to transform the returned merchandise back into sellable inventory.

This feature cuts down on dead stock piling up in your warehouse and gives you the chance to dramatically reduce the losses associated with RMAs.

Creating and Managing an RMA in Sellercloud

Sellercloud simplifies the entire RMA process. Regardless of the origin or reason for the return, everything from creation to resolution can be handled, tracked, and referenced within our platform.

To begin with, creating an RMA automatically generates a unique RMA number for each return. This procedure serves as the key identifier for processing and tracking every step of the return process – including notes, customer information, tracking numbers, and inventory status.

Once the RMA is created, an email can be generated that is prepopulated with relevant customer contact information. We offer a variety of pertinent email templates that can be set to automatically fill with even more return-related information that the customer will need or request. These emails can even be set to send automatically once a new RMA is entered into the system.

Once the RMA is received, our platform makes it easy to update the steps in the resolution process and keep track of the status of the returned and/or replacement merchandise. From there, RMAs can be set to close manually or automatically.

For more on this process, visit our [Creating an RMA help page](#).

Even More RMA Customer Service Automation with Zapier

Sellercloud's integration with the automation productivity tool Zapier can make your RMA process even more streamlined. Zapier is a user-friendly platform for creating automated scripts (called Zaps) that can be triggered by various webhooks and actions within marketplaces, digital forms, emails, and even Sellercloud itself. Once configured, these Zaps can open up whole new avenues of efficiency.

Since Zaps can be set to execute from such a wide range of actions, there are several ways to use the Zapier-Sellercloud integration to your advantage:

- Once a new RMA is created in Sellercloud, return instructions and a return shipping label can be sent automatically to the customer.
- Trigger emails to be sent to customers when a returned item has been received and/or processed – both keeping customers informed about the next steps in the RMA process and reducing the number of follow-up calls being made to your customer service department.
- If a returned item cannot be replaced, generate a coupon code in Klaviyo to be sent along with the refund notification.
- When a replacement item is marked as delivered, automatically schedule a follow-up customer

service call to ensure satisfaction and increase the odds of receiving positive feedback.

What makes Zapier so helpful is that there are nearly infinite combinations of customizable if-then pathways like these. This feature allows you to create automations perfectly tuned to your e-commerce business's needs, no matter how simple or complex they may be. When paired with Sellercloud, these powerful tools can be used in tandem to make your entire RMA workflow more productive and effective.

Reselling Returned Merchandise

So you can process returns effectively, but what do you do with all of the returned merchandise?

There are numerous state and federal laws governing what can be done with returned merchandise regardless of its condition. Returned merchandise can no longer be advertised and sold as new – even if it is completely unblemished. Most e-commerce marketplace policies follow these guidelines as well. This situation means that you need some type of protocol for restoring these products back to sellable condition and putting them back into the appropriate inventory channels.

In many cases, you will be able to label the products as "seller refurbished." On marketplaces that allow seller-refurbished merchandise, this label signifies to customers that a product has been repaired, cleaned, and inspected by someone other than the manufacturer or

one of its vendors. The seller vouches that the product meets these specific quality thresholds for sale.

Sellercloud can help you with this, too. Once an RMA is closed, you can apply custom inventory labels to the returned merchandise based upon condition. From there, you can use these labels to automate what happens to RMA inventory. Rather than ending up in a dead stock pile, these items can be redistributed to bins corresponding to specified “refurbished” or “renewed” versions of your listings – giving you a second chance to turn them into profitable sales.

For more about selling returned, refurbished, and used merchandise check out our guide [here](#).

Returns are an inevitable part of doing business online. RMAs are never great for your bottom line, but if you are able to handle them in an organized and timely manner, you can minimize both the costs and manpower associated with getting them resolved. The Sellercloud e-commerce platform is perfectly suited to help you do exactly that. Contact us directly to learn more.



Read it online:

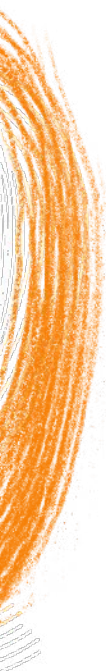


JUNE 26, 2020

Add a Repricer to Your E-Commerce Workflow to Boost Sales and Save Time





An orange circular graphic with a textured, brush-stroke-like appearance, located on the left side of the page.

On third-party marketplaces, competition for the Buy Box can be fierce. If you are able to get it, your listing becomes the one “Buy Now,” “Add to Cart,” and virtual shopping assistant orders pull from the Buy Box to fulfill customers’ purchases.

There is a lot that goes into landing this coveted spot (and the rules and algorithms vary by marketplace), but a competitive price is a major factor.

When multiple third-party sellers are offering the same product, marketplaces like Amazon and Walmart compare the total landed costs (the final price a customer pays after purchase, shipping, handling, and fees) of each listing to determine which listing(s) represent the best value for the customer. What this means is that while you don’t need to be the lowest price for a particular product for your listing to be featured, it certainly helps.

With new listings going live every day, it can be as much of a challenge to earn the Buy Box as it is to keep it. Doing so involves long-term commitments to reliable fulfillment, consistent customer satisfaction, and responsive customer service. These variables boost your reputation and can help your e-commerce business appear to the powers-that-be as a reliable custodian of the Buy Box. That said, these variables are tough to master in the short term. That’s where repricing comes in.

Sellers need to keep an eye on their landed cost figures and how they compare to their competitors’ offerings. Sometimes, all it takes is a penny’s difference for another seller

to overtake your spot – either in the Buy Box or in the general pecking order of how your listing appears in marketplace search results. In most cases, doing this work manually ranges from being tedious to downright impossible.

If you are relying on repricing your listings by hand to regularly undercut your competition, there are a number of issues you will likely run into:

- **Effective repricing must take into account a wide variety of variables.** Settling on an optimal price for your listing is a multi-faceted proposition that evolves in real time. It is not as simple as scoring the lowest price point. For instance, you may be able to actually charge a bit more than a low-ball competitor due to stronger marketplace reputation, greater inventory, and more reliable fulfillment. Trying to figure this out for every competitor on every one of your listings is a potential nightmare.
- **Manual repricing is tedious and time consuming.** The labor costs associated with regularly assessing and updating your listings can add up quickly. As such, the return on investment you get from your efforts is likely to be minimal. In some cases, the hours invested could even negate the benefits of repricing entirely.
- **You are likely to overreact to pricing anomalies.** For instance, you may find yourself reducing your prices to undercut a seller with limited inventory. Once they have sold off their stock, you are left undercharging for your own inventory until you go back and readjust your price.

The opposite scenario could also play out. In a time of limited competition, you may be able to increase your price

when other sellers are out of stock. This situation can be a nice boost to your profit margin, but if other sellers swoop in and undercut you, you are likely to see your sales dry up until you notice and make a correction.

- **Humans make mistakes.** This issue is perhaps the biggest risk of manual repricing. Humans are susceptible to emotion and overreaction in ways that algorithms are not. It can be painful to reduce the price of a listing below what you think it is worth – even when doing so is the smart business decision. Similarly, trusting your gut on a pricing move without fully comprehending its impact could hamstring an otherwise successful listing.

Of course, manual data entry is, in itself, a major risk. A misplaced decimal or a mistyped digit could result in disastrous effects on your bottom line. Inventories that are priced too low could fly out of your warehouse – instantly multiplying the losses associated with the error.

Listings priced too high could completely stagnate your sales and cost you your shot at the Buy Box. If you are taking a DIY approach to repricing, every price change could be an opportunity for a costly error.

A Repricing Partner Allows You to Optimize Your Listings Safely and Efficiently

Repricers are invaluable partners for e-commerce sellers, particularly for sellers with lots of competition. When working with a repricer, you are transferring the responsibility of researching and adjusting the prices of your listings across their supported marketplaces. This procedure saves you

the time, worry, and frustration associated with manual, in-house repricing strategies.

The beauty of repricers is that they can synthesize a wide array of data to settle on pricing decisions in a way that is both faster and more comprehensive than what most people would be capable of doing on their own.

There are two major considerations most repricers use to price a listing. The first is competitor pricing. Repricers scour marketplace listings and determine price values that give you the best chance of securing the Buy Box. Other sellers' pricing and landed cost figures are put through an algorithm to determine what (if any) pricing adjustment needs to be made to your listing. If an adjustment needs to be made, the repricer makes it on your behalf. Depending on the repricer, these calculations can happen anywhere from several times a day to several times an hour.

The other factor that repricers consider is a client's acceptable minimum pricing threshold. The main benefit of threshold-based repricing is that it eliminates the risk of selling a product at a loss or a lower profit margin than you are comfortable with. Even if a repricer's algorithm determines that you should sell for a certain price, if it is below the price-floor you have set, no price change will cross that limit.

Repricers allow you to set rules based on set prices and/or cost-based formulas. For example, you can set a listing to never be repriced below \$10. Alternatively, you could set a more complex rule, such as the price should always be

set at the landed product cost plus 25%. These rules create safeguards so that no matter how frequently a price is adjusted, you can ensure your products are never undervalued in the shopping cart.

The combination of competitor- and threshold-based repricing means you can be confident that you are both listing your merchandise at attractive prices and avoiding costly errors. Moreover, you are likely competing against other sellers who are already using repricing services. By choosing to price and reprice your listings manually, you are at a severe disadvantage. The speed at which competitors' listings can adjust to your manual repricing moves dwarfs what can cost effectively be done by hand.

The benefits of a repricer are hard to argue with. When combined with the Sellercloud e-commerce growth platform, there are even more optimizations to unlock.

Sellercloud's Repricer Integrations Make It Easy to Perfect Your Pricing Strategies

While Sellercloud users already have the ability to adjust prices on their listings from within the Sellercloud platform, many businesses opt to take advantage of our repricer integrations to further optimize the process.

To start with, your current Sellercloud product cost data can be used to establish minimum cost thresholds for each of your products. This information can be synchronized with a repricer to ensure that you never reprice a listing below the combination of your current product cost and your minimum acceptable profit margin. As your

product costs fluctuate, Sellercloud data can be shared with the repricing partner to automatically adjust listings across multiple marketplaces in accordance with these constraints.

Another major benefit to combining Sellercloud and a repricer is that it becomes easier to maintain compliance with Amazon's pricing rules. One of the big no-nos in selling on Amazon is offering your product elsewhere for a lower price than what you are listing it for on Amazon. Violating this rule can result in account suspension or other disciplinary action. Considering the costs of losing access to Amazon's hundreds of millions of customers, this violation is a major risk.

Sellercloud protects you against this type of compliance violation by allowing you to use the lowest listing price of a product across all of your marketplace listings as the default price for your Amazon listing of that product. This protection means that if your Walmart price is repriced below the current Amazon price, both will automatically synchronize to the new, lower price. This feature is just one more way Sellercloud offers users the ability to take advantage of repricer pricing strategies while maintaining peace of mind.

If adding a repricer to your e-commerce business is something you are ready to explore, read more on our wiki guide or contact us directly for more on how you can start optimizing your listings, today.

Read it online:





JULY 7, 2020

When Times Change, Your Listings Need to Change With Them



It shouldn't be a surprise that, in retail, you must be sure you are selling what people are buying. Although this is certainly the rule at the product level, it is just as important at the marketing level – especially in e-commerce. Even with the right merchandise and the right timing, you need to be sure that your listings appeal to the needs, wants, and concerns of customers. Customers need to be able to find your products and feel confident that the purchases will meet their demands. If you aren't making this happen, the odds are that your competitors will.

Listing a product on your website or a third-party marketplace should never be a “set it and forget it” proposal. Part of running a successful e-commerce business is regularly optimizing your offerings to ensure that you are driving as many sales as possible. This factor is particularly true in the current climate.

It is already clear that consumer mindsets have evolved since the COVID-19 pandemic has made its indelible mark on nearly every aspect of daily life. For one thing, retail's traditional seasonal and regional demand curves are all over the place. Shoppers who that are stuck at home are looking to stock up on certain products, while wholly ignoring others. Some items that would ordinarily be considered luxuries or out-of-season products are being sought-after. At the same point, some inventory stockpiles are essentially sheltering-in-place like the rest of us.

In fact, some sellers offer products that transcend quarantine life and are continuing with business as usual, but that circumstance seems to be the exception, not the rule.

Sellers focused on certain product categories are absolutely feeling the effects – both positively and negatively. With gyms, salons, and spas shuttered, fitness equipment and personal-care items are selling well. Conversely, with travel restrictions and vacation cancellations have come major drop offs in luggage and clothing purchases. Simply put, buyers stuck at home are unsurprisingly focusing on purchases that are ideally suited for home use.

Whether we are in the middle of a global crisis or we're back to business as usual, you need to be sure that your e-commerce business is in a position to respond to fluctuating markets and consumer intent. A diversified marketplace and first-party sales presence puts you in front of as many customers as possible (something we regularly stress the importance of), but it is the listings you upload to those channels that need to connect with those customers – and connect well enough to convert sales.

Listings Require Maintenance to Remain Competitive

An important consideration for online sellers is identifying and responding to trends in consumer demand. Having a finger on the pulse of what is happening in the world and your customers' lives can help.

Take a specific example from our current situation: kids have been home for months and entertainment options are limited. Parents are looking for solutions. If you sell yard toys, electronics, games, or other forms of stay-at-home entertainment, this is a demographic that your listings should be deliberately appealing to. Listings that

make reference to home use, battling boredom, or holding attention will grab the eye of a cooped-up parent. These details can be in the description, listing title, or even the images you choose to feature.

By doing this, you are essentially marketing to a watered-down version of a customer avatar. A customer avatar is a representation of your target customer. You dig deep into who that person is, what their life is like, what their goals are, and everything else that makes them tick. Then, you tailor your branding and marketing efforts to go after that one imaginary customer.

The idea is that the avatar gives you a focus – a very specific target for your sales strategy. Rather than just focusing on a group of people (parents at home with kids), you focus on a specific person (Janet is a mom from the Northeast with three kids – two boys and a girl – who is working from home as a CPA. She loves to garden, go on family outings to parks, and curl up with a good book. She and her husband have a combined income of...). You get the picture.

It's up to you how far down this rabbit hole you are willing to go, but you should at least be thinking about how to fit your product listings into the niches carved out by your customers' circumstances. That said, avatars are just one approach.

Another strategy is using the calendar to identify sales opportunities. Holidays and sale seasons (think Black Friday, Prime Day, etc.) are ideal times to revisit and revise

your listings. Have a product with a patriotic print? Feature that image in the leadup to holidays like the Fourth of July or Memorial Day. If you sell office or school supplies, be sure to include language about back to school in August and September. These little adjustments add extra relevance to your listings and may be the difference between catching a shopper's eye and getting scrolled past.

As with most things, a combination approach is best. Take advantage of every angle you can to keep your listings current, relevant, and impactful.

But Are Your Revisions Working?

Of course, any adjustment to your listing strategy is meaningless unless you can be sure it is leading to more sales. Your new description copy may seem perfect, but is it connecting with customers? Rather than speculating, you should put your listing changes to the test.

A/B Testing is a strategy that pits two versions of something against each other to see which version is better. It works for any number of sales and marketing purposes, but it is particularly helpful for evaluating the strength and value of listing changes. By tracking statistics like listing views and sales, you can make data-driven decisions about which listing changes resonate with your clientele.

One thing to keep in mind when A/B testing is that you need to be sure you remain compliant with marketplace listing policies. Double listing an item can lead to penalties and suspensions, depending on where and how you do it.

This point doesn't mean A/B testing is impossible. You just might have to make manual adjustments back and forth between your original and updated listings over a certain time frame until you are able to generate enough usable data to determine the best version. Cumbersome or not, the strength of a good listing is your best asset in e-commerce.

Sellercloud's Catalog Features Simplify Creating and Updating Listings Across All of Your Channels

No matter what your strategy for optimizing your listings, Sellercloud's omni-channel management tools allow you to adjust all aspects – descriptions, pictures, shipping options, and prices – across all of your channels, all at once. This feature means that you don't have to painstakingly recreate each change for each marketplace and website where your products are sold. Changes in your master Sellercloud catalog can be automatically syndicated across them all.

Furthermore, Sellercloud's Shadow Products feature allows you to streamline the A/B testing process while remaining compliant with marketplace regulations and eliminating any order-picking mishaps in your warehouse.

A Shadow Product is essentially a virtual version of a SKU already in your inventory. When you create a Shadow Product in your Sellercloud catalog, it can have its own unique Product ID, description, images, and title. Meanwhile, as orders come in, the Parent SKU and all of its

Shadow SKU variations all point to the same item and bin in your inventory.

On the marketplace side of things, Shadow SKUs – with all of their independent identifiers and product information – can be uploaded alongside their Parent SKUs, allowing you to effectively A/B test different listing and categorization iterations for a single product. Since all the identifying information for each SKU is unique, you can circumvent product listing restrictions on marketplaces like eBay and Amazon.

This level of listing and publishing control can save you time and deliver results far superior to inputting changes on a listing-by-listing basis and manually checking for listing parity across your sales channels.

As time goes on, it is safe to assume that this quarantine experience will have a lasting impact on how people shop. The convenience, selection, and service afforded by shopping online is not likely to be forgotten once shopping brick-and-mortar is a viable option again. Moreover, online competition is not going to get easier.

Your listings are your sales pitches. Be sure that you are giving them the attention they deserve.

Sellercloud's all-in-one e-commerce platform is an invaluable tool for your business now and into the future. Contact us directly to learn more about how our software can help you optimize your listings and maximize your sales.



Read it online:





JULY 29, 2020

How to Prepare Your E-Commerce Business for Walmart+



Earlier this summer, Vox revealed that Walmart's \$98-a-year subscription service was set to roll out this July. The program, positioned as a direct competitor to Amazon's Prime subscription service, offers subscribers benefits such as same-day delivery, exclusive deals, and discounts at physical locations (including gas and groceries). Following a pandemic-induced boost to e-commerce sales in Q2, Walmart+ provides an intriguing value to the ever-growing cohort of online shoppers.

While some question the decision to introduce a pricey subscription service at a time when so many are facing financial hardship, the delay of Amazon Prime Day actually makes the July rollout seem like a stroke of marketing genius. One of the main goals of Amazon's annual summer super sale is to spur Prime (re)subscriptions. When Amazon punted Prime Day 2020 to the fall due to fulfillment concerns, it created a window of opportunity for shoppers who regularly re-up their Prime subscriptions on Prime Day to let their subscriptions lapse and switch to the new, less-expensive Walmart+.

As an e-commerce seller, you need to be ready to capitalize on the growing interest in Walmart's online marketplace. Here are three key things that you should do to position yourself for success in the Walmart+ era:

Optimize your Walmart listings

With more and more shoppers flocking to Walmart Marketplace, you want to be sure that your presence is the best it can be. Sellercloud's robust catalog features make

updating listings painless; what's more, your changes can be shared across all of the channels where you sell.

For specific ways to give your listings a tune-up, check out our guide to improving listings on Walmart Marketplace.

Fulfillment

Efficient and quick shipping is a must for many online shoppers – especially if you are going to be competing with same-day delivery from Walmart locations. Be sure that your inventory and logistics workflows are both speedy and reliable so that your listings can contend.

Taken a step further, transitioning to a Walmart Dropship Vendor could help you transition your business to first-party sales – putting you in an even better position to capitalize on Walmart+ shoppers.

Strive for the highest customer satisfaction marks

As with other premium marketplace subscription offerings, your ability to operate as an elite marketplace seller is the key to getting your optimized listings to surface in customer searches. Responsive customer service, timely order fulfillment, reliable quality control, and smooth RMA procedures will all help ensure that your product and seller ratings remain high.

Be aware: with new initiatives like Walmart+ often come new expectations. Be sure you keep on top of Walmart's latest terms of service so that you are always keeping your seller account in good standing.

Sellercloud is an official Walmart Marketplace Partner. Our omni-channel e-commerce platform is always up to date with the latest Walmart integrations and features so that you can be confident that your marketplace listings remain compliant and functional. As mentioned, our Walmart DSV integration makes it possible to transform

your third-party marketplace presence into first-party sales.

For more on how Sellercloud can help bolster your Walmart.com seller experience, contact us directly to schedule a free demo.



Optimize your Walmart listings

Read it online:



Offer fast fulfilment options



Strive for the highest customer satisfaction marks





Flexible and convenient payment collection

Waytopay.me is a simple, secure, and fast way to request and receive payments.



Exclusively built for the Sellercloud merchant, waytopay.me is designed to provide e-commerce professionals with a reliable and effortless way to accept payments online. Collecting payments for your Sellercloud orders has never been easier!



Simple

Improve your customer satisfaction by offering them an effortless way to pay, independent of their shopping carts.



Secure

All of your information is secured with high-end 3D password encryption to prevent order and payment fraud.



Private

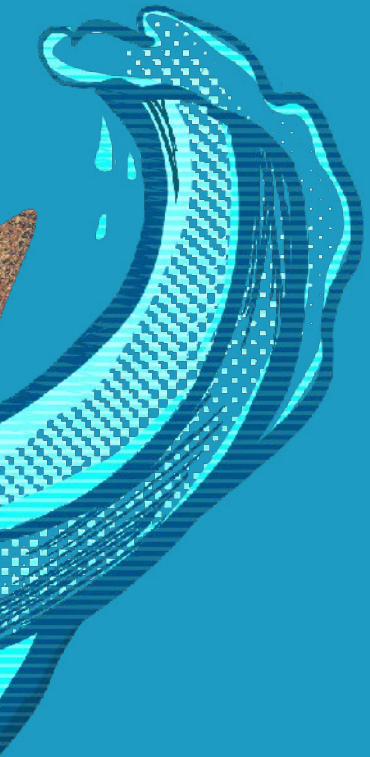
We don't collect any personal information from customers. An email address and credit card info are all that is needed to process order payments.





AUGUST 11, 2020

E-Commerce Industry Gains Projected to Last Beyond Coronavirus Pandemic



The combination of COVID-related shelter-in-place orders, brick-and-mortar closures, and an overall change in customer purchasing patterns led to holiday-level e-commerce sales in Q2 2020. Although it may have been a very unique set of circumstances that led to this spike, market analysts remain bullish that these e-commerce gains are unlikely to fade back to pre-COVID levels.

According to a recent report from Adobe Analytics, May 2020 saw consumers spend \$82.5 billion online – a 77.8% increase year-over-year. This was a whopping \$52 billion higher than their initial, pre-pandemic expectations and over \$10 billion higher than online spending during an average holiday shopping season.

What's especially impressive about this trend is that the e-commerce shopping experience has not been without its logistical hiccups. Low stock struggles, fulfillment delays, supply chain issues, and longer-than-average customer service wait times have not stemmed the tide of unprecedented spring sales increases.

This is great news whether you are a first-party (1P) brand, third-party (3P) marketplace seller, or somewhere amidst a transition from 3P to 1P. Online sales are literally off the charts and investors are showing signs that they are confident that the trend will persist.

All that said, you need to be careful when turning to market data to govern your e-commerce business decisions.

Don't confuse corporations' stock projections with their projected value for your e-commerce business

Many of the arguments about growth in the e-commerce sector – including which e-commerce marketplaces are the strongest – hinge on stock market performance and profit estimates. While investment advice can be seen as a predictor for some aspects of the industry, it can also be deceiving.

Take Amazon – a clearly dominant force in retail; Amazon is a multifaceted corporation with fingers in an astounding number of pies, including e-commerce, groceries, web services, pharmacy, home security, and its latest acquisition – autonomous driving vehicles – to name a few. Throughout the pandemic, Amazon's stock value has continued to rise and the latest projections show no sign of slowing. This is all great news for Amazon, but what about for your business?

When it comes to a corporation with such diverse interests as Amazon, you need to remember that an investment recommendation is based on the totality of the corporation, not just the sector that matters to you and your business. For instance, Amazon Web Services (AWS) is the industry leader in the cloud computing and infrastructure as a service (IaaS) domains. When AWS has a highly publicized failure (like it did in 2017), Amazon's total corporate valuation suffers.

Similarly, there has been speculation over the past few months that Amazon's Q2 2020 top-line profits may be

negated by a multi-billion dollar investment in COVID-19 related infrastructure and safety measures. Although this news may not be ideal for Amazon's investors, it obscures the strength of the e-commerce sector that made this investment both necessary and possible.

In each of these cases, investment advice does not directly correlate to actionable e-commerce advice. Neither of these stories should change your third-party marketplace selling strategy. Over 60% of the net profits gained by Sellercloud clients in Q1 2020 came from Amazon and FBA sales. If you are selling online, you should be selling on Amazon. Full stop.

The same goes for chief Amazon competitors, Walmart and eBay. There are plenty of stories about how far ahead Amazon is in the battle for e-commerce supremacy as well as stories about Walmart and eBay's ongoing jockeying for the number two spot. Stock prices and market shares dominate the conversations. But no matter how the "rankings" shake out, Sellercloud data suggests that there is plenty of profit to be made on both of these platforms as well.

Even smaller fish in the e-commerce pond are experiencing strong performance gains. Etsy, for one, saw record-shattering numbers this spring. Does this gain put Etsy into the conversation as a challenger to Amazon, Walmart, or eBay? From an overall market perspective, not even close. However, this situation highlights the flaw in over-focusing on the strength of marketplace corporations instead of your own company. With the right

products and listing strategies, there are profits to be made even in these smaller marketplaces that "industry-watchers" might overlook.

Ultimately, there is one current trend in e-commerce that matters: a rising tide is lifting all ships. You don't need to be able to pick the winner or even limit yourself to a single boat. Sellercloud's omni-channel e-commerce platform allows you to reap the benefits of industry-wide strength.

Your Sellercloud Data Provides the Actionable Metrics Relevant to Your Business

Rather than focusing on other companies and broad industry data, use the data generated by your business to make decisions. Sellercloud's robust reporting features make it simple to track crucial business-guiding metrics like profit and loss (P&L), sales, orders, inventory, and fulfillment summaries, to name a few. With this information, you can track which marketplaces are performing well for your business, not just their own.

You can also use your Sellercloud data to assess the performance of individual products across multiple marketplaces. This feature can help you choose the optimal destinations for future listings as well as draw attention to areas of your product catalog that may be ready for a refresh.

Sellercloud's integration with PowerBI adds even more accessible and scalable data layers to drill down into.

With this powerful analytics tool, you can dig deeper into your Sellercloud data and cost of goods sold (COGS) insights to surface how each element of your sales, inventory management, logistics, and fulfillment workflows are impacting your profitability both as a whole and on a per-channel basis.

Simply put, although you should certainly feel an obligation to keep abreast of the latest ebbs and flows of

the e-commerce and logistics industries, just as much (if not more) attention should be given to the specific value these larger companies are providing directly to your e-commerce business. For more on how Sellercloud reporting features can help strengthen and guide your decision-making, contact us directly for a free demo and consultation.





AUGUST 18, 2020

Spiking Demand for Warehouse Space is the Next Big Challenge for E-Commerce Sellers





American commercial real estate powerhouse JLL “expects e-commerce sales could hit \$1.5 trillion by 2025 — which would increase the demand for industrial real estate to an additional 1 billion square feet.” While the former is amazing news for e-commerce sellers, the latter should give them pause.

As the e-commerce industry continues to grow at a record pace, so will the demand for available warehouse space. Worldwide, real estate investors are taking notice as insurers are looking to trade sinking commercial investments in office space and storefronts for warehouses.

This situation may not seem especially noteworthy for sellers who rely on third-party logistics (3PL) and fulfillment providers, but it should be. As retailers large and small are flocking to e-commerce, demand for space will rise and costs will likely follow suit. Furthermore, selling during COVID-19 has proven that relying on the most popular fulfillment and warehousing options, while convenient, can often prove detrimental with a single policy or terms of service shift.

Amazon is Once Again Limiting Third-Party Inventory Storage

At the beginning of the pandemic e-commerce boom, Amazon made headlines for placing strict limits on the types and quantities of products that could be shipped to and sold through their popular Fulfillment by Amazon (FBA) service. Eventually these limits were lifted, but not before FBA sellers felt the effects. While the e-commerce

industry, as a whole, saw record sales, many FBA merchants struggled.

Once again, Amazon is tightening the reins on its warehouse space – this time in preparation for its delayed Prime Day and the subsequent holiday rush. Specifically, sellers with an IPI score under 500 as of the week of July 13 will be subject to storage volume limits from August 16, 2020 through December 31, 2020.

This stipulation should create nowhere near the disruption caused by Amazon’s COVID-inspired FBA policy shift this past April, it again demonstrates that overreliance on marketplace-based fulfillment and warehousing solutions can leave you vulnerable to the logistics strategies (and subsequent whims) of companies with their own interests at heart – not yours.

This is not to say that 3PL and marketplace-based fulfillment options are fruitless – Sellercloud data shows that, quarter over quarter, these services help businesses achieve tremendous sales. However, with the warehouse market poised to get very competitive, now is the time to explore ways in which you can potentially solidify warehousing options that will best serve both your fulfillment needs and your bottom line.

Sellercloud and Skustack Can Help Optimize Your Warehouse Logistics

Since speculation and demand will certainly be driving up the cost and limiting the availability of new warehouse space for the foreseeable future, you need to make the

most of every square foot of warehouse space you have. Streamlining your warehouse management will be a vital way of both increasing and protecting your profits during this era of rapid e-commerce growth.

Enter Skustack – Sellercloud’s patented warehouse management system (WMS). Skustack allows e-commerce businesses like yours to locate each piece of inventory across every warehouse and shipment. PO receiving, cycle counting, order picking, RMAs, locale management, warehouse tracking, and more are all managed at the granular level so you can be confident that every item is exactly where it should be. What’s more, the Skustack warehouse management platform is fully integrated with Sellercloud, so taking charge of your warehousing logistics couldn’t be easier.

Given the current state of warehouse demand, Skustack can serve as the essential tool to help you make the most of your existing and future warehouse space.

- **Clear dead stock.** With warehouse space at a premium, there’s no use in keeping damaged, defective, returned, or otherwise unsellable merchandise on the shelves. Skustack offers robust cycle-counting features that, among other things, make it easy to find and flag dead stock for removal. For FBA sellers, Amazon’s “Free Removal Program” offers an excellent opportunity to do just that.
- **Process RMAs quickly and efficiently.** With any increase in e-commerce sales inevitably comes a rise in returned merchandise. Skustack makes it easy to

ensure that RMA shipments are sorted and stored in a predictable, organized manner to minimize their impact on your valuable warehouse space.

- **Get the most out of FBA.** As FBA limits affect what and how much inventory Amazon will store for you, your margins of error will undoubtedly shrink. Thankfully, Skustack can help streamline your FBA workflow. With Skustack, you can be sure that order components are picked, labeled, and shipped both quickly and accurately.
- **Move inventory to where your customers are.** One of the key ways to reduce logistics costs is to locate your inventory in close proximity to your customers. Shorter travel distances mean faster fulfillment and lower shipping costs. E-commerce is booming worldwide, which means so will the demand for international warehouse space. Skustack makes it easy to transfer your inventory where you need it, while also keeping track in real time of how much you have and where it all is.

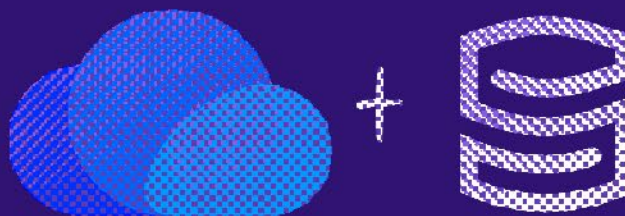
Logistics are always a make-or-break point for successful e-commerce ventures. As competition for customers grows, so does the competition for inventory storage and order processing efficiency. To compete, you will need to be sure you have a plan and the tools to execute it.

For a free demo of how the combination of Skustack and Sellercloud can streamline and optimize your warehouse management workflows, contact us directly for a free demo and consultation.

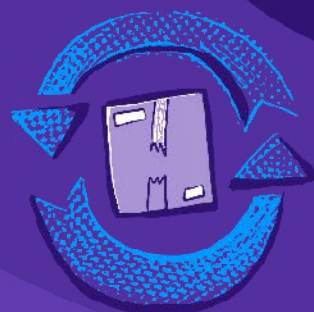
Remove
Dead
Stock



Move
inventory
closer to
customers



Process RMAs
Quickly and
Efficiently



Get the
most of
FBA



Read it online:





Optimize your warehouse with our patented technology

Streamline your entire inventory management process — from receiving purchase orders to picking orders, preparing shipments, and processing returns.

FEATURES

Leave the tedious manual inventory tasks in the past. Skustack helps you accurately track what you have so you don't oversell ever again.



Track Inventory



Cycle Counting



Warehouse Transfers



Locale Management



Picking FBA Shipments



ShipVerify



RMA Receiving



FBA Removals



Picking Orders



Kit Assembly



PO Receiving



Serial Number Tracking



Lot Number and Expiration Tracking

Built for the omnichannel merchant

We understand the challenges of omnichannel selling and are here to help you optimize your workflow.

Gain visibility over your entire inventory lifecycle

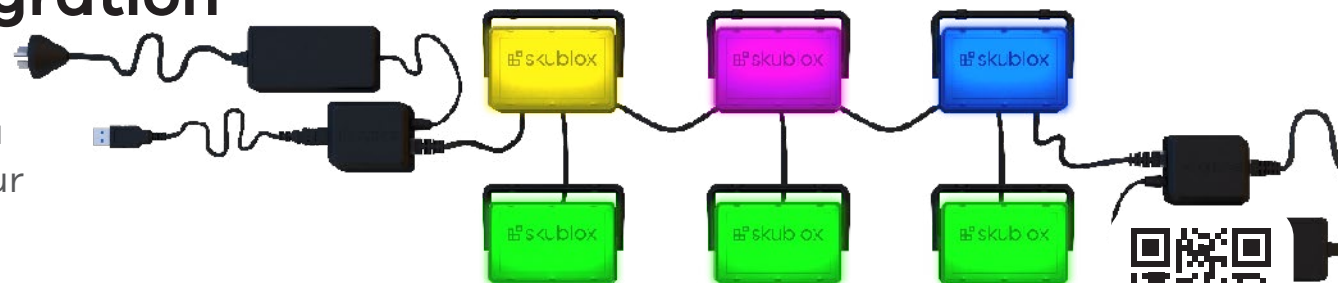
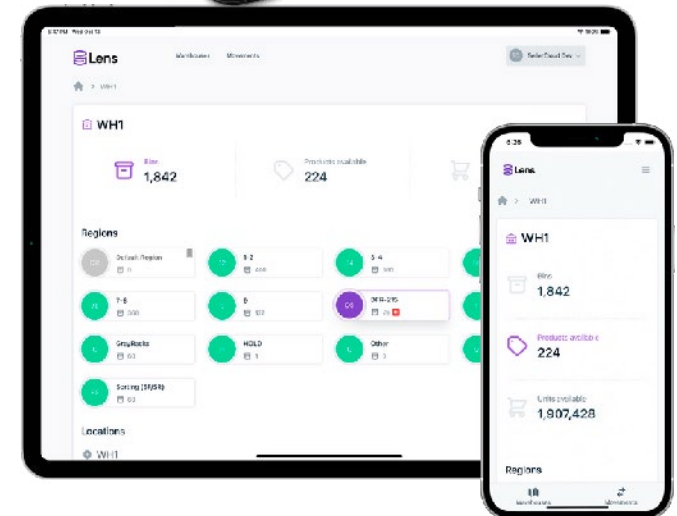
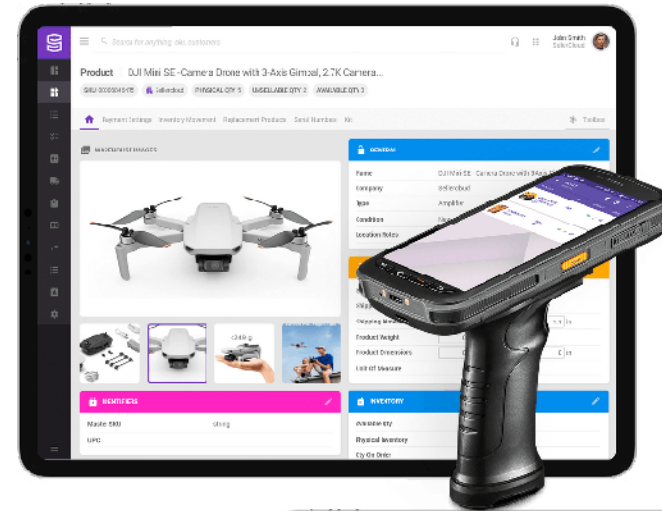
Empower your business and gain insights across your warehouse related workflows with Skustack.

Get a bird's eye view of your warehouse with Lens

Monitor warehouse activity with powerful visualization and real-time tracking.

Native sorting integration with skublox

The sort-to-light system that you need to eliminate errors from your fulfillment workflows.





AUGUST 27, 2020



7 Top Zapier Automations to Streamline Your E-commerce Workflows

As we shared earlier this year, Zapier is a user-friendly automation platform that allows over 2,000 different web-enabled applications to interact with each other, work together, and streamline your most repetitive tasks – all without requiring any complex programming or scripting knowledge.

Sellercloud's own integration with Zapier has opened the door to many efficiency-boosting use cases including:

- Purchase order updates
- Record-keeping
- Inventory tracking
- Customer creation
- Email marketing
- Internal communication and reminders

Of course, this list only scratches the surface. Zapier uses webhooks that allow you to use most common (and even some uncommon) application actions to trigger a follow-up action. These automations (called Zaps) can be chained together to span both multiple actions and multiple applications to create sequences that are tailored to your e-commerce business's needs. The possibilities are truly endless.

That said, you don't have to reinvent the wheel. There are several premade Sellercloud Zaps that are ready to add to your workflows today. Here are some of our favorites:

Zapier Connects Sellercloud and Google Sheets

Google Sheets is a powerful, cloud-based spreadsheet tool that makes it easy to organize data, keep records, and surface useful insights into your e-commerce business's operations. Zapier offers a host of triggers, actions, and searches that integrate directly with Google Sheets. When combined with Sellercloud's Zapier integrations, there are numerous time-saving possibilities.

Automatically add new inventory records

When Sellercloud detects a new piece of inventory, Zapier can trigger Google Sheets to instantly create a new row in an existing spreadsheet, and then populate it with relevant information. This feature saves you and your team

SellerCloud + Google Sheets

Create Google Sheet rows for new inventory in SellerCloud

When this happens
Step 1: New Inventory

Then do this
Step 2: Create Spreadsheet Row

Keep your inventory records up to date in a spreadsheet. Whenever new inventory is added in Sellercloud, the integration will automatically create a row with its information added to a Google Sheet. It's never been easier to organize your inventory records.

[SEE DETAILS](#) [TRY IT](#)

from having to waste precious time on manual data entry and ensures that everyone with access to the Sheet has the most up-to-date details about your inventory.

Try this Zap now:



Create orders from a spreadsheet

Just as Sellercloud can trigger actions in a Google Sheet, the reverse also works. If your order processing workflow

starts with spreadsheet data, you can save time by having Zapier create Sellercloud orders automatically from your entries.



This Zap detects when a new row is added to a specified spreadsheet. It then pulls relevant data from the Sheet fields and creates an order record in Sellercloud.

Try this Zap now:




Use a spreadsheet to keep shipping statuses up-to-date and easily accessible


Taking things a step further, Zapier can help simplify the process of creating and maintaining shipping and tracking information. If you currently use a spreadsheet for order tracking, this Zap scans each order's row for changes in tracking order number status. When a change is detected in the Sheet, it is automatically updated in the corresponding Sellercloud order record as well. This simplified, cloud-based input method can speed up your order tracking workflow, while also allowing you to take full advantage of Sellercloud's robust order-tracking feature set.

Google Sheets + SellerCloudX


Create Sellercloud orders from new Google Sheets rows



When this happens
Step 1: New Spreadsheet Row



Then do this
Step 2: Lookup Spreadsheet Row



Then do this
Step 3: Create Order

Automatically create sales orders in Sellercloud from your own Google Sheets account. Each time a row is added in Google Sheets, an order in Sellercloud will be created with all of the given information. If you're manually creating orders in Sellercloud from a spreadsheet, this is a Zap for you.

[SEE DETAILS](#)[TRY IT](#)

+2
Google Sheets + SellerCloud

Update SellerCloud order shipping statuses from a new Google Sheet row

When this happens
Step 1: New Spreadsheet Row

Then do this
Step 2: Lookup Spreadsheet Row

Then do this
Step 3: Find an Order

Then do this
Step 4: Update Order Shipping Status

Ensure that your sales orders in your e-commerce tool are up to date with your sales orders in your spreadsheets. This integration helps every time a shipment tracking number is added to an order's row in a Google Sheet, the shipment tracking order number is updated on the SellerCloud order record. You won't have to manually update shipping statuses for orders again.

[SEE DETAILS](#)
[TRY IT](#)

and efficiently communicate vital information both internally and to customers.

Notify vendors of purchase order status changes

Zapier can use an updated purchase order in Sellercloud to trigger a host of different actions. One of the most useful is composing and sending an email to your vendor when their purchase order has been approved. Zapier can populate the email with relevant status updates and order details.

Try this Zap now:



Try this Zap now:



Use Zapier to Automate Crucial Communications

Zapier integrates with many of the popular mail, messaging, and marketing applications that your e-commerce business already uses (as well as some that you might want to consider trying). This integration opens up numerous possibilities for how your company can quickly

SellerCloud + Gmail

Send emails via Gmail for updated purchase orders in Sellercloud

When this happens
Step 1: Updated Purchase Order

Then do this
Step 2: Send Email

Automatically notify the buyer of a Purchase Order in Sellercloud when an important change is made on their Purchase Order. When a Purchase Order's status is marked as "Approved", its buyer will automatically receive a custom email through Gmail with details.

[SEE DETAILS](#)
[TRY IT](#)

Keep your employees informed about unexpected issues

Just as Zapier makes it quick and easy to keep customers informed about their orders, it can also be used to keep your employees up to speed.

For instance, the Zap below is triggered by your Sellercloud job queue. When a new queued job appears, Zapier can send a Slack message to a specific channel, employee, or group notifying them. Zapier's wide range of integrations means that similar Zaps could also be created to generate emails, text messages, and to-do list entries.

Try this Zap now:



Zapier Streamlines Customer Creation and Communication


Creating and maintaining accurate customer records is a key component of successful e-commerce business growth. Not only does it ensure that orders can be processed quickly and accurately, but it sets the table for an ongoing customer-brand relationship that could pay dividends moving forward.

Typically, collecting and organizing customer information is a tedious data entry exercise. As you might expect, Zapier is an incredibly useful tool in streamlining and automating that process.


Populate Sellercloud customer data from QuickBooks


One of the most problematic aspects of manual data entry is inconsistency. When customer information does not match across multiple platforms, it can create issues that compromise the integrity of your data. Thankfully, Zapier allows you to move this customer data from application to application seamlessly.

For example, you can use Zapier's integration with QuickBooks to populate your Sellercloud customer records.

 SellerCloud + Slack ×

Send Slack channel messages for new queued jobs fail in SellerCloud

 When this happens
Step 1: New Queued Job

 Then do this
Step 2: Send Channel Message

Quickly respond to a failed queued job in your e-commerce tool by being notified immediately. This integration sends a customized message to any channel in Slack when the status of a queued job in SellerCloud is marked as 'failed'. Be confident that your team is on top of failed queued jobs in SellerCloud.

[SEE DETAILS](#) [TRY IT](#)

Add new customers to your email marketing subscription list

E-marketing is a key component in fostering relationships between your customers and your brand. There are several email marketing platforms that integrate with Zapier. This integration means that you can easily use your Sellercloud customer data to trigger a host of marketing-related actions.

For instance, the Zap below is triggered when a new order is placed. The customer data is pulled from Sellercloud and used to populate the relevant fields for a new subscriber in the Klaviyo marketing app. This feature ensures that your customer marketing reaches even your newest customers – allowing you to reach your widest possible audience with your digital marketing efforts.

QuickBooks Online + SellerCloud

Create a customer in Sellercloud when a customer is created in Quickbooks



When this happens
Step 1: New Customer



Then do this
Step 2: Create Customer

Keep your customers up to date in your accounting software. Each time a customer is created in QuickBooks Online, a record with their information is automatically created in SellerCloud. Now you won't have to go back and forth between the two when checking information.

[SEE DETAILS](#)

[TRY IT](#)

When a new customer is created in Quickbooks, the Zap below automatically creates a corresponding customer in Sellercloud. Automating this process removes the chance for typos or other data entry issues that may create conflicts and affect your ability to reach customers and fulfill their orders accurately.

Try this Zap now:



SellerCloud + Klaviyo

Create Klaviyo subscribers for new Sellercloud orders



When this happens
Step 1: New Order



Then do this
Step 2: Find a Customer



Then do this
Step 3: Add Subscriber

Keep track your active customers in Sellercloud by creating a record for them in Klaviyo. Every time a new order is created in Sellercloud, the customer is automatically added as a subscriber in Klaviyo. Easily email and organize customers in Klaviyo with their information from Sellercloud.

[SEE DETAILS](#)

[TRY IT](#)

Try this Zap now:



These are just a few of the ways that you can take advantage of the pairing of the Sellercloud omni-channel

e-commerce growth platform and Zapier. They only scratch the surface of Zapier's unique ability to synchronize all of the web-enabled apps that your company relies on. What's more, Zapier does so with an interface that is both intuitive to use and ripe for creative implementations.

For more on how the combination of Sellercloud and Zapier can propel your e-commerce business forward, contact us directly for a free demo.



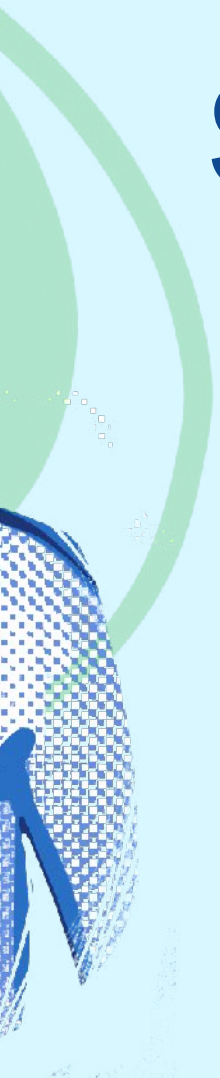
Read it online:





SEPTEMBER 3, 2020

Amazon's Transparency Brand Service Is Your Partner Against Counterfeit Claims



Back in January, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) began a serious push to crack down on counterfeit goods being sold on e-commerce platforms. This strong defense of intellectual property (IP) rights was designed to protect brands against those pirating their merchandise. At the same time, it became apparent that the federal government was prepared to hold e-commerce marketplaces accountable for allowing counterfeit goods on their platforms.

Every marketplace responded in its own way. That said, as with most major developments in e-commerce, all eyes were on Amazon's response. Since January, the e-commerce giant has taken several steps to answer the call to police its marketplace against counterfeiters:

- Amazon established a Counterfeit Crimes Unit that works with brands, retailers, and law enforcement to prosecute those who have listed or are attempting to list counterfeit merchandise on the Amazon Marketplace.
- Amazon has increased its policing of price-gouging – especially in relation to emergencies like the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Amazon will require third-party sellers in the US to publicly disclose their names and address to customers (as of September 1, 2020).

These reactions are certainly welcome changes for legitimate e-commerce retailers and brands, but they don't do much to empower sellers looking to offer real-time assurances of product authenticity at point of sale.

That's where Amazon's product serialization service, Transparency, comes in. Started in 2019, it may prove to be one of the best weapons against counterfeit branded products.

Transparency Allows Sellers and Buyers to Authenticate Branded Merchandise

Although many of the aforementioned counterfeit-reducing steps are reactive, Transparency is an active service that allows customers to verify the authenticity of the products they are shopping for, even before adding them to their shopping carts.

To participate, sellers purchase and assign a unique Transparency code for every unit they sell. This proprietary alphanumeric code is generated and logged by Transparency. When a customer orders a product that has a Transparency code, the unit is procured and its code is verified before it is shipped to the customer.

The fact that each individual piece of inventory has its own unique Transparency code (rather than one code per SKU) adds an additional layer of anti-counterfeiting security that cannot easily be defeated by bad actors. This nominal investment of a few pennies per code can serve as a proactive, cost-effective insurance against the massive losses associated with trying to outsell IP-infringing competition and pursuing legal action to stop it.

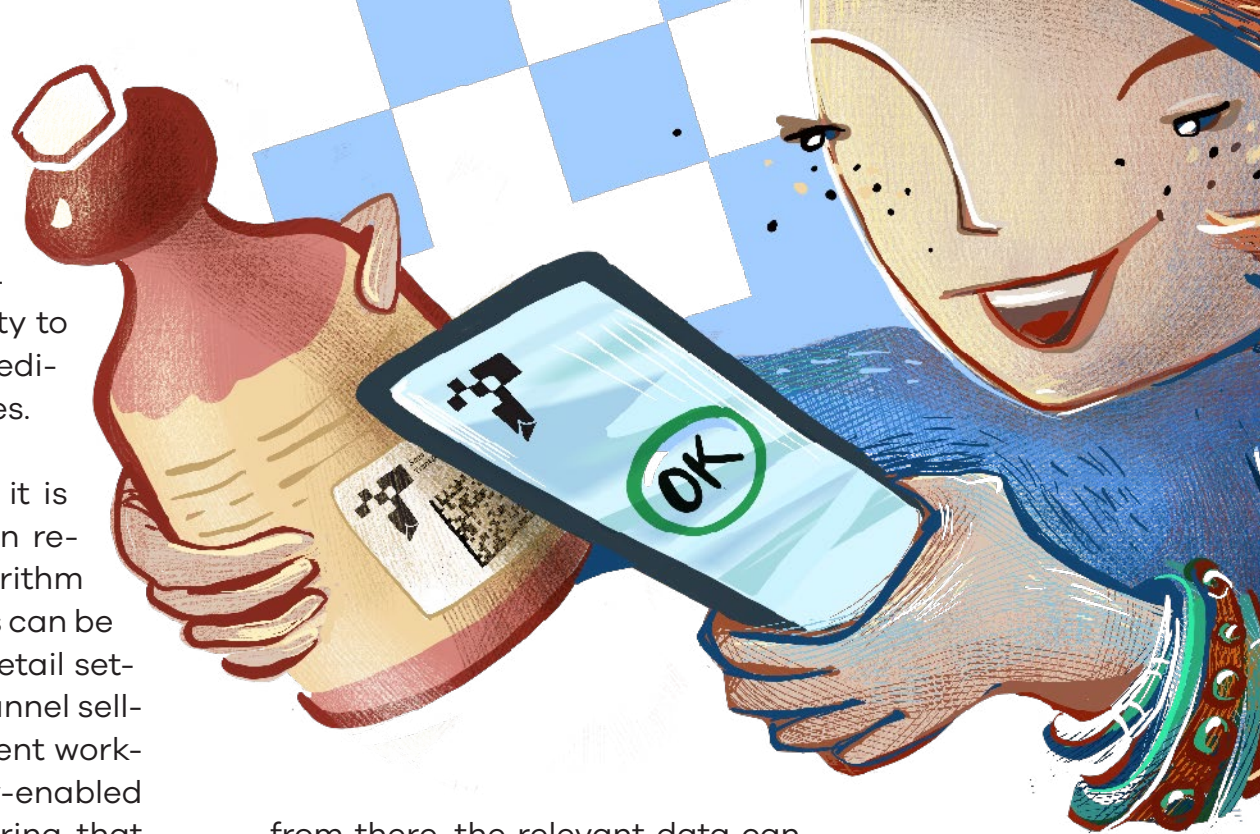
Sellers and brand owners are not the only beneficiaries of the Transparency service. Customers have access to this platform as well. Using either the Amazon app or

the dedicated Transparency app (available on iOS and Android), purchased items can be scanned and the authenticity of the item can be verified. Amazon has explained this scanning functionality to give sellers the opportunity to include pertinent product details such as ingredients, manufacturing origin, and expiration dates.

An additional benefit of Transparency is that it is not limited to Amazon sales. Although Amazon remains in control of the code-generating algorithm and verification, Transparency-coded products can be sold in any e-commerce or brick-and-mortar retail setting. This trait is especially helpful for multi-channel sellers who use a centralized inventory management workflow – there is no need to isolate Transparency-enabled merchandise. That said, it is worth remembering that scanning a product's Transparency code will always be a road that leads back to Amazon, no matter where the customer encounters the said product.

Sellercloud Users Can Enroll in Transparency Today

Sellercloud is one of the few Software as a Service (SaaS) platforms that integrates directly with Amazon's Transparency. Our omni-channel inventory management platform already has systems in place to integrate Transparency codes into the inventory, order picking, and shipping processes you already have. Once enrolled, simply select the particular products you need protected, purchase the necessary Transparency codes, and



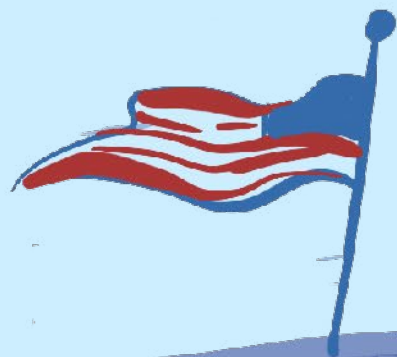
from there, the relevant data can be imported into your Sellercloud catalog database.

Furthermore, since Transparency is not limited to Amazon Marketplace listings, you can take advantage of the brand protections offered by Transparency across all of the channels where you sell. In this regard, adding Transparency into your fulfillment workflow can provide its unique peace of mind to your entire customer base.

For more on how Sellercloud's integrations can simultaneously streamline and secure your entire e-commerce sales business, contact us directly for a free demo.

Read it online:





Walmart
Superstore



SEPTEMBER 14, 2020

5 Reasons Your E-commerce Business Needs to Sell on Walmart Marketplace



Walmart is the definition of a retail giant – generating over half a trillion dollars’ worth of annual revenue in combined sales across their physical and online stores. Back in 2017, Walmart.com was making a hard run at Amazon’s throne as the king of the online marketplaces and we took note, urging our users to get on board. Now, three years later, Amazon still remains dominant, but our advice rings truer than ever.

If there is one piece of advice that all e-commerce sellers need to hear, it is this: diversifying your e-commerce business across multiple platforms is a must. Many online sellers start out on a single website, experience some success, and then never branch out into other marketplaces. Although this behaviour is problematic for a number of reasons, Sellercloud’s integration with Walmart Marketplace provides a simple and potentially profitable opportunity.

If you are ready to bring your e-commerce business to a wider audience, here are 5 reasons why Walmart.com should be one of the marketplaces at the top of your list:

Walmart.com gives your e-commerce business access to a massive customer base.

Walmart’s long-standing physical presence in towns and cities across the world has created a loyal following of 265 million weekly customers who associate the brand with low prices and convenience.

As a result, there are segments of online shoppers who seek out Walmart Marketplace – Walmart’s e-commerce arm – as their trusted go-to for internet purchases. These are customers who would likely never see your listings or purchase your products unless you list on Walmart Marketplace.

Walmart.com boasts 100 million unique visitors per month; why not turn them into potential customers?

Walmart’s Shopify partnership shows an increasing commitment to third-party e-commerce sales.

As a company, Walmart’s commitment to third-party sales continues to grow. In just this past year, the number of third-party sellers on Walmart.com has nearly doubled.

Walmart’s recently announced partnership with Shopify is poised to make Walmart.com an even stronger platform for third-party sellers. In its initial roll-out, Walmart hopes to add 1,200 Shopify sellers to the marketplace this year. This goal is a great sign of Walmart’s continued investment in their online brand. As Vice President of Walmart Marketplace Jeff Clementz explains, “Shopify has a long history of helping small businesses leverage scale, and we’re proud to be part of the solution that is helping customers and other retailers.”

It should be noted that participation in the Shopify/Walmart partnership isn’t automatically being

granted to all Shopify users. There is a vetting process involved (a sign of Walmart's commitment to customer satisfaction and marketplace curation), but any reputable Shopify sellers with reliable fulfillment practices should certainly be looking to throw their hat into the ring. Sellercloud clients already taking advantage of our robust Shopify integrations will certainly have a leg up on the competition when it comes to demonstrating strong end-to-end online sales experiences.

Walmart+ is coming – and it is poised to be a major disrupter in the e-commerce industry.

Then there's Walmart+. Designed as an Amazon Prime competitor, Walmart+ is Walmart's proposed paid membership service that will offer users some combination of (still undisclosed) benefits. It is safe to bet that fast and free shipping (one of Amazon Prime's most popular draws) will be one of them.

Furthermore, it is expected that there will be brick-and-mortar perks for Walmart+ subscribers as well – grocery delivery, gas discounts, and Sam's Club memberships have all been postulated. Although these benefits may not directly benefit your e-commerce business, they will further foster customer loyalty to the entirety of the Walmart brand – thereby improving the value of your Walmart Marketplace listings.

Walmart+ may also create some fragmentation of the overall e-commerce customer base. Given the associated membership costs, many online shoppers may

find themselves forced to choose between Amazon Prime and Walmart+. This possibility means that if you only sell on one of these two marketplaces, you will lose access to the most dedicated cadre of shoppers on the other.

Walmart DSV and Walmart Canada provide additional opportunities to expand your e-commerce business.

It is worth noting that Walmart Marketplace is just one arm of Walmart's online retail presence.

Walmart's Drop Ship Vendor (DSV) program allows third parties to transition to first-party providers. Although dropshipping may not be ideal for all e-commerce businesses, it presents a unique opportunity to scale your sales efforts in a different direction, while still reaping the benefits of working under the Walmart umbrella.

Walmart also offers sellers unique opportunities to expand into international online sales. For instance, American sellers gain access to an entirely new customer base by listing on Walmart Canada.

Of course, there are some added considerations when selling and shipping out of the country, but Sellercloud has you covered with a fully-featured Walmart.ca integration and a stable of third-party fulfillment (3PL) integrations to help with the logistics.

Sellercloud's Walmart partnership equips you for success across all of Walmart's e-commerce platforms.

As an official Walmart Solution Provider, Sellercloud offers users the peace of mind that selling on Walmart's e-commerce channels is not only feasible, but it makes sense. Sellercloud makes it easy to port your existing catalog to Walmart Marketplace without having to create all new listings from scratch, while also helping you ensure that your listings are compliant with Walmart's terms of service.

Once the orders start coming in, Sellercloud's tracking and inventory management features allow you and your customers to rest assured that products are

shipped and delivered reliably. This integration helps keep your Walmart Marketplace in good standing while also keeping your warehouse workflow running smoothly. Want to learn more about how Sellercloud can help bring your products to Walmart customers? Contact us directly for more details.



Read it online:




SEPTEMBER 21, 2020

Voice-Based Shopping is Not a Fad – Is Your Product Catalog Compatible?







Market penetration of voice-enabled devices continues to rise. Gone are the days when a smartphone was the lone avenue for talking to Google's, Apple's, and Amazon's virtual assistants. Among smart speakers, smart TVs, and other smart appliances, there are now countless ways for users to call out a request and receive a response from their preferred virtual companion. With so many people cooped up at home this spring, smart devices have certainly gotten a workout.

Whether it's "OK Google," "Hey, Siri," or "Alexa?," simple voice commands are not only replacing typing, but they are becoming part of the lexicon. Although voice recognition technology continues to improve by leaps and bounds (thanks in large part to continued strong investment in it), there is important growth happening on the user side, as well.

One of the steepest barriers to acceptance for voice-based searching has been the syntax, tone, and cadence required to get an AI-powered speech-recognition device to actually register what is being said correctly. It takes patience and practice. The combination of better tech and increased user familiarity is making voice-based searching increasingly viable.

For e-commerce businesses, this improvement is a tremendous opportunity. The key is making sure that your listings have the right information and phrasing so that when a virtual assistant is asked to find a product, it can find yours.

Make Your Listings Voice-Friendly

A lot of what makes voice-enabled searches work is the same as what drives search engine optimization (SEO). At the end of the day, AI searches (text, image, or voice) come down to a series of ever-evolving algorithms. Companies keep the specifics of these algorithms pretty close to the vest (to avoid giving users opportunities to game them), but there are general best practices that remain fairly consistent:

- **Keywords are crucial.** It is important that your listing contains keywords that are relevant to your product. Although your brand is certainly a keyword you want to feature, be sure to include both short- and long-tail keywords that match how a customer might refer to your product.

Taken a step further, consider where your customers may be in the sales funnel. While a user familiar with your product and/or brand might know exactly how to refer to your merchandise, there will likely be prospective customers who just have a vague idea of what it is they are looking for.

- **Syntax and phrasing matter.** Voice-based search is more conversational than the boolean entries tapped into a search box. As such, your listings need to have a degree of this conversational flow, not only to increase the odds of hitting upon long-tail keywords users are searching for, but also ensure that when your listings are read through a speaker, they have a pleasant flow. Remember that voice-shopping typically happens without a user actually seeing your listing. In a



sense, informative, descriptive, and engaging listing copy becomes your product image.

- **Try to win the “Buy Box.”** Winning the coveted “Buy Box” on a third-party marketplace often puts you at the top of the list for voice-enabled purchases. If your listing is leading the pack for a specific keyword, it is likely that your product will be the one offered to customers when they include that particular keyword in their voice search.
 - **Understand how virtual assistants work.** Amazon, Google, and Apple regularly offer guides and white papers about how their voice-based tools work. Some of these releases can be jargon-heavy (they are primarily focused on the developer community), but there are insights that can be gleaned about user-AI interaction that can help you tailor your listing syntax and keywords accordingly.
- Again, search-related optimizations (voice or otherwise) are never an exact science. It will take time and possibly even some A/B testing to zero in on verbiage that yields the best returns. Making things more challenging, most marketplaces and search engines won't surface many (if any) voice-specific metrics.

The good news is that the majority of your voice-focused optimizations will correlate to stronger listing quality in

general. Catering to voice shopping audiences shouldn't cost you with text-based searchers.

Sellercloud Simplifies the Process of Optimizing Your Listings for Voice Shopping

By making voice-search listing optimizations through your Sellercloud catalog, you can save yourself valuable time and ensure that your changes populate across all of your e-commerce channels. In other words the same revisions you make to help Alexa boost your third-party sales can also be used to improve your first-party sales through Google Shopping Actions.

Creating, editing, and managing listings with Sellercloud is a straightforward process. In addition to its undeniable convenience, our platform also conducts checks to help be sure your listings maintain compliance across all of the channels where you sell. The result is a combination of convenience and peace of mind. Check out our guide for more on how Sellercloud gives you control over how you create, revise, and even A/B test your entire catalog of product listings – and why you should.

Read it online:





SEPTEMBER 29, 2020

Optimize Your E-Commerce Listing Images for Social Media Sales



One of the defining benefits of social media is its ability to quickly and easily share content between users. As an e-commerce business, it is becoming increasingly convenient to use social networks to share your product listings with the world.

This phenomenon means both customers and those interested in your brand can serve as free marketing for your products – sharing and reposting your listings for family, friends, and followers who otherwise may never have seen your merchandise.

Many social media networks have capitalized on this feature and have created dedicated e-commerce integrations into their sites and apps. The specifics of these integrations vary by channel, but at their cores, they make it possible for users to make purchases directly from social media posts and/or the storefronts of e-commerce accounts.

While there are different ways of taking advantage of social media as a selling tool, the combination of Shopify and Sellercloud make it easy to bring your business into social network ecosystems without having to overhaul your catalog or inventory management workflows.

That said, just posting your entire catalog on Pinterest or creating a Facebook Shop is not going to fuel a frenzy of new orders. There are some strategic adjustments you need to make to your listings – particularly to the images you choose – to ensure that they maximize their social potential.

Create Listing Images with Social Media in Mind

First and foremost, appearance matters. Your listing images need to be clear, direct, and appealing. However, there are other steps to take to get the most out of your listing pictures.

Some key considerations when optimizing your product images include:

- **Composition** – Ideally you want to have multiple images for each of your listings. This factor gives you (or others) the flexibility to select the optimal visual depending on where and how your listing is being shared.

To start with, you need a clear, uncluttered image of your project without any background or distracting flourishes. These are typically ideal title images and can also double as effective thumbnails. From there, be sure to include images of your product both in use and in a variety of settings. This aspect gives customers context while also increasing the odds that your listing will surface in certain types of image-based searches (more on these later).

- **File name** – While most people viewing your listings will never see (or care about) the names you give your image files, search algorithms will. Be sure to include descriptive names (with dashes instead of spaces) of what is depicted in each listing image you use.

Some sites also allow you to add “alt tags” to your images. These descriptions are what search engines and screen

readers use to understand what an image is. The more precise information you attach to your images, the better the odds are that they will be surfaced for users – and surfaced in relevant contexts. People can't share (or purchase) what they can't find.

- **Size** – The larger and higher resolution the image, the longer it will take to load. The smaller and lower resolution the image, the fuzzier and less appealing it is to a prospective customer. You want to be sure your images are large enough to be seen clearly, but not so large that they fail to load before someone scrolls past them. Most sites and marketplaces have strict limits on image dimensions and sizes, but others (like your own storefront) may not.

If your images are going to be resized (either by you or a third-party platform), be sure the product is still a clear and prominent focal point once it's in its final form. This suggestion is especially true for thumbnails.

For more image optimization tips, check out this guide from SEO expert Neil Patel.

Capitalize on Image Searching Functionality

Passing the eye test is not the only consideration you need to account for when creating and selecting your listing images. You also need to account for a growing trend: image search.

Most major search engines have offered image searching capabilities for quite a while. Getting your listing images to rank and appear in these results comes down to how well they satisfy ever-evolving algorithms that consider things like image file names, hosting pages, resolutions, sizes, and colors.

Taken to the next level, applications like Google Lens and Pinterest Lens allow users to utilize images instead of words to find what they are looking for. Known generically as a reverse image search, this process takes a user-provided image (from a file or smartphone camera) and delivers results that are close matches.

A reverse image search also has value as a shopping tool. Like that pair of shoes? Want to know the name of that toy? Customers can snap a quick photo and generate links to comparable, purchasable items online.

While the concept of image-based shopping is nothing new (marketplaces like eBay, Wayfair, and Amazon have had their own versions for years), it is poised to continue to grow in popularity as the AI technology behind recognizing and scanning images continues to grow in accuracy, and smartphone cameras improve in fidelity.

Integrations with social media will add an extra layer of practicality. For instance, look at how Pinterest has sought to leverage image-based searching as a core pillar of its e-commerce expansion. Back in 2019, Pinterest took image search to the next level with its "Complete the Look" search functionality. The tool allows users to select or

upload an image and immediately generate a list of complementary products that match, not only the main subject of the image, but the surrounding scene as well. Best suited for fashion and home decor, “Complete the Look” functionality created a useful way for users to surface relevant product posts beyond a single item – a sort of visual upselling.

Fast-forward to today: Pinterest is continuing its commitment to leveraging its image-based social network as a driver for e-commerce sales. Now, when users use Pinterest Lens to conduct a reverse image search, the results include a shop tab. This tab populates with relevant seller posts that link directly to the check-out links for in-stock inventory. This simple addition to Pinterest’s search results page transforms Pinterest into a de-facto image-based marketplace (complete with a unified shopping cart feature) for sellers who have taken the time to bring their catalogs onto the site.

Pinterest is clearly leading the way when it comes to integrated social network marketing functionality, but it is safe to assume that the other social media players will not be left in the dust.

Once again, it all starts with your images. To get the most out of social media marketing and shopping, your product images need to be top priority. It may take time to optimize, but the image-focused work you do now will certainly provide long-term value into the future as you increase your products’ exposure.

Streamline Image Based Social Media Sales Opportunities into Your Existing Workflow

Sellercloud integrates with Shopify as a Shopify app, making it simple and convenient to publish and change your listings (including images), process POS transactions, manage inventory, and track every stage of order fulfillment. This partnership brings social media sales into reach for your e-commerce business.

As far as images are concerned, once yours are optimized, Sellercloud allows you to update them in your master catalog and instantly update all of your listings across all of your sales channels – including Shopify. Not only does this integration save you time, but it maximizes the return on the effort spent on the visual side of your listings. With a few clicks, you can add, remove, replace, or even A/B test listing images.

Social media purchases are a burgeoning frontier of e-commerce that you can’t afford to miss out on – especially when social networks continue to make it more convenient to get on board. No matter how social sales continue to evolve, effective product images will remain the most forward-facing elements of your listings – responsible for generating notice, shares, and sales on these platforms. As such, you need to be sure you are purposeful in how you choose, optimize, and manage pictures in your listings.

For more on how Sellercloud can help you wield your catalog to expand and maximize your e-commerce exposure, contact us directly.

Red_boots.jpg 45 kb



#style
#boots
#fashion
#collection

Read it online:





OCTOBER 13, 2020

Apply the Inventory Turnover Formula to Assess Your E-Commerce Business



Inventory Turnover Ratio (ITR) is one of the most crucial metrics for evaluating the effectiveness of your e-commerce business. The formula is simple:

INVENTORY TURNOVER = Cost of Goods Sold (COGS) / Average Inventory Value

For a given period, you divide your total cost of goods sold (COGS) by the average inventory value over that same period.

Sellercloud's robust reporting features make it easy to find these values (as well as inventory turnover itself), but they are also fairly simple to identify using your own e-commerce business data.

COGS are a time-based metric. It can be calculated for a period of time by adding your beginning inventory costs, adding the additional inventory costs (labor, parts, storage, etc.) and then subtracting your ending inventory value.

To find the corresponding average inventory value, total your beginning inventory and ending inventory value for the same period of time as your COGS calculation and divide that sum in half.

This ratio of the COGS and average inventory value for a period can tell you a lot about the efficiency of your e-commerce business, while also generating key benchmarks for assessing your purchasing and sales performances.

Interpreting Your Inventory Turnover

Inventory turnover is a "sweet spot" type of metric – if it is too high or too low, you likely have an issue.

A low ITR is the most obvious problem. As your inventory turnover approaches zero, it indicates that your stock isn't moving sufficiently to justify its cost. This problem could be due to any number of reasons: overstocking, dead stock, poor marketing, and/or a lack of a diversified marketplace strategy. A low ITR won't pinpoint the problem for you, but it should act as a red warning light that it is time to diagnose the issue(s).

Conversely, a high ITR indicates that you are moving through inventory quickly. In most cases, this is a positive; but if your inventory turnover is too high, you may be missing out on sales opportunities due to low inventory levels and an inability to meet buyer demand. You never want to have to turn a potential customer away with an out-of-stock status message.

So where is the inventory turnover "sweet spot?" Most experts point to an ITR between 5 and 10 as the ideal. This range is more of a guideline than a hard-and-fast rule. You should take into account your industry, customer profile, and specific business model to determine the best ITR for your e-commerce business's performance.

For example, if you deal in perishables or high holding cost inventory, you want your turnover ratio to skew higher (since longer holding times equal higher costs).

On the other hand, if you deal in luxury or niche products with lower holding costs, skewing lower may be best.

In general terms, as long as the product of your inventory turnover rate and gross profit margin percentage is less than 1, your average inventory value is not too high. Paying attention to the relationship between your ITR and overall profit-loss values should help you dial in your optimal inventory turnover conditions.

Other Inventory Value Metrics

Along with inventory turnover, there are other key data points you should be actively monitoring to maximize the efficiency of your e-commerce business.

Sellercloud's Inventory Value Dashboard gives you access to a host of other graphs and data points about your inventory including:

- **Inventory Value** – This is your current total inventory value. This includes everything your company is currently holding – available and reserved, both sellable and unsellable. This data provides a useful insight into the valuation of your stock, but more importantly, it provides a useful starting point for further analysis.
- **Average Inventory Value** – This is a mean inventory value for a selected date range. It is calculated by totaling the sum of the inventory values for each day and then dividing that sum by the number of days. In many cases, average inventory value

(referred to as total value in Sellercloud's Inventory Value Dashboard) is more useful than inventory value due to the fact that it can balance out steep, single-day drops or spikes that may occur. This factor is why average inventory value is typically used in calculating inventory turnover.

- **Reserved Quantity Value** – This term shows the average value of your reserved inventory – merchandise and unshipped orders that are technically still on hand, but no longer available for sale. This is similar to On Order Value, which shows the actual value of items in an approved but unreceived purchase order (PO). These metrics allow you to isolate both inventory and revenue that has not yet been fully transacted.
- **Top Products By Inventory Value** – This feature surfaces your products with the highest costs. These products represent your largest inventory investments and thus their turnover has the most profound effect on your bottom line.

Sellercloud also features a number of inventory value reports that can be generated to drill even deeper into your inventory specifics:

- **Inventory by Warehouse** data allows you to isolate inventory value metrics based on their physical location. This feature can help you make adjustments to which inventory is stored where as well as identify potential logistics optimization opportunities.
- **Inventory by Product** data provides a hyper-focused look at particular SKUs and their performance.

These metrics are the basis for calculations like COGS and inventory turnover at the product level. Staying tuned in to these figures (particularly for your highest cost products) can help you make decisions regarding details like stock reordering rates and product marketing. For example, paying attention to factors like Product Age and Unsold Inventory can make it easy to identify your high- and low-performing SKUs so that you can adjust accordingly.

Data-driven decision making is crucial to e-commerce success. The Sellercloud omni-channel e-commerce growth platform is designed to help you access and wield your inventory metrics to optimize your selling experiences and increase profits. Contact us directly for a free demo of the type of insights and logistical optimizations we can provide for your e-commerce business.

Read it online:





Inventory
Turnover
Ratio

=



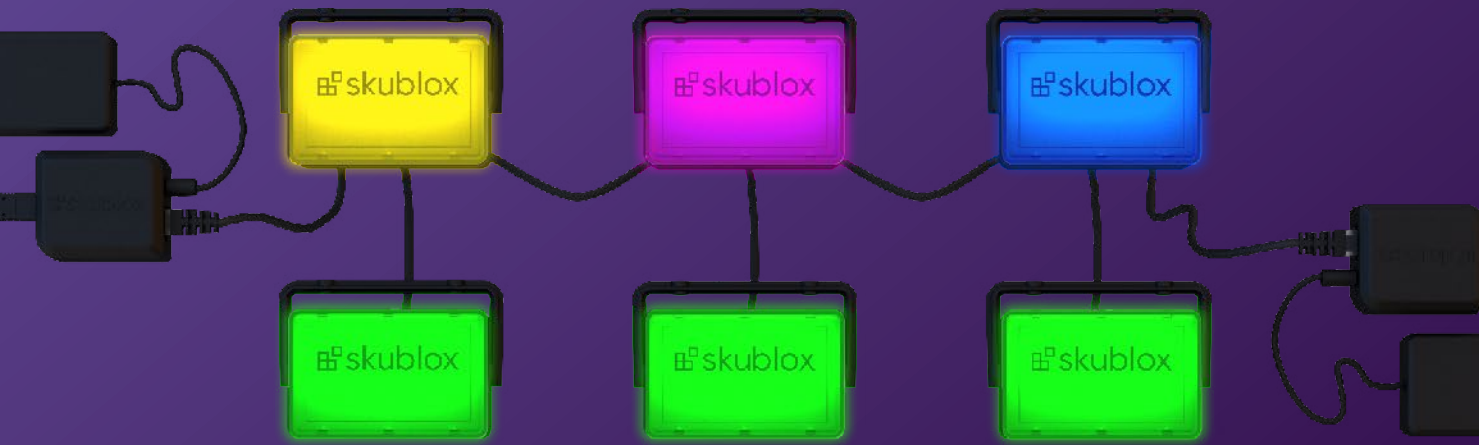
Cost of Goods Sold

Average Inventory Value



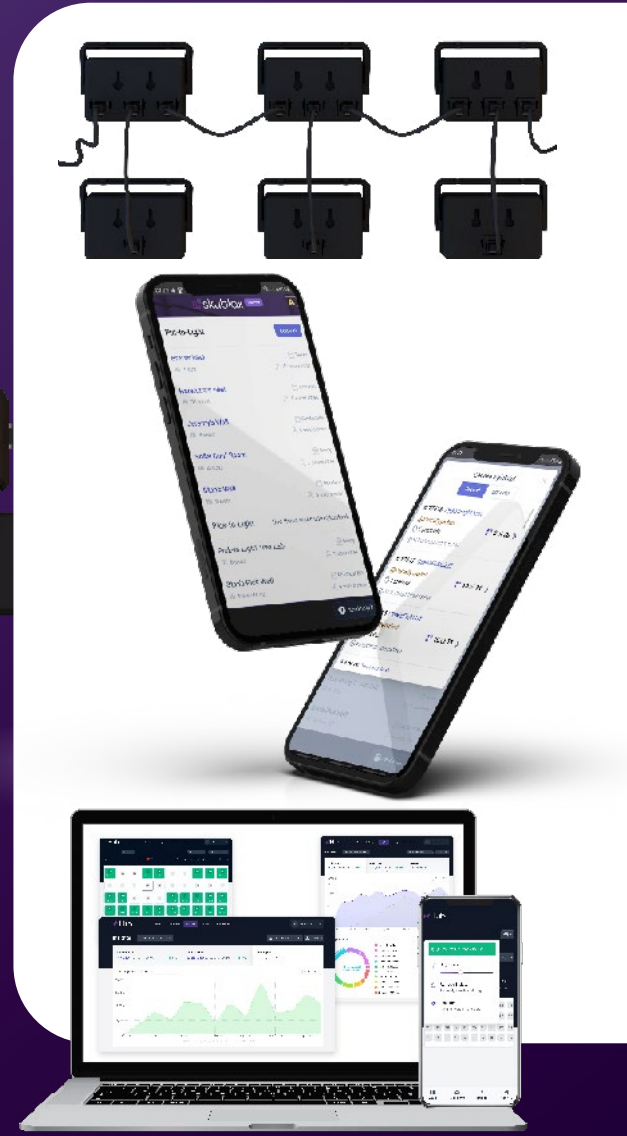
skublox

by Sellercloud



Eliminate sorting and shipping mistakes

Improve order picking accuracy and boost the productivity of your team. Add scalability and invest in automation of your warehouse and tools.



Easy and customizable installation

Set up your Skublox system and start your optimized workflow.

Connected Technology

Utilize our additional products and services to simplify order fulfillment processes.

In Our Workflow

Join our e-commerce ecosystem and streamline your entire operation.

Real Time Visualization

Track your order sorting operations in real-time from anywhere.





OCTOBER 27, 2020

Eliminate Shipping Errors that Cost Your E-Commerce Business Time and Money



Much of your success as an e-commerce business is tied to your ability to efficiently pick, pack, and ship orders to your customers. To do so, you need to be confident that you know how much inventory you have, where that inventory is, and that you can get it from your warehouses to the correct destinations. A strong fulfillment workflow is key.

Without one, fulfillment errors can lead to expensive problems. Not only are there costs associated with having to re-ship items and/or issue refunds, but the loss of customer confidence can lead to negative feedback and irreparable damage to your business's reputation.

Thankfully, there are ways that you can streamline your fulfillment and warehousing protocols to avoid these costly shipping errors.

Create and Optimize Shipping and Inventory Automations

When you can automate aspects of the fulfillment process, you can improve processing speed and reduce the potential for mistakes.

Sellercloud's omni-channel e-commerce growth platform offers a host of inventory, order, WMS, and shipping features that allow you to streamline your fulfillment workflows across all of the channels where you sell. With them, you can be sure that you can do things like:

- Maintain proper inventory counts across all of your warehouses

- Easily access tracking information for both supply-chain and customer order shipments
- Share order updates both internally and with customers

Because these features are all cloud-based, all of the key fulfillment stakeholders, end-to-end, can have access to the tools and information they need to ensure orders get to where they belong quickly and correctly.

Taken a step further, you can use a web-enabled productivity tool like Zapier to create even more automations to improve efficiency, communication, and fulfillment turn-around time. Sellercloud's integrations with Zapier allow users to create any number of tasks (called "Zaps") that can boost efficiency and free your workforce from managing endless queues of repetitive order-related tasks.

Whether it's through an inventory management platform like Sellercloud or by using an automation application like Zapier, the more you remove opportunities for human error, the better.

Be Consistent Across Your Warehouses and Channels

As the saying goes, what's good for the goose is good for the gander. As you establish effective protocols for a specific channel or warehouse, do your best to mirror these processes across your entire e-commerce business. This behaviour can have a number of profoundly positive effects including:

- Increasing your flexibility in both employee and warehouse management
- Opening up opportunities for sharing costs and labor across your entire e-commerce business
- Reducing the onboarding time for warehouse staff
- Simplifying processes for identifying and solving errors as they arise

Conversely, the more variations you have in your logistical workflows, the more complex and confusing things become. This situation creates more potential for mistakes and dissatisfied customers. When all is said and done, consistency can go a long way to alleviating errors and mishaps before they have a chance to upend your order fulfillment routines.

Benchmark Your Fulfillment Processes

Improving your shipping practices is not a one-and-done proposition – it must be a perpetual commitment. To keep track of how your e-commerce business is delivering (or not), it is crucial to establish self-evaluation protocols to routinely explore and identify patterns of success and failure.

Regularly review your internal data and success metrics to discern if your fulfillment procedures are getting the job done. Compare results across channels and time, looking for trends.

Sellercloud's robust reporting features make it easy to surface this information, but you could also consider

utilizing a business intelligence (BI) platform for added layers of analytical complexity and actionable feedback.

However you choose to benchmark your shipping performance, what's most important is that you do. Identifying and correcting fulfillment deficiencies can go a long way to growing your e-commerce business's reputation and bottom line. Similarly, discovering positive results can give your business a north star to continue to reach for company-wide.

Make the Process Foolproof with Skublox

Even with automations, benchmarks, and procedural consistency, fulfillment errors can still slip through the cracks. That's why we created Skublox – a put-to-light, pick-to-light fulfillment technology that both simplifies and streamlines your shipping workflow.

Skublox transforms your warehouse by making order picking and packing as simple as matching colors. On the order picking side, each warehouse team member is assigned a unique color. When a product barcode is scanned, a slot on the Skublox wall lights up with the sorter's assigned color, showing exactly where the item should be placed. Once the product has been placed in the matching slot, the slot barcode is scanned, and the sorter repeats the process for the next product from the bin.

On the shipping side, once all of the orders from a particular order have been placed into slots, the light on the shipping side of the wall turns green. Shipping team

members can then scan the slots to print the appropriate shipping labels and begin packing the items to be shipped.

We know how important accurate, timely, and reliable fulfillment workflows are to e-commerce success. That

is why we have designed a comprehensive e-commerce workflow, including products like Skublox, Skustack and ShipBridge to help you run your business as smoothly as possible. For demos of these or any other aspect of our Sellercloud platform, contact us directly for a free demo.

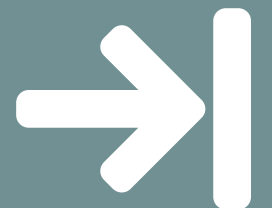


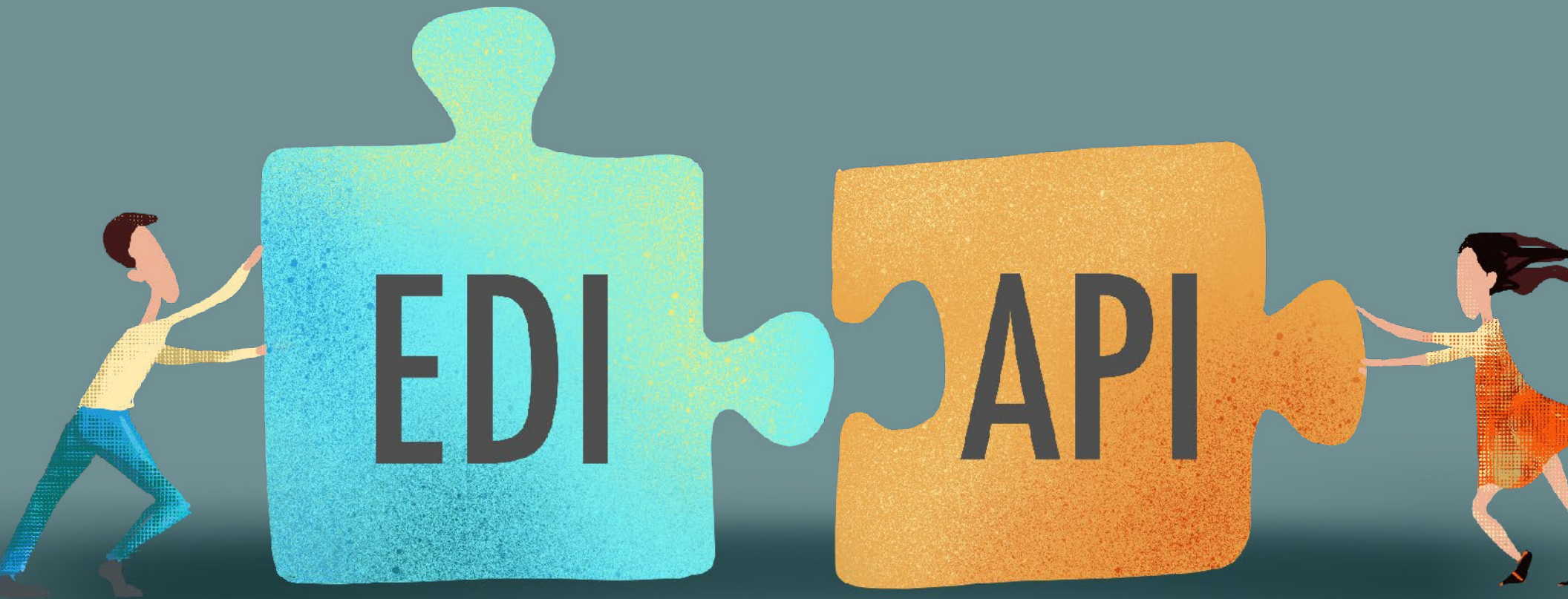
Read it online:




NOVEMBER 4, 2020

EDI vs. API – The Differences Matter in E-Commerce







Running an efficient and successful e-commerce business requires managing a lot of different lines of communication. There are any number of B2C and B2B interactions that must take place to carry out the delicate dance of accepting, processing, fulfilling, and shipping an order. The faster and smoother these exchanges happen, the more reliable your e-commerce workflows become and the happier your customers will be.

The key is establishing the proper integrations to streamline the necessary information exchanges among all of your partners and service providers. If done manually – using website data entry, faxed documents, and a tangled web of forms – your business is susceptible to any number of errors and delays that can disrupt its ability to satisfy customers and grow your brand. Thankfully, electronic exchange integrations have been developed to eliminate this wasteful practice.

That said, not all B2B integrations are created equal. An electronic data transfer integration typically falls into one of two categories: an Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) or an Application Programming Interface (API). While both can be used to facilitate data and transactional exchanges between businesses, API integrations offer significant advantages over the older EDI standard.

EDI – A Passable Integration Standard That is Showing its Age

Electronic Data Interchanges are essentially digitized file feeds. Data from your internal system is translated

into a specific file format and syntax that the internal system of your partner can understand. This file is then transmitted via SFTP, HTTPS, AS2 or some other secure delivery protocol.

The data translation process is where things get tricky. It requires EDI specialists on each end of the partnership to invest time and effort to establish a file format that can be understood and processed by each company's system. There are numerous trial runs that need to be conducted to ensure that data is routed and translated correctly. Given the content of these transmissions (purchase orders, sensitive customer information, shipping details, inventory data, etc.), even a mistake as small as a single misinterpreted character could prove incredibly costly to your business.

Once an EDI integration has been established, there are Value-Added Networks (VANs) that can help remove some of the tedium by collecting EDI data through a single stream on your end and then handling the dispersal to all of the relevant partners according to their accepted protocols.

A properly configured EDI integration partnership still serves its purpose of allowing systems from different companies to exchange relevant data with each other. That said, creating EDIs involves substantial time and energy from both sides of the exchange. Because of this fact, EDI integration partnership tends only to be an option for e-commerce businesses that are able to demonstrate enough sales volume to justify the effort.

Although the Sellercloud omni-channel e-commerce platform can carry out EDI transactions, there is a better integration option – one that is faster, more accurate, and more open to e-commerce businesses of all sizes...

API – A More Direct, User-Friendly Integration Pathway

Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) take advantage of specific elements of software and code being left open for outside data requests and transfers. An API designed to access specific elements of the host company's system can be made available for partners to use. The result is a secure pipeline that is similar to an EDI in function, but infinitely more user-friendly to establish and utilize.

EDI systems represent the natural evolution of B2B communication - from mail, to fax, to computers. However, API systems represent the wholesale modernization and simplification of computer-to-computer interaction. While EDI is a derivative of the business world's needs, APIs are the result of everyone's increasing need to interact with internet-enabled devices in productive, dependable, and immediate ways.

As such, APIs are not exclusive to the world of e-commerce. They are used in nearly every facet of how we interact with devices. Whether you are surfing the web, ordering takeout, comparing real estate, or making an online purchase, you are likely interacting with dozens (if not hundreds) of APIs.

The truth is that modern e-commerce owes much of its accessibility and efficiency to the way APIs have become both more prevalent and feature-rich over the past decade. Everything, from selling on third-party marketplaces to launching web-based advertising campaigns, managing shopping carts to printing shipping labels, operates as an interconnected web of API calls and integrations. These transactions and communications happen quickly, securely, and with an efficiency that older EDI systems struggle to match. Even without complex coding knowledge or a large IT staff, e-commerce businesses of all sizes and niches can rely on API-powered systems to grow as successful brands.

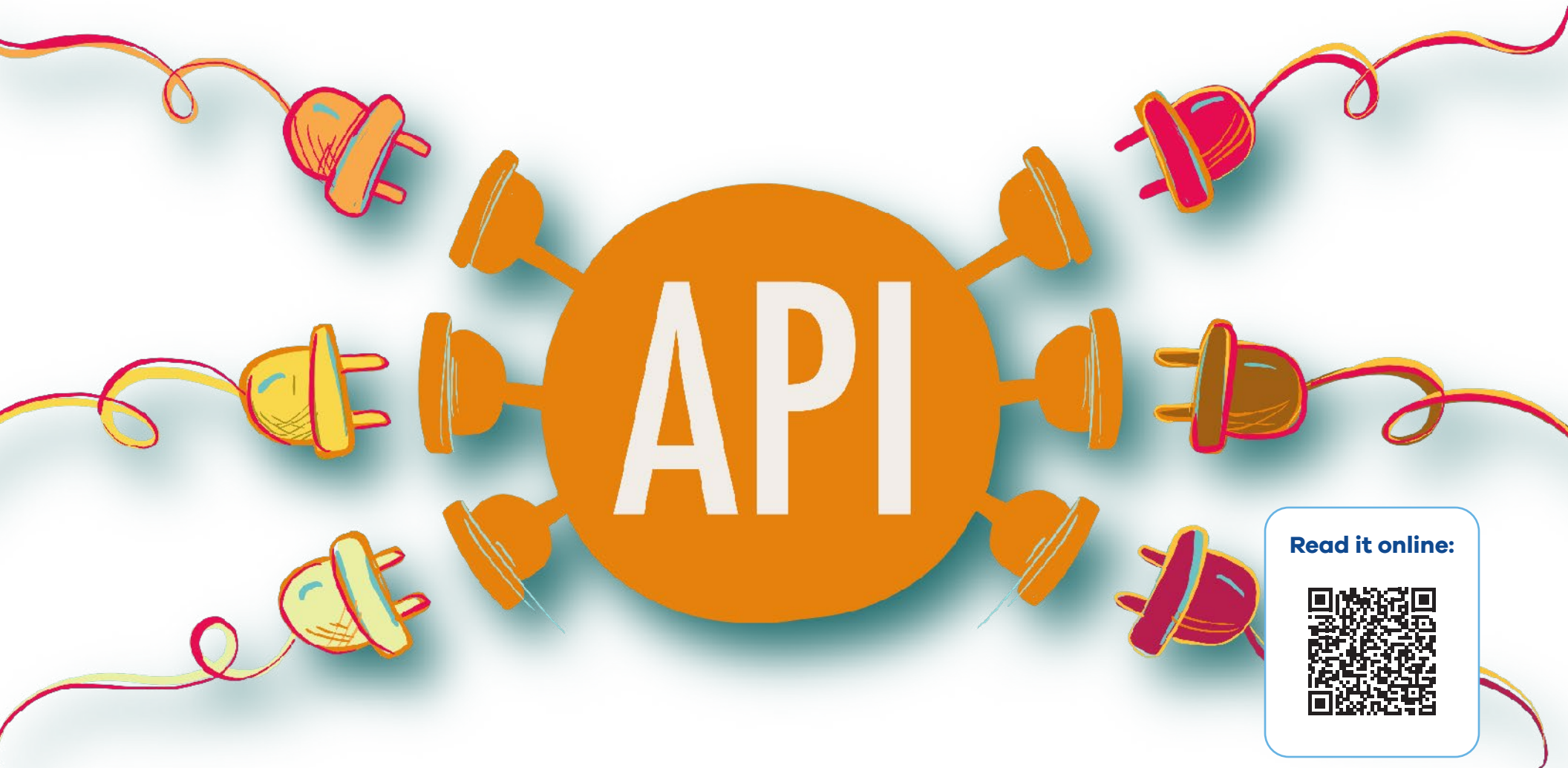
For all of APIs' inherent strengths over EDI, there is a middle ground. When it isn't possible to go exclusively with an API integration approach (EDI remains a standard in many industries), APIs can be used as an architectural layer placed over top of an existing EDI infrastructure. In these cases, the API layer can be used to both input and receive data, which is then pushed through your existing EDI translation and transmission processes. The result is the convenience of API, while still allowing for interactions with EDI-driven partners.

Sellercloud maintains up-to-date integrations with over 120 different e-commerce partners. When possible, our platform takes advantage of API-level access to ensure transactions and data transfers are as reliable and feature-rich as possible. That said, in cases where API integrations are either not possible or not available, we also support EDI transactions.

The reality is that, in some industries, change takes time. Although the e-commerce industry continues to grow and advance at an astounding pace, many of the other industries that e-commerce relies upon do not. As such, we know it is important to maintain an e-commerce growth platform that can make interacting with all of these different partners as smooth and pain-free as possible. This attitude means that as our partners evolve

and upgrade their integration features, you can trust we will do the same – whether they use EDI or API.

For more on how Sellercloud's robust integrations and partnerships can help increase the efficiency of your e-commerce business, contact us directly for a free demo.



Read it online:





NOVEMBER 17, 2020

Replace Your Patchwork of E-Commerce Solutions with a Unified Platform



Getting an e-commerce business up and running involves coordinating a host of different workflows and procedures that span various partnerships and services. Success depends on your supply chain, order processing, accounting, communication, shipping, and logistics all being on-point and in sync. Should one of these elements fail, your company, brand, and reputation will suffer.

What makes e-commerce especially challenging compared to a brick-and-mortar operation is that it relies heavily on maintaining a unique harmony between both digital and real-world services. This outcome may seem like a delicate dance, but in most cases, you're not going at it alone. When it comes to coordinating electronic transactions and the movement of physical goods, there is no shortage of service providers out there ready to offer their assistance.

That said, whether you are just starting out in e-commerce or going through a period of growth, it doesn't take long to amass an overwhelming number of partners – all with their own logs, interfaces, and costs.

More Partners, More Problems

It happens quickly. You experience some success selling on third-party marketplaces and decide to branch out. You add a shopping cart provider to allow direct sales from your company website. You bring in a piece of accounting software to track your financials. You sign on with a shipping partner to help get your merchandise out to customers more efficiently. Then,

business picks up and you need additional warehousing and logistics solutions to keep up with orders.

Before you know it, you've built a business reliant on a host of third-party partners. To keep things running smoothly, you now spend an inordinate amount of time wrangling them all into a patchwork workflow – time you could be spending growing your company. Sound familiar?

To perform their roles (and to maximize the value of these arrangements), each of these partners must be able to interface with each other – ideally without needing you to facilitate it all. Being the solitary thread holding everything together can be a headache. Failing to do so amounts to costly waste – wasted time, wasted effort, and wasted subscription fees.

Expanding into new markets only exacerbates the issue. As soon as an order comes in from outside the U.S. borders, you need partners prepared to deal with the additional regulations, protocols, and costs. Shipping overseas is an entirely different logistical process than domestic delivery. Similarly, your shopping cart partner for domestic sales may not accept certain foreign currencies (or offer favorable conversion rates). Instead of singular partnerships for each area of your e-commerce business, you can easily end up with multiple partnerships.

The reality is that there's no way around it – competing in the e-commerce space requires partnerships.

The bigger your company gets, the more complex that web of partnerships becomes. In any case, it is up to you to manage them all.

A Centralized E-Commerce Platform is Essential

No matter how hard you try to condense your stable of e-commerce partners, you can't go at it alone. As a result, you will inevitably need some way to keep everything straight and your lines of communication untangled.

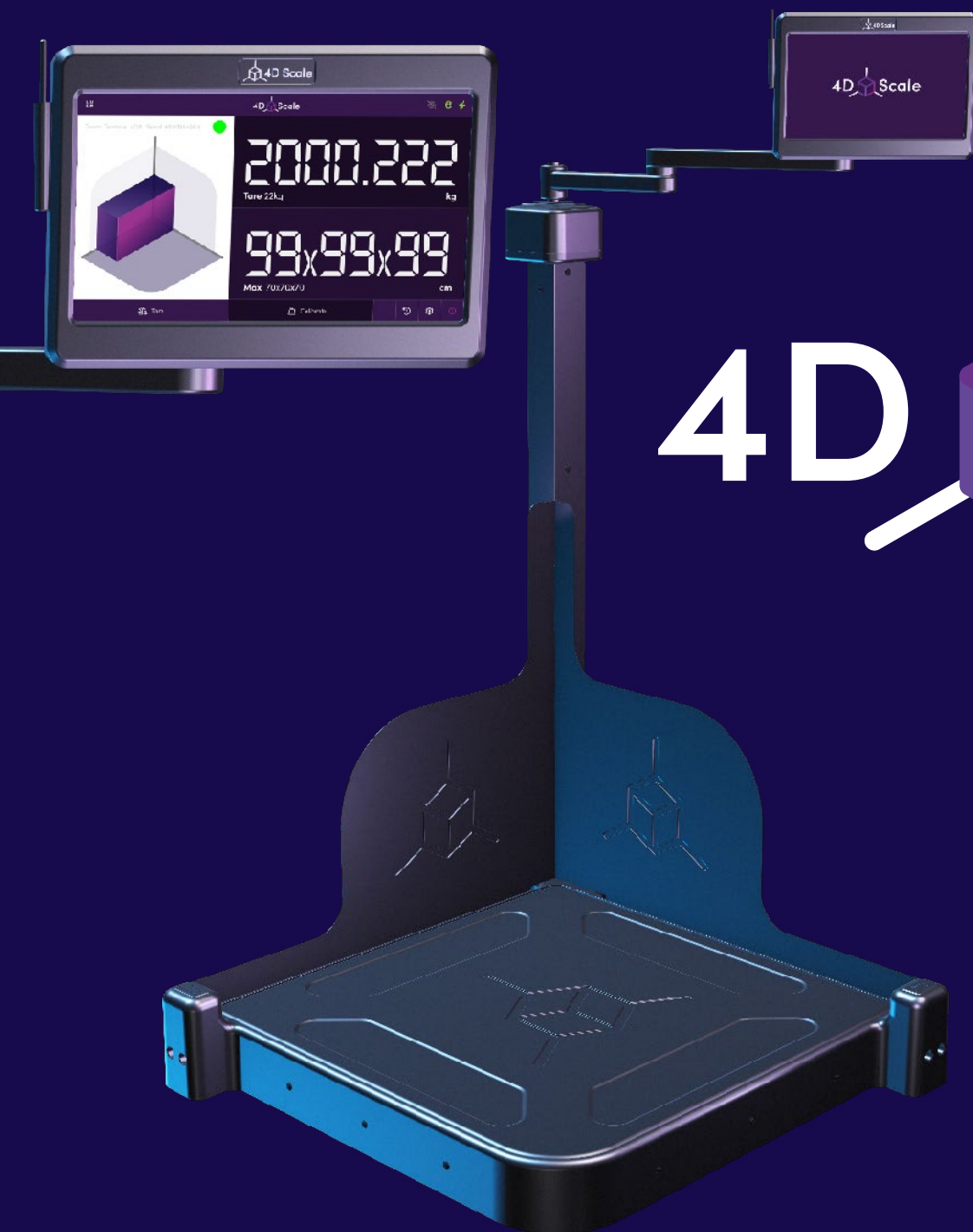
That's where an omni-channel e-commerce platform like Sellercloud comes in. Sellercloud unifies all of your partners and communications into a single, streamlined location. We maintain API and EDI integrations with over 120 different e-commerce partners so that you can manage your inventory and fulfillment processes from one convenient location. Everything from updating your product catalogs to surfacing key accounting metrics can be handled from within Sellercloud. Warehouse management, monitoring inventory levels, and processing shipments? We help with that, too.

What's more, Sellercloud makes expanding your business with additional partnerships as pain-free as possible. The majority of our existing integrations are turnkey, but for those that require a little extra effort, our robust help site and responsive support team have everything you need to get started with your latest and greatest endeavors. If you need to introduce a new

service and the functionality you need isn't already in place, our team is prepared to help build specific features suited specifically to your business's needs.

Contact us directly for a free demo and learn how Sellercloud's omni-channel e-commerce solutions can turn your collection of e-commerce partnerships into a well-oiled selling machine.





4D  Scale
by Sellercloud

Tip the scales

This is the multidimensional scaling system that will speed up your shipping and simplify your warehouse management.

With its smooth design and laser-sharp precision, 4D Scale helps you measure package weight and dimensions instantly. With our powerful real-time data transfer, you can capture measurements and dimensions in less than a second.

You can also add the dimensions of a new item when receiving a PO and calculate shipping rates more easily by quickly loading box weight and dimensions. This will seamlessly speed up both your receiving and fulfillment workflows.

Why 4D Scale?

- Instantly capture package weight and dimensions
- Boost your warehouse productivity
- Eliminate costly shipping errors
- Full integration with the Sellercloud ecosystem
- Accessible for businesses of all sizes



Measure exact dimensions and weight instantly



Real-time data transfer and 3D visualization



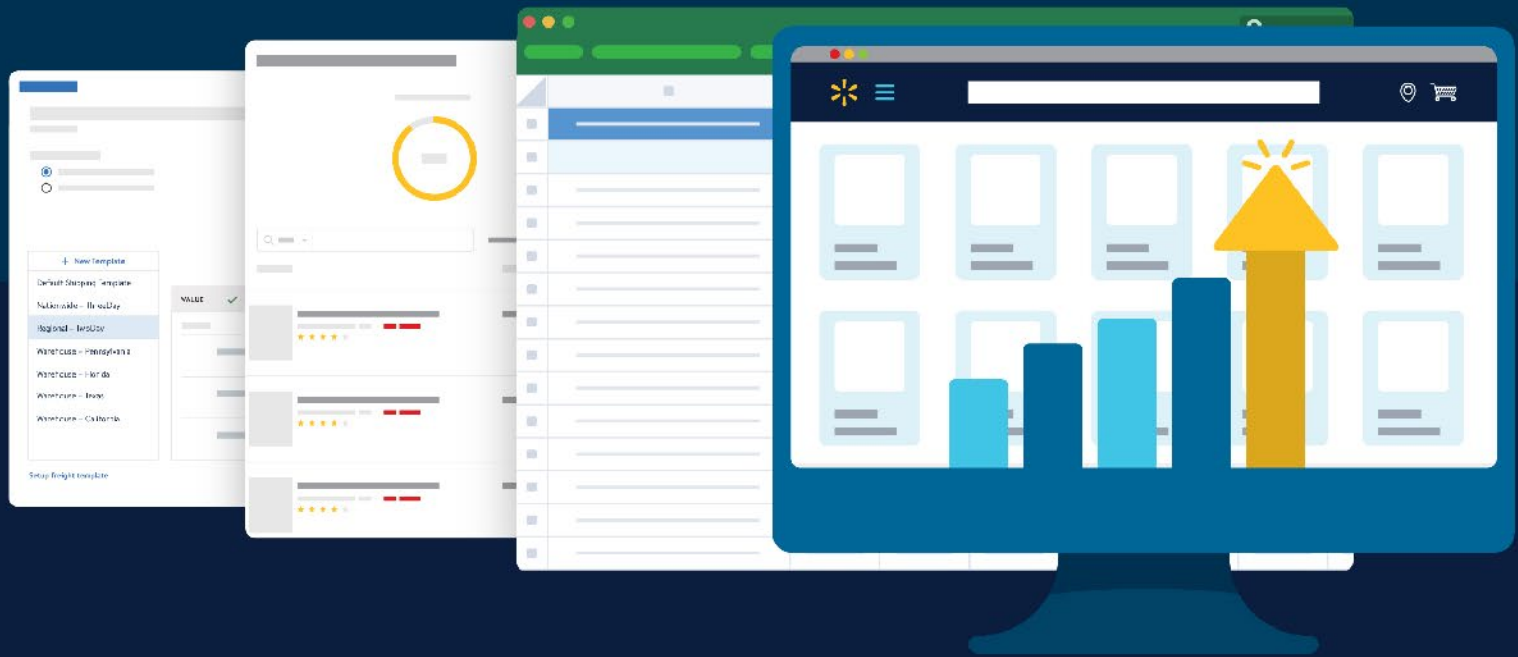
Remote control your 4D Scale from any device



Support for different units of measurement



Monitor the activity of each 4D Scale through the Admin panel



3 key ways to boost your conversion on Walmart.com

The first step to achieving conversion on an online marketplace is having an active audience ready to shop and make a purchase—check. Walmart.com attracts millions of customers each month who search for their perfect match among nearly endless categories and products. The next steps are largely up to the seller: providing quality items and content, offering competitive pricing, and guaranteeing fast, reliable shipping.

Walmart Marketplace equips its sellers with all the tools necessary to achieve those important steps with helpful technology and processes. Read on to discover how a few of Walmart Marketplace's essential features—Item Spec 4.0, Listing Quality, and expedited shipping—work together to help sellers stand out and boost conversion.

1. Make item setup work for your product discoverability with Item Spec 4.0

Recently, Walmart Marketplace updated its 3.2 spec iteration to a new version known as Item Spec 4.0. With it comes a lot of new capabilities: enhanced data definitions, new and more specific closed list values, modernized attribute names, and greatly improved organization of attributes. All of these features work together to provide sellers with not only a streamlined workflow when uploading and maintaining items, but also improved item description pages that customers view. Setting up items correctly using Item Spec 4.0 can lead to better discoverability on Walmart.com and can contribute to a shopper's decision to make a purchase.

One of the most important ways this outcome happens is through proper attribution. With up to 40 required attributes for Marketplace sellers and up to 80 recommended attributes, Item Spec 4.0 is already set up to help sellers succeed. Attribution shows up in a few different ways on Walmart.com, and it greatly affects a person's shopping experience. Whether the attributes are colors of a sweater, types of fitness equipment, age ranges of a toy, or flavors of a beverage, they end up factoring into the Walmart.com shelving experience and left-hand navigation. In other words, the way product pages are organized on the site starts with the attributes selected by the seller when setting up items. By ensuring proper attribution, you don't risk missing out on extra impressions and clicks, while customers are browsing and narrowing down their search results in your category.

2. Get actionable insights to improve conversion with your personalized Listing Quality Score

We want all Marketplace sellers to feel supported and prepared with insights tailored just for them, and that's where the new Listing Quality process comes in. Thanks to an advanced algorithm weighing factors that can affect a customer's purchase decision, each seller has a numerical Listing Quality Score that signals the overall health of the seller's listings on Walmart.com. This exciting growth tool is designed to take the guesswork out of setting up attractive listings and to offer clear, concrete advice for sellers to help them succeed. The higher the score, the better, but if it's low, sellers always have the opportunity to improve it (guided by specific tips found in the Listing Quality Dashboard).

The Listing Quality Score consists of four main factors: content & discoverability, offer, ratings & reviews, and post-purchase quality. A high-quality listing on Walmart.com will have clear Titles, Descriptions, Images, and Attributes (uploaded via Item Spec 4.0!), plus competitive pricing, convincing reviews, and expedited shipping options.

In the same way that using Item Spec 4.0 correctly can affect an item's placement on Walmart.com, taking Listing Quality seriously can make a big difference, too. Top-notch item page content can help you gain more product visibility in search results, and detailed product descriptions are known drivers of conversion. For each listing, we recommend including at least four high-resolution

product photos, a Description paragraph with a minimum of 150 words, and a descriptive Title with 50-75 characters. For more in-depth tips on this topic, check out the entire Listing Quality Optimization Guide. Putting in the effort to get your catalog in its best shape will pay off in the long run.

BONUS tip: Walmart Marketplace recently introduced the Pro Seller Badge, a mark of excellence given to top-performing sellers to help them stand out and drive conversion. Listing Quality works together with other factors, including cancellations and returns, to determine a seller's eligibility.

3. Win over more customers with expedited shipping

Once you've mastered using Item Spec 4.0 and optimizing your listings with the Listing Quality Dashboard, you can't overlook an equally important component to your sales strategy: expedited shipping. It's no secret that customers have come to expect fast shipping, and Walmart Marketplace provides a portfolio of options to fit each seller's needs. Offering TwoDay and ThreeDay shipping is the best way to go when possible because these speedy options are proven to increase conversion on Walmart.com. In fact, products on the TwoDay program see a 50% lift in conversion on average.

With the introduction of Shipping Templates, another recent improvement to Marketplace processes, it's easy for sellers to customize their shipping strategy based on warehouse locations, shipping carriers, and items they

deem worthy of TwoDay or ThreeDay shipping. For example, Shipping Templates would allow sellers to offer TwoDay on items that ship to regions nearby their fulfillment centers, while keeping ThreeDay or Standard for shipping elsewhere. There are dozens of ways to customize Shipping Templates and optimize your shipping strategy to win more customers. Whether you fulfill your own items or want to participate in Walmart Fulfillment Services (WFS), there's a way to make expedited shipping work for your catalog. Expedited shipping attracts customers and improves your Listing Quality Score, so it's a win-win.

Let Walmart Marketplace's solutions give your business a boost.

You've just learned a lot about Walmart Marketplace, but Item spec 4.0, Listing Quality, and expedited shipping are just a few of the features the company offers. In addition to providing internal tools, Marketplace partners with best-in-class solution providers, including Sellercloud, help sellers reach their full potential. Whether you're an existing Marketplace seller or would like to learn more and request to sell on Walmart.com, you can discover even more benefits from the world's largest omnichannel retailer. When a quality seller partners with a high-traffic e-commerce destination, plenty of conversion is bound to happen.

Read it online:





NOVEMBER 26, 2020

Top 10 Things Online Merchants Can Do to Make This Holiday Season a Success

There has never been a holiday retail season like that of 2020. Heading into the fall, consumers have continued to flock to e-commerce options for their shopping needs – a trend that took off in Q2 and continued into Q3. However, with projections about a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic looming, once again sellers are faced with the prospect of unforeseen supply chain and logistical issues.

For all of these reasons, this year's holiday shopping season remains one of the most crucial moments for online retail. Some sellers are looking to keep their positive momentum going, while others are looking to make up for an unexpectedly challenging year. Either way, the key is taking a proactive approach. Here are our top ten tips for setting your e-commerce business up for a successful 2020 holiday season.

1. Optimize Your Listings for the Holidays

First things first. You need to be sure that your listings are tailored to the season and the shoppers you are trying to attract. Start with your catalog. Every item you sell should have images, keywords, and descriptions that will provide customers with as much of the information you think they will need to find your listings through the search box and make an informed purchasing decision. Consider temporarily adding in holiday- and gift-themed content to your listings as well.

Taking a step further, consider how you market your products across the various marketplaces and

customer bases where you sell. Analyze your available business intelligence data to help decide which merchandise has the highest chance of success where. Invest your time and marketing dollars accordingly.

2. Diversify Your Marketplace Exposure

Throughout 2020, online shoppers have shown an increased willingness to make purchases beyond the most popular marketplaces. During the early stages of the pandemic, Amazon and Walmart's fulfillment delays, inventory shortages, and incidents of third-party price gouging led customers to seek out better deals and faster delivery options elsewhere. As a result, both first-party and third-party marketplaces saw huge spikes in 2020. What's more, the diversification of customers' shopping patterns is projected to continue.

What this trend means for your e-commerce business is that you need to expand your own online presence. Getting your products on as many relevant third-party marketplaces as you can increases your opportunity to reach customers you otherwise may have missed. Furthermore, taking advantage of first-party sales opportunities is a move that has shown to be more profitable now than ever. In both cases, Sellercloud's robust, omnichannel catalog features and ever-growing list of marketplace integrations make expanding your e-commerce business simple and efficient.

3. Ensure a Speedy Purchasing Experience

Speaking of first-party sales, now is the perfect time to make sure your website is running as quickly and

efficiently as possible. Customers should be able to find what they are looking for and complete a purchase in as few clicks as possible and with minimal loading time. The more convoluted and confusing the shopping experience, the more likely a customer will look elsewhere. Use the holiday rush as an excuse to optimize your e-commerce website's performance – both on desktop and mobile – to make purchasing your merchandise a breeze.

4. Be Prepared for Supply Chain Delays

With news of a COVID-19 “second wave” looming, learn the lessons from this past spring. In very short order, the coronavirus had a profound impact on nearly every aspect of e-commerce. With many areas currently experiencing conditions as bad if not worse than March and April, many of the issues that upended retail then could be rearing their heads once again – this time right smack-dab in the middle of the holiday shopping season.

One of the largest potential areas for disruption is in the supply chain. As countries and ports ramp up their safety protocols and restrictions, be sure to have your orders in to your suppliers as quickly as possible. Maximize your chances of getting what you need on hand before delays start to pile up.

In addition, having some contingency plans and alternative suppliers at the ready may be worth considering as well. Don't be caught in a situation where the

customers are ready to purchase, but your warehouse shelves are bare.

5. Get Your Inventory Where It Needs to Be

Having the supply you need is one thing but having the inventory in the optimal locations is another. Particularly if you sell to a wide geographic audience, it is always a good practice to keep your merchandise in close proximity to where it is being ordered.

Given that holiday shipping delays can happen even in the best of times (read: not 2020), this concern is of particular importance this season. Explore your customer data from previous years to have an idea of where your most popular products tend to sell. Where possible, try to relocate inventory to warehouses (either your own or your fulfillment partners') based on your findings. This action can lead to quicker shipping speeds than your competition – a powerful asset as holidays approach.

6. Find the Inventory Sweet Spot to Avoid Out-of-Stocks and Overstocks

No one wants to turn away a sale because they have run out of inventory. On the other hand, it can be expensive to store an excess of inventory that isn't moving. The combination of Sellercloud's deep inventory metrics and the inventory turnover formula can help you zero in on the perfect amount of merchandise to keep on hand this holiday season.

7. Use the Right Kinds of Promotions

There are a variety of holiday promotions that work especially well for the holiday season. Some, like gift guides and charity partnerships, work as marketing tools to get attention for your brand. Others, like coupons and limited-time discount promotions, can make you more competitive on price.

For the latter, be sure to pay attention to how each marketplace handles discount offers. Beyond the price reductions, you must also consider the additional promotional fees. In some cases, fees are charged based on the length of the discount promotion period, while in others (like with coupon codes), fees are charged per sale. Whatever the additional costs, be sure to include them as part of your cost of goods sold (COGS) calculations to evaluate the overall effectiveness of your sale campaign.

8. Make Free Shipping Available

On the subject of price, no one wants to get to check-out and see their purchase price go up. It's bad enough that every online sale now includes sales tax, but tacking on shipping and handling fees can create a check-out sticker shock that leads to an abandoned cart.

Offering a free shipping option can work to your benefit. Take into account what such an offer will mean to your costs as well as the ability of your shipping providers to commit to your volume needs.

Also, be sure that both you and your shipping partners can honor your shipping speed commitments. More

than any other time of year, arrival dates will certainly matter to your customers. No one wants to give an IOU to a friend or family member instead of a gift this holiday season. Start by eliminating the chance for shipping mistakes on your end and then make sure you have the right shipping partners to take it from there.

9. Reach Out to Former Customers

The holidays are a great time to ramp up your email, SMS, and social media marketing efforts focused on attracting former customers back to your brand. Given the fact that online shoppers are showing an increased willingness to shop around, reminding your former customers of why they once chose you can go a long way toward generating repeat business.

Offer coupon codes or other loyalty perks to returning customers to entice them to pay your website another visit. Similarly, consider including things like discounts, giveaways, and free shipping offers to first-time buyers to keep them in the fold.

What's more, these outreach opportunities don't have to be difficult. Sellercloud's Memaila service can, among other things, help streamline these types of promotional customer contacts and start driving more business toward your holiday sales efforts.

10. Be Ready for Returns

Last but not least, you must be prepared for holiday returns. Whenever sales rise, so do the inevitable RMAs and dissatisfied customers. Put in the effort to

establish a strong reverse logistics workflow before the rush. Doing so can help make sure your outbound order processing remains optimized and focused while, at the same time, unhappy customers can be attended to before the negative consequences (and returned stock) pile up.

As strong as Sellercloud's inventory management platform is for order processing, it is equally efficient at handling your inbound RMAs. Be proactive this holiday shopping season so that the inevitable return rush doesn't overwhelm your workers and your workflows.

The holidays are here. Are you ready? Give your business the gift of peace of mind this year and take advantage of all the tools, integrations, and conveniences offered by the Sellercloud omnichannel e-commerce growth platform. Contact us directly for a free demo to see just how prepared and profitable you can be this holiday season.



Read it online:





Managing your catalog images has never been this easy

Upload, change, delete, and edit product images.



Imagebridge is an image management tool that connects directly to Sellercloud. Simply drag and drop images directly from your desktop into a product in Sellercloud. Imagebridge lets you browse your image files, pull images from different search engines, or grab images directly from any web page. With Imagebridge you can quickly do basic editing before uploading your product images.

Upload product images

Select the images you want from your hard drive or server and upload them to your Sellercloud account.

Drag and drop images

Easily drag and drop images into placeholders to set their position and placement on your listing pages.

Edit your images

Resize, crop, change brightness, set and clear captions, copy images, add a watermark, or delete images on the fly.

Configure image size

Automatically resize images into a square or set up a default size depending on your DPI requirements.

Search products by SKU

Imagebridge lets you search for SKUs and easily update the product images.







Illustration of a ship's hull and a tablet with a checklist.

DECEMBER 2, 2020

Shipbridge Streamlines Your Omnichannel E-Commerce Fulfillment




Illustration of a pen in a holder.

Reliable order fulfillment is an essential component of a successful e-commerce business. As you expand and diversify your e-commerce reach, fulfilling orders can become an increasingly complex proposition. New customers, multiple shipping partners, and order-specific shipping procedures can all create headaches as you try to get merchandise to customers in a timely and effective manner.

That's where Shipbridge comes in.

Shipbridge is Sellercloud's robust solution to the multitude of tasks associated with shipping and e-commerce order fulfillment. When your paid orders reach the Shipbridge app – either from third-party marketplaces like Amazon or Walmart or from first-party merchant accounts – you have the ability to control every aspect of the shipping process from one centralized location.

Some of Shipbridge's most useful functions include:

- **Batch shipment management** – select any number of orders and process similar shipping methods in batches instead of manually by order.
- **Scan-and-Ship** – require shippers to scan each order item to ensure that each piece of merchandise arrives at its correct destination.
- **Automated invoice and packing slip creation** – customizable forms can be generated to match the specifications of both your business and your various logistics partners.

- **Address verification** – catch input errors before they derail a shipment.
- **Third-party billing** – take advantage of marketplace channels that allow merchants to ship orders through their shipping accounts.
- **Amazon Transparency support** – add brand-protecting labels that are scanned to verify your merchandise's authenticity.
- **Custom plugin support** – create unique scripts and integrations to suit your business's needs like automated shipping method assignments based on package weights or automatically purchasing insurance on items above a certain value threshold.

Having a tool as convenient and dependable as Shipbridge not only simplifies your e-commerce business, but it can help you make it even stronger.

Expanding Your Shipping Partnerships Can Help Grow Your Business

Not all e-commerce orders are created equal. Seldom does a one-size-fits-all approach to any aspect of an online sale produce the optimal shopping experience. This shortcoming is especially true when it comes to fulfillment.

Just as there is value in broadening your e-commerce marketplace exposure, maintaining flexibility in your shipping options matters, too. There is often money to be saved by negotiating favorable rates with a primary shipping partner – providing additional bottom-line growth as your shipping volumes increase.

That said, as your sales reach expands to more customers in more areas, you are likely to take on additional fulfillment routines to meet more diverse geographic and logistical demands. In situations like this, growing e-commerce businesses often wind up with fulfillment protocols tailored to specific order types – domestic, international, expedited, and bulk, to name a few.

This is where it quickly becomes apparent that not all shipping partners are created equal. Your long-time domestic shipping provider of choice may be ill-equipped to support a burgeoning international customer base. An unexpected rate hike may make your favorite bulk shipper too costly to rely on. Optimizing a growing list of order-specific shipping practices can quickly become overwhelming – especially in such a dynamic industry. Certainly, there can be significant benefits to working with a variety of shipping partners, but you need help to make it worth your while.

That's why we created Shipbridge. The ability to steer orders to the most reliable and cost-effective shipping partners can help ensure that customers receive their merchandise on time and you maximize your profits on each sale. Whether it's by channel, destination address, weight, value, number of packages, or another supported data point – Shipbridge allows sellers to create, track, manage, and even automate all of their shipping protocols from one convenient interface.

No matter how many shipping partners you bring on-board or how many fulfillment workflows your company

needs, you remain in control without the headaches of juggling multiple partner logins and interfaces. What's more, you know where your packages are, end-to-end, at all times. As a result, your business can continue to expand with the knowledge that you have the flexibility to maintain a truly optimized and expandable shipping workflow.

Compliance Matters

Managing merchandise and packages is a complex proposition, but so is managing the ever-evolving rules, regulations, and policies surrounding shipping and logistics. Failing to comply with developments like international shipping treaties, postage rate changes, terms of service revisions, and API and EDI updates can prove to be costly. Improperly managing your shipments can lead to lost merchandise, unexpected rate hikes, disappointed customers, and even account suspensions. Staying on top of it all requires an organized plan of attack.

Thankfully, Shipbridge is designed with compliance at its core. When changes occur (as they often do), our developers are ready to adapt to the latest developments. Our longstanding partnerships with shipping industry leaders, popular e-commerce marketplaces, and the world's best logistics providers allow us to remain at the cutting edge of compliance and optimization.

Our users can be confident that they remain in total control of their shipping workflows and that every order is processed correctly every time – no matter which carrier, product, or destination. The result is increased customer

satisfaction, more positive feedback, and greater opportunities for repeat orders.

Growth Fueled by Innovation

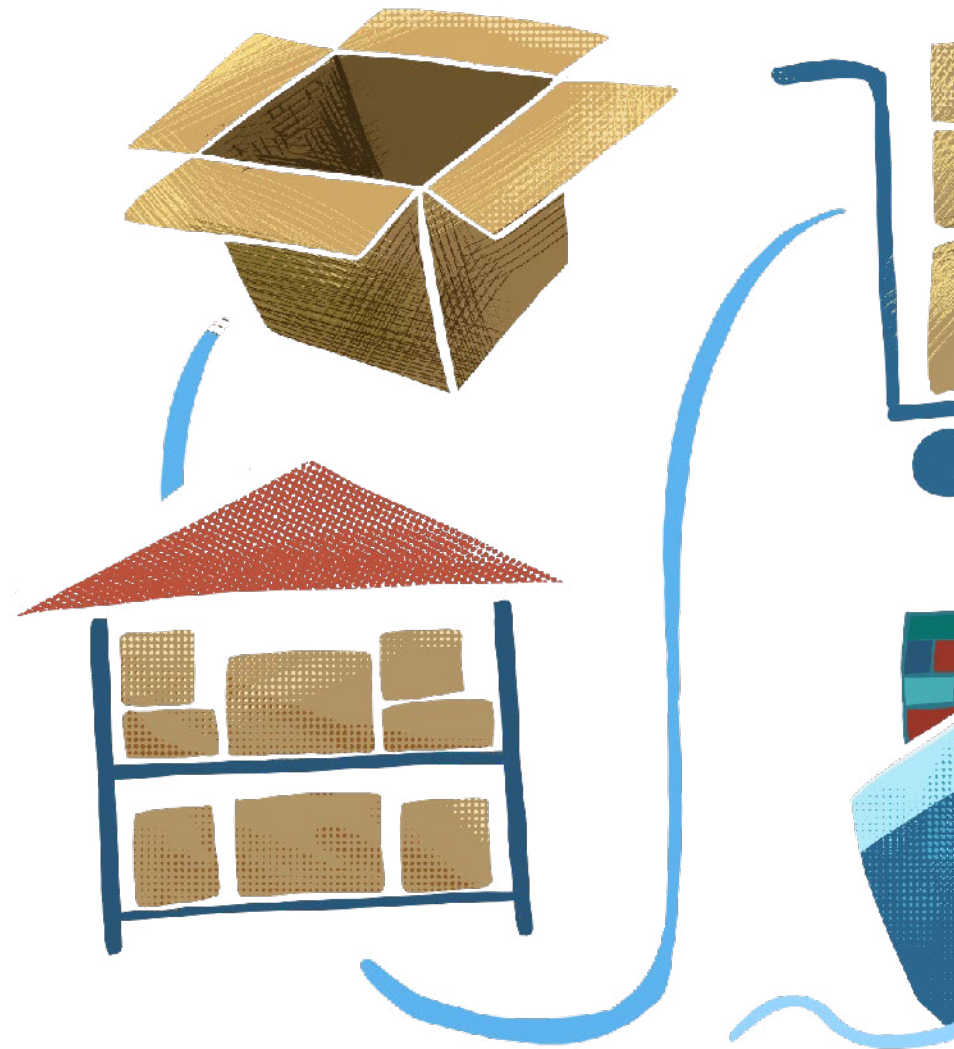
As the product of over 10 years of ongoing, active innovation and development, Shipbridge is and will continue to be guided by merchants' needs. We know how crucial fulfillment is to a successful e-commerce business. As such, we make it a priority to offer features in our omnichannel shipping management platform that few, if any, competitors ever could.

For instance, Shipbridge has added support for Amazon's Transparency brand protection program. Transparency codes can be added for any item and authentication labels can be produced automatically with the same simplicity as printing a standard shipping label. These shipments can then be flagged to ensure that they are properly scanned throughout the entire shipping process.

Shipbridge also remains a key focus as we continue to innovate our own Sellercloud family of products. Native integrations with both Skustack and Skublox further enhance Shipbridge's functionality and reliability. When you know every aspect of the order process is streamlined for maximum efficiency you can breathe easy, confident that your e-commerce business is optimized for success.

Shipbridge is included as a totally free component of all Sellercloud accounts. This benefit represents

a tremendous value-add to our already robust omnichannel e-commerce management platform. For more on how Shipbridge and the rest of the Sellercloud suite of services, integrations, and features can take your e-commerce business to the next level, contact us directly for a free demo.



Read it online:





DECEMBER 9, 2020



5 Key Reverse Logistics Strategies for Processing E-Commerce Returns

The ability to process returns is a crucial element of a successful e-commerce business. Just as you invest time, energy, and money into managing the logistics of your outbound orders, you must also give attention to your reverse logistics needs.

Reverse logistics are exactly what they sound like. Consider all the partners, workflows, and labor associated with getting shipments out to customers. It's a delicate dance involving supply chains, warehousing, order management, and shipping. When products are returned, all of these elements have to work in harmony once again – just in reverse. To keep everything in rhythm, an e-commerce business must balance these multifaceted routines to process inbound and outbound shipments with an equal degree of reliability and efficiency.

Returns are coming. Although you can use business intelligence data, the inventory management formula, and clear product marketing to help minimize them, returned merchandise is an inevitable headache of the e-commerce world. Creating a dedicated reverse logistics plan can minimize the negative impact of these returns on your business's time and bottom line.

Here are 5 considerations to help streamline your reverse logistics strategies:

1. Have a Clear and Consistent Returns Policy

To start with, be direct about how the returns process works. Make return information readily available and

easy to find across all marketplaces and channels where you sell.

Not only will a strong and clear returns policy benefit customers looking to send back merchandise, it can be a strong selling point for customers looking to make a purchase in the first place. Removing the mystery of what can be returned and how shows an e-commerce business's commitment to customer satisfaction. New and returning customers alike appreciate knowing that they are protected against unforeseen issues with their online purchases. When asked, online customers are not shy about the fact that easy return and exchange experiences drive purchase decisions.

As such, it is a must that you articulate the acceptable terms for returns as well as what customers can expect from these processes. Be sure to include key details like:

- Clear RMA procedures
- Relevant return shipping details
- Associated costs (shipping labels, restocking fees, etc.)
- Communication (including expected response times)
- Available remedy options (replacements, refunds, etc.)

The simpler and less burdensome these processes are on the customer, the more enticing making a purchase from your company becomes. However, you need to be sure that you have the logistical infrastructure to make those promises come true. The smoother your internal returns

handling becomes, the better guarantees you can make to new and returning customers about your commitment to customer satisfaction.

2. Streamline the RMA Process for Each Type of Return

Most on-demand reverse logistics actions are driven by one of the following reasons:

- **Customer returns** – dissatisfied customers (for whatever reason) send a product back.
- **B2B returns** – unsold inventory is sent back from a retailer, third-party logistics provider (3PL), or marketplace.
- **Delivery failures** – shipments are returned to you because a product or shipment could not be delivered to its intended address. Whether this was caused by an incorrect address, unavailable customer, or a shipping label defect, the shipment is returned to sender.
- **Damaged shipments** – A customer or shipping partner returns inventory that was damaged in transit.

Just as having a clear customer-facing return policy is so important, being transparent about how every type of return is handled is important as well. Make it a point to distinguish between the types of returns outlined above when crafting your return policies and workflows. Investing time in optimizing your RMA procedures is only as beneficial as your ability to steer incoming returns into the appropriate logistical funnels.

For example, B2B returns and delivery failures are typically unopened, undamaged products that are in the

same condition as they were when they initially left your warehouse. After a cursory check, this merchandise is typically still fit for sale and ready to re-enter your warehouse alongside the rest of your new stock. Getting these products scanned, counted, and restocked can help prevent costly overstocks or unnecessary reorders from your suppliers.

Customer returns and damaged shipments, however, are seldom fit for resale. Some can be refurbished or renewed, while others are destined for the unsellable stockpile.

Maintaining a defined, unique processing protocol for each return type can get returned merchandise to where it belongs and keep your returns workflow manageable.

3. Appraise and Assess Returned Merchandise Quickly

Immediate and accurate appraisals matter. The faster a returned piece of merchandise can be assessed, scanned, sorted, and reported, the more efficiently and effectively your reverse logistics protocols can be executed. On the other hand, when returned merchandise winds up stuck on an unloaded truck or in a dusty corner of a warehouse, the likelihood of both mishandling and customer dissatisfaction rise.

With Sellercloud, creating and managing an RMA is simple. In particular, our cloud-based inventory management software makes it fast and easy to scan a returned item, select its condition from a dropdown menu, and get it on its way to its proper destination. The process is both

quick and intuitive, so both processing time and errors are minimized. Since every scan, note, tracking number, correspondence, and data value is linked to the item's automatically generated RMA number, you can be confident that each piece of returned merchandise is being handled correctly.

Beyond the benefit to your return logistics workflows, timely returns acceptance also helps build customer confidence. The sooner customers know their return has been received and processed, the more likely their overall satisfaction with your business will remain intact (and the more likely their resulting feedback will be positive).

Just as with outbound order processing, return processing speed is crucial. It can either be the bottleneck that grinds your reverse logistics to a halt, or the pipeline that effectively propels the entire workflow. A simple and reliable plan for acceptance and assessment is a must.

4. Have Dedicated Channels Ready to Resell Refurbished Returns

Selling refurbished merchandise can seem like a gamble; the odds of customer dissatisfaction (and thus additional returns) go up when a product is not being sold in anything other than new condition. That said, it can be a profitable venture if you take the proper steps to remain as above board with your customers as possible. Selling used products doesn't mean you are a snake oil salesman.

Rather than refurbishing items and listing them alongside your new merchandise, consider creating separate sales channel accounts and logistics pipelines to keep them segregated. This approach creates a firewall of sorts between your new and renewed products and limits the chances for negative impacts caused by picking errors or increases in negative marketplace feedback.

Sellercloud's omnichannel e-commerce platform makes it easy to manage these renewed and refurbished inventory channels alongside the channels you use for your new merchandise. Our custom inventory calculation rules allow you to be sure that the proper products in the proper condition reach their proper destinations. In addition, features like this help to ensure that you remain compliant with marketplace listing policies that prohibit duplicate listings from multiple accounts.

5. Consider Adding a Centralized Return Center

Rather than having your warehouses and logistics partners trying to juggle both inbound and outbound shipments, consider dividing the two processes into dedicated logistical workflows. When your warehouse teams are not constantly having to switch between shipping out orders and processing returns, you eliminate opportunities for confusion and errors.

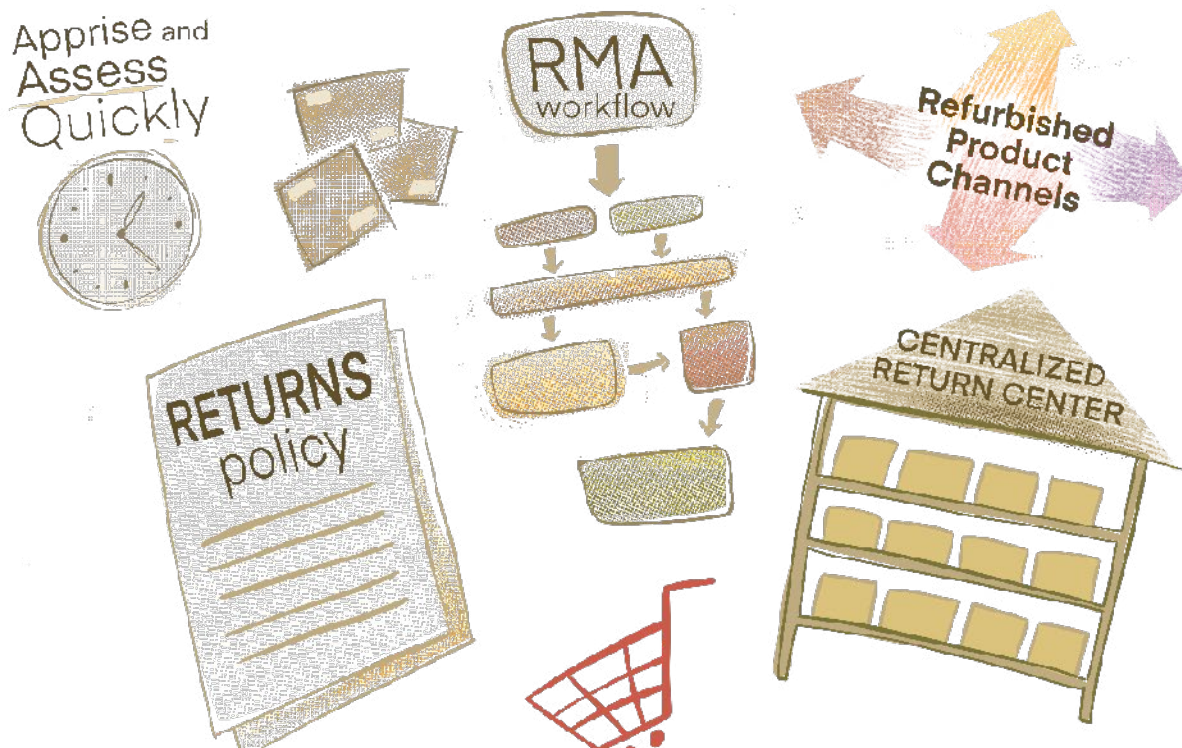
Centralized Return Centers (CRCs) take this a step further by serving as the hub for all of your inbound return shipments. Since these facilities are solely responsible for receiving returns and RMAs, workers have the time, space, and focus to ensure every return and RMA

is processed as quickly, smoothly, and efficiently as possible. Some companies opt to create their own CRCs in-house, while others opt to enlist the help of a 3PL partner. Some companies create a CRC that is centrally located in relation to its customers, while some companies operate multiple, regional return centers to minimize transportation costs and delays.

Though not suitable for every e-commerce business, for many, the benefits of CRCs are real. Putting return shipments under their own roof limits their overall impact on your ongoing sales workflows. For instance, utilizing a CRC means that you no longer have to make the call to pull staff from processing new orders to tackle a neglected mound of returned products. You don't have to juggle valuable loading dock space when both inbound and outbound shipments are competing for attention.

Ultimately, a dedicated return processing team is likely to operate at a higher efficiency than warehouse staff trying to wear too many hats at once. This circumstance allows you to create more deliberate return and RMA protocols to minimize loss and help maximize customer satisfaction. At the same time, management and oversight can be hyper-focused on optimizing returns procedures.

No matter what your reverse logistics plan looks like, Sellercloud's inventory and returns management tools can give you peace of mind that you are on top of your merchandise and its shipments. Our robust tracking features and omnichannel inventory management platform make sure that you know where every piece is – outbound or inbound – and where it's going. Contact us today for a free demo.



Read it online:







DECEMBER 16, 2020

Put-To-Light Technology Makes Your Warehouse Workflow Scalable and Efficient

Throughout 2020, many e-commerce sellers have had to account for logistical ups and downs the likes of which the industry has never seen. Orders on third-party marketplaces and first-party websites soared. However, overburdened shipping partners, strained supply chains, and the growing demands for warehouse space have made fulfilling these sales more challenging than usual. These fulfillment issues are expected to grow even more thanks in large part to an unprecedented holiday shopping season, when more shoppers than ever will be making some or all of their purchases online. Logistics scalability has never been more important.

For established e-commerce businesses facing volume fluctuations and retail businesses moving larger portions of their sales online, the ability to quickly and reliably process orders is critical. That said, with so many opportunities for potential unforeseen delays, it is essential to keep avoidable mistakes from adding to the pile. Eliminating order picking and packing errors should be at the top of the list.

Luckily, there's a solution. Whether you are looking to expand the output of your warehouse staff or simply streamline procedures to erase costly missteps, put-to-light technology can help you scale your order picking and packing workflows and keep them error-free.

How Put-To-Light Order Fulfillment Benefits E-Commerce Businesses

Put-to-light systems work exactly as they sound. Typically, a wall of shelves outfitted with multicolored lights is

set up. On one side, order pickers retrieve a piece of merchandise, the product's barcode is scanned, and a light on the wall shows where the product should be placed. On the other side, once an order is fully picked and assembled on its assigned shelf, a light indicates that the order is ready to be packed and shipped. Scanning the items provides shippers with the packing information and shipping labels they need to get the completed order to its destination.

Naturally, there are variations of the put-to-light concept. Some involve semi- or fully-automated picking and packing. Others add additional layers including pick-to-light-enabled warehousing shelves, lit pathways, and color-changing shipping bins.

Regardless of the scale, a put-to-light workflow offers numerous benefits:

- **Order accuracy** – First-and-foremost, nothing matters more than getting customers exactly what they ordered. A light-based picking and packing setup simplifies procedures and makes mispicking an order nearly impossible. That situation means more positive feedback and fewer returns.
- **Faster sorting rates** – A pick/put-to-light system allows multiple workers to fulfill multiple orders at the same time. This synchronized, simultaneous picking and packing is considerably faster than pulling orders sequentially off a clipboard – shortening order cycle time and improving customer satisfaction.

- **Reduced labor costs** – Light-based sorting cuts down on overall time per order, and thus reduces the amount of labor associated with fulfillment. This feature can mean big bottom-line savings in both the short- and long-terms.
- **Faster training/onboarding** – Whether you routinely scale your warehouse workforce throughout the year or otherwise experience regular employee turnover, a put-to-light system virtually eliminates the learning curve that comes with traditional order fulfillment practices.
- **Optimize space** – In addition to being efficient in practice, put-to-light systems are generally also very efficient in their physical footprints. Every item and order has a place, which means no more piles and half-filled boxes strewn across your shipping department. The organized nature of a put-to-light setup simplifies the spatial optimization of your warehouse.

With all of these benefits, it's hard to imagine an e-commerce business not wanting to adopt such a workflow. Unfortunately, implementing a put-to-light fulfillment system can be challenging for a number of reasons:

- **Setup and integration** – As with any new procedural overhaul, building a put-to-light order sorting solution from the ground up can seem like a daunting task. In most cases, constructing both the physical and digital infrastructures requires time and purpose. Similarly, onboarding with your warehouse staff and integrating with your existing network and software platforms can add additional headaches.

- **Cost** – If you're not careful, the combination of new equipment, additional staff training, and the time it takes to get a new system up and running can add up. For many smaller e-commerce businesses, it can be difficult to shoulder the costs in such a way as to justify the return on investment (ROI).
- **Commitment** – Many put-to-light system providers lock users into binding contracts and lengthy subscription services. This practice can feel like an additional risk that makes taking the leap much more daunting.

We at Sellercloud recognize the value of warehouse and logistical efficiency for e-commerce businesses of all sizes. However, we also realize that there are technologies out there – like put-to-light pick and put systems – that could benefit our customers but remain out of reach. That's where Skublox comes in.

Skublox Brings Put-To-Light Technology Within Reach

Traditionally, put-to-light systems have been both expensive and challenging to implement. With Skublox, we have made it a priority to eliminate those barriers. In doing so, we created a powerful, versatile tool that is both financially and logistically within reach for merchants who would not be able to afford and/or adopt traditional put-to-light systems. In addition, unlike many put-to-light systems, Skublox requires no significant upfront cost or lengthy contract.

Skublox is a customizable put-to-light system that natively integrates with our Skustack WMS and Sellercloud

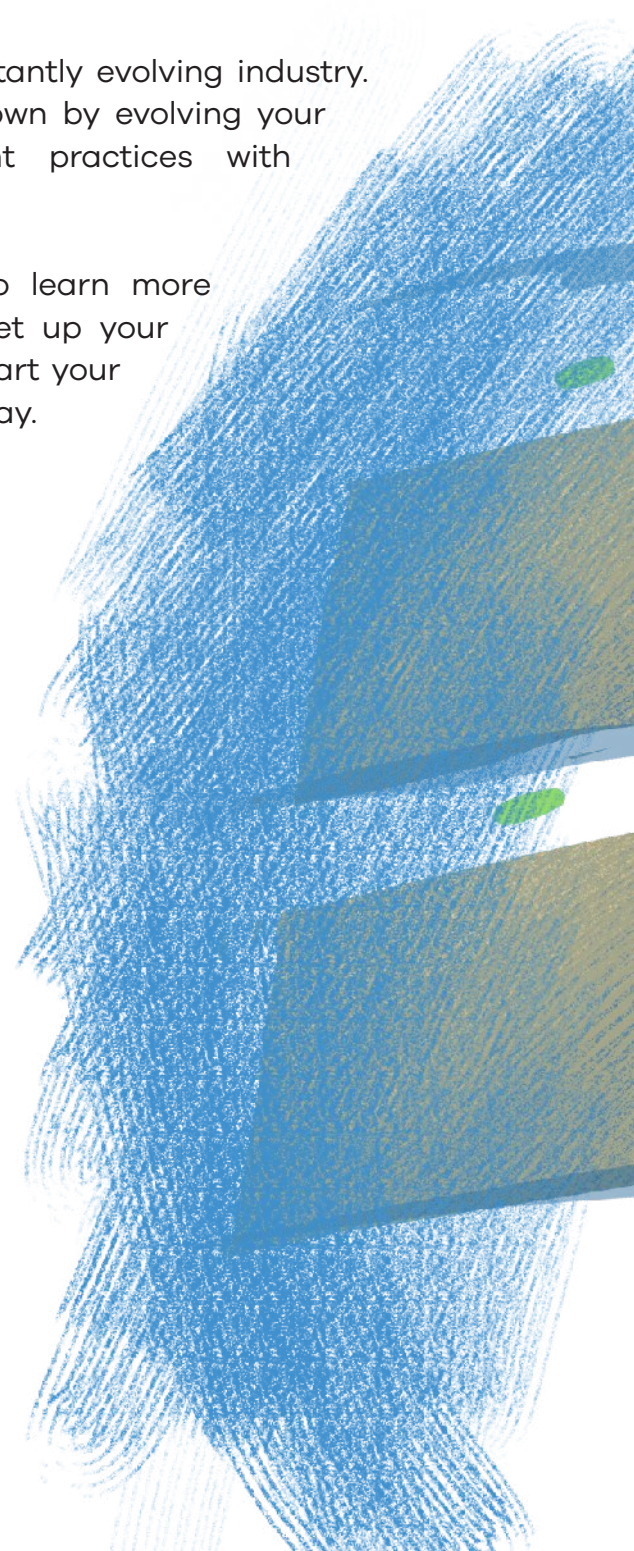
omnichannel e-commerce platforms. This integration means that all of your existing SKUs in your catalog are ready to be processed through Skublox on day one. You can fulfill orders from any of your existing marketplace channels as well as from your company's own online storefront website. What's more, you can feel confident that every piece of merchandise will be picked, packed, and shipped correctly – regardless of where the order came from or where it is going.

Setup is simple: connect the Skublox hub to a PC, log in to Skublox with your Sellercloud credentials, and create your own customized light wall. Trade clipboards and order printouts for smartphones or mobile scanning devices (such as a Zebra TC21) running the Skublox app. From there, with minimal training, your warehouse staff is ready to experience the convenience of put-to-light logistics – pick, scan, put-to-light, scan, pack, and ship.

Scalability is a key feature of Skublox. Users can create put-to-light walls as small or as large as they need. Each Skublox light receives power over ethernet (PoE) making configuration as simple as continuing a daisy chain. This feature means that Skublox lights can be added, moved, or reconfigured in any number of ways – including multiple light wall setups. This way, Skublox is ready to grow and evolve right alongside your e-commerce business's logistical needs. Get only the Skublox lights you need and add additional Skublox lights as you need them.

E-commerce is a constantly evolving industry. Make strides of your own by evolving your warehouse's fulfillment practices with Skublox.

Contact us directly to learn more about how you can set up your Skublox system and start your optimized workflow today.





Read it online:



Financial report

Balance sheet

Assets	1,734,826
Current assets	89,906
Non-current assets	1,645,921
Liabilities	166,630
Current liabilities	110,527
Non-current liabilities	56,103
Equity	74,393
Preferred capital	73,521
Retained earnings	1,672



Income statement

Revenues	12,978,516
Net sales	12,873,992
Investment	104,524
Expenses	6,372,535
Research and Development	1,585,093
Operating expenses	4,496,118
Marketing	540,322
Net income	6,505,981



Equity statement

Current year	1,774,576
Comprehensive income	86,363
Issue of share capital	25,000
Dividends	10,000
Previous year	166,630
Comprehensive income	110,527
Issue of share capital	18,330
Dividends	67,670



Cash flow statement

Operations	12,978,516
Net earnings	12,873,992
Depreciation	104,524
Investing	6,372,535
Real estate	1,385,093
Equipment	4,988,118
Financing	6,505,981
Notes payable	6,505,981



Keep track of your financials

Import all your Sellercloud financial data into QuickBooks.



We're here to simplify your bookkeeping with Quickbridge. Quickbridge is a desktop application that syncs all your Sellercloud data with QuickBooks. No more costly, time-consuming, and error-prone manual data entry. With Quickbridge you can seamlessly export purchase orders and sales order data into QuickBooks, making it easier than ever to track your financials and accurately determine your overall profitability.



Import accounts receivable and accounts payable data into QuickBooks.



Sync order data like marketplace fees and settlement reports.



Track your purchasing.



Track your sales.



Track your inventory.



Post directly to your General Ledger.



Post new products with account mapping.

Quickbridge
by Sellercloud



Certified





JANUARY 14, 2021

Warehouse Inventory Cycle Counting Saves Your Business Time and Money



Inventory management is a crucial component of a successful omnichannel e-commerce business. The foundation of any effective inventory strategy is knowing how much stock you have and where it is. With the pace of modern e-commerce retail, this goal can be challenging. That said, accurate inventory counts are essential when it comes to eliminating overselling, avoiding over-purchasing, and generating actionable business data.

With accurate inventory numbers, you can optimize your multi-channel e-commerce sales and improve overall customer satisfaction. No more apology emails for delayed or seller-cancelled orders. No more emergency rush orders from your suppliers.

The key is to transform the way that you think about inventory. Omnichannel inventory management platforms are great, but they are only as good as the numbers they are working with. At some point, you inevitably need a physical count of your merchandise. Rather than relying solely on an annual inventory audit, cycle counting throughout the year is a more thorough, efficient, and cost-effective strategy.

The Problems with Traditional Inventory Counting Methods

Manual inventory audits are an outdated, ineffective practice. To start with, conducting a whole-warehouse hard count requires a business to grind to a halt. All merchandise and supply inventory are frozen while warehouse workers wander up and down

the aisles with clipboards in hand. Items are counted, quantities are recorded, and all the individual counts are then compiled into a final inventory result.

This all-hands-on-deck approach may be the way that retail inventory has been calculated for generations, but it is long past its practical usefulness as a reliable, standalone solution. Several key reasons include:

- **Manual inventory counts are costly.** To ensure an accurate manual inventory count, you need to make sure that your inventory levels remain constant for the duration of the audit – nothing new comes in, nothing gets shipped out. This situation means that orders are left to pile up and new merchandise is left waiting to be unloaded.

Furthermore, in order to minimize the duration of this disruption, inventory audits typically become an “all-hands-on-deck” affair. This procedure pulls employees from their usual roles and disrupts your day-to-day operations. Not to mention, extra labor hours mean extra costs.

- **Physical inventory audits are tedious.** No one likes to do them. The repetition of moving shelf to shelf, bin to bin, counting, and recording quickly becomes a slog. No one will ever mistake inventory counting for a team morale booster. This fact leads to the final issue.

- **Manual inventory counting is prone to mistakes.** The more a process relies on human effort, the more opportunities there are for errors. Inventory counts require accuracy to be useful. Every miscount, misrecording or miscalculation further devalues the inventory data you collect.

Thankfully, there's a much more productive and cost-effective alternative.

Cycle Counting: The More Efficient Way to Audit Your Inventory

Rather than relying solely on an annual manual inventory count, many retailers and e-commerce businesses have transitioned to a cycle counting model that makes taking stock of your inventory a continuous process throughout the year.

Not only does this plan minimize or eliminate many of the issues outlined above, but it also provides some additional benefits:

- **Cycle counting makes it easier to correct inventory errors.** When you are focusing attention on your inventory counts more regularly, it becomes easier to spot blunders that otherwise would go unchecked (and cause costly errors) until the next annual audit.
- **Cycle counting can prioritize your high-turnover merchandise.** When you eliminate the burden of counting your entire inventory each time you choose to audit your warehouses, it frees you up to

focus on maintaining the most up-to-date counts on the products that matter most to your profitability. Slower-moving stock can be relegated to less frequent counting once or twice a year.

- **Cycle counting can free up your warehouse staff.** Rather than diverting your entire labor force to a large-scale inventory audit, you can conduct smaller cycle counts throughout the year as part of the regular routine. Not only do you get more up-to-date inventory data more often, but workers are more likely to be auditing inventory they are most accustomed to (which means faster counting and fewer mistakes).
- **Cycle counting makes it easier to optimize and customize your warehouse space.** Having updated inventory counts throughout the year means that you can reconfigure warehouse layouts and storage decisions to best match your order processing needs. You can use data-driven decision making to transition high-volume sales merchandise into the most easily accessible areas and relocate slower sellers and seasonal goods to lower-traffic locations.

Many e-commerce businesses that subscribe to a cycle counting inventory model still conduct manual counts annually. In some cases, it is more habitual than a necessity. In other cases, cycle counting procedures still include enough errors to require the annual hard count. Even so, inventory cycle counting

remains an important and relevant practice – particularly in the e-commerce world.

Skustack Makes Continuous Cycle Counting Intuitive, Accessible and Affordable

Whether you are looking to add regular inventory cycle counting to your inventory routines or you are simply looking for a way to improve your existing cycle counting procedures, Skustack is the answer.

As an industry-leading omnichannel e-commerce platform, Sellercloud is well aware of the challenges and headaches that come with auditing inventory. We are also aware of how important it is to get the numbers right when it comes to generating accurate inventory counts. In designing Skustack – our fully integrated omnichannel WMS platform – we made a point to focus on embedding the inventory cycle counting process into the day-to-day warehouse workflow.

Our patented technology centralizes every aspect of your inventory processing from top to bottom. By trading clipboards for handheld scanners, every member of your warehouse team has the ability to scan, count, and record inventory data quickly and intuitively. As a result, the combination of improved accuracy and time savings will reduce your overhead costs.

For more on how Skustack can bring optimized inventory cycle counting into your warehouse workflow, contact us directly for a free consultation.





Read it online:





JANUARY 21, 2021



Video is the Next Big Thing in E-Commerce Marketing Strategies

The unprecedented growth and evolution of the e-commerce industry continues as we enter 2021. E-commerce marketplace sales figures may have been grabbing the headlines since the holiday season, but those in the industry should be paying just as much attention to how marketplaces have grown in function, as they have in volume.

One of the biggest evolutions in online sales this past year has been the rise of video – particularly live video – as a way to enhance and promote e-commerce listings. Effective product descriptions and image selections definitely still matter, but the growing prominence of multimedia elements is making the competition for the Buy Box and customers' attention significantly more challenging. Simply put, if you aren't finding ways to incorporate video into your marketing strategy, you are going to get left behind. Based on current trends, that shift may be happening sooner rather than later.

Listing Videos is Becoming More of a Necessity Than a Luxury

It's no secret that when times change, your listings need to change with them. The key is staying ahead of the curve and making the right changes. With more shoppers transitioning to e-commerce from brick-and-mortar, crafting an appealing visual presentation will matter to shoppers used to physically browsing for merchandise.

A visual presentation starts with high quality pictures. Online shoppers judge books by their covers; a well-staged, well-lit, well-composed, well-tagged, and well-optimized image is all but a requirement at this point. It's not enough.

Video adds the extra layers to the equation that you will need to keep up with your competitors. However, just like with images, not all product videos are created equal. When producing video content for your products and brand, all the things that make for great product images still matter, but videos require additional production layers like scripting, directing, and audio fidelity that also need to be on point.

If done right, videos can add crucial extra dimensions to a customer's understanding of your products. Beyond clarifying things like scale and color (elements that can also be effectively conveyed through static images), video allows interested shoppers to envision ways that potential purchases can fit into their lives and suit their needs. This challenge can seem daunting, especially if video has not been a consistent part of your marketing strategy to date. That said, there are several ways to add this multimedia dimension to your catalog, each with its own benefits and style:

- **Marketplace video reviews are a Holy Grail of e-commerce marketing.** They require no effort or production on your part, just a commitment to customer satisfaction and product quality. Amazon is not only allowing this type of public feedback, but is

encouraging it (it serves as a key differentiator versus competitors like Walmart that have yet to allow video reviews). Amazon knows as well as anyone the sales-boosting power of video.

Be advised, however, that just as a video praising your product can be a boon, negative review videos can expose and highlight flaws that may not be as beneficial to your future sales. For that reason, your video marketing strategy should not solely rely on the recordings of others – taking control of your own video representation should be a priority.

- **Customer testimonial videos are similar to video reviews; however, they tend to have higher production values and are more focused than your run-of-the-mill marketplace reviewer on a smartphone.** Testimonials of any kind are powerful, but those that come directly from a satisfied customer's mouth will always create more of an authentic draw than a block of quoted text.
- **Video tutorials are media investments that can actually provide multiple benefits.** For one, they allow you to feature the usefulness and function of your product in a way an image or written description cannot. Furthermore, a clear and complete explanation of your product, its setup, and its functions can take a lot of burden off of your customer service department by reducing the likelihood of returns and basic assembly and troubleshooting requests.

In each of these cases, the key is making sure that your tutorial's content and appearance are relatable and understandable to both existing and prospective customers. When it comes to outstanding tutorial videos, purpose and planning are key.

- **Paid promotion videos are gaining steam as the television commercials for the internet generation.** Getting your products into the hands of relevant influencers on social media channels and streaming video services like YouTube and Twitch can be an effective way to generate attention for your brand from established, targeted audiences. What's more, these types of videos allow you to reap the benefits of multimedia marketing, while also shifting the video and audio production responsibilities to individuals who tackle those tasks for a living.

Regardless of the types of video content you generate, the results should be wielded as social media marketing tools. Be sure to feature your efforts across your business's online channels to maximize the return on your time and investment.

The Rise of Live Video E-Commerce Marketing

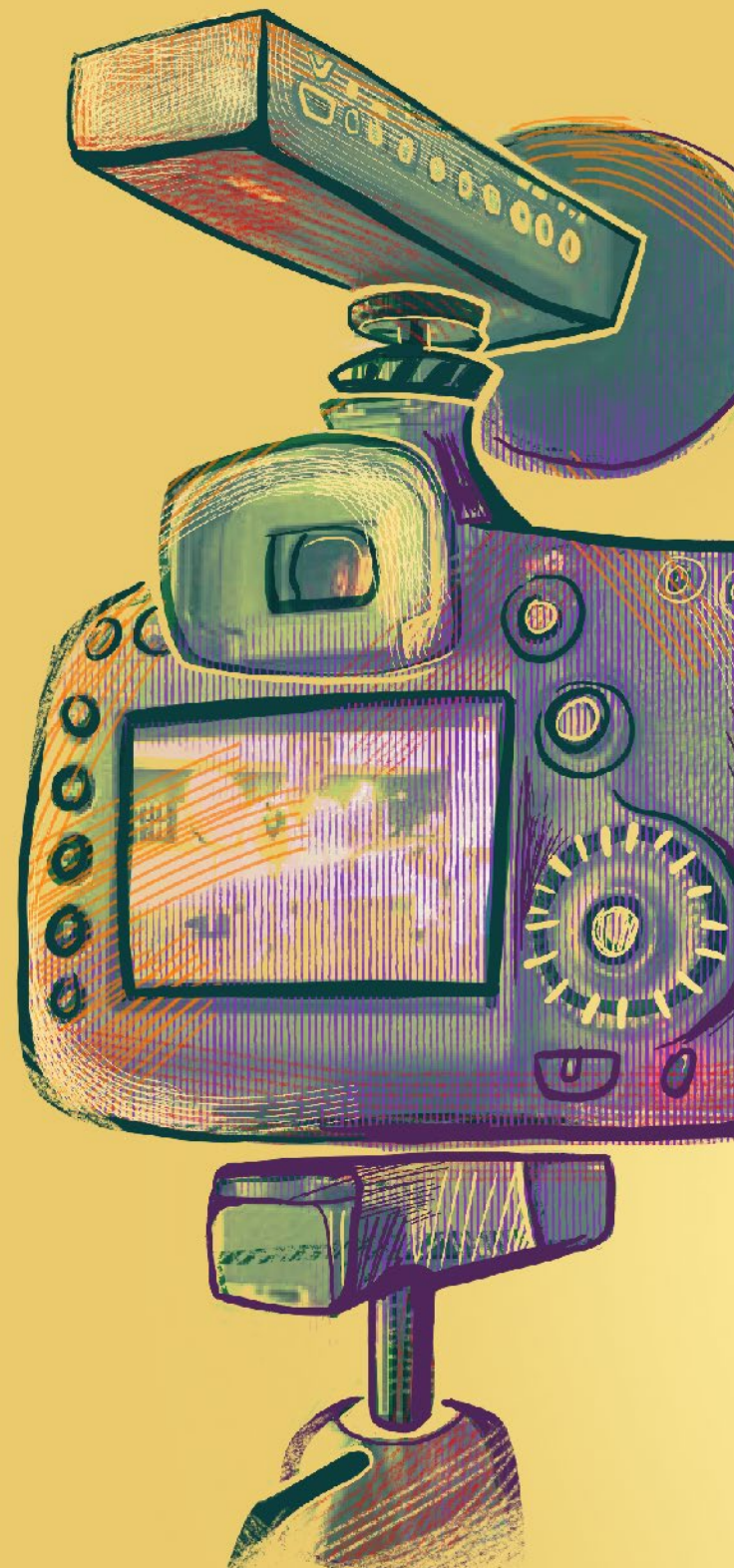
This holiday season, several leading e-commerce marketplaces took video-based product marketing to the next level with live video promotion feeds. Starting with Prime Day 2020, Amazon has started featuring its Amazon Live service as a way of putting streaming video marketing front and center across its websites and

shopping app. These home-shopping-channel-style streams are hosted by showcase varieties of brands, products, and deals from across the vast Amazon marketplace catalog.

This media-focused extension of the Amazon Influencer Program is the embodiment of modern e-commerce video marketing. Professional streaming personalities are incentivised to expose customers to products in engaging, relatable ways. The Amazon Live Creator app (currently only available on iOS) makes starting a stream as simple as signing up for an account and tapping record.

The genius of the program is that since the marketplace is also the video hosting platform (both live videos and archived live video recordings remain on Amazon Live), interested buyers are only a “Buy It Now” click away from completing a purchase. It’s like QVC and HSN without the phone call. Do not be surprised to see other marketplaces following suit in the coming year. If video-based marketing is becoming the new standard, live video may very well be the next one. If you are considering establishing or expanding your video marketing efforts, keep an eye on the live streaming space as an area for potential investment.

Sellercloud is an omnichannel e-commerce platform committed to making sure that you are ready for all of the latest evolutions of the online sales industry. Be sure to check back in for our regular blog updates to be sure you remain in-the-know about the latest e-commerce trends, tips, and analysis.





Read it online:





JANUARY 28, 2021



12 Considerations When Creating Your Perfect E-Commerce Return Policy

Returns aren't why people get into the e-commerce business, but effective and fair return policies certainly help keep e-commerce businesses in business.

This factor has become increasingly important as more and more customers are opting for the online shopping experience over the brick-and-mortar retail alternatives. In-store retail allows customers to physically hold and inspect a product, purchase the exact item they touched, and leave with their merchandise in tow. E-commerce sales are made at a distance through images, descriptions, and multimedia. Purchases are made on a screen and the merchandise has to be picked, packed, and shipped to the customers. Each of these extra steps is an opportunity for the buying experience to fail to meet customer expectations. When that happens, so do returns. How you prepare for these inevitable disappointments will go a long way in your ability to reach, satisfy, and retain customers – especially those who are more accustomed to traditional brick-and-mortar buying experiences.

Make Initiating a Return Simple

Customer self-service is becoming an increasingly common component of e-commerce returns. The fewer hoops a dissatisfied customer has to jump through to return or exchange merchandise they are not happy with, the fewer opportunities there are for further frustration and disappointment. When it comes to making things right, time is of the essence.

Third-party marketplaces know this issue. That is why the majority have created very customer-friendly return policies (sometimes too customer-friendly in the eyes of some sellers) that streamline the refund and exchange processes. A few clicks from an order status page and the RMA is generated, return shipping instructions are provided, and refund options are initiated. Being aware of these policies and keeping up on their frequent changes is essential if you are a third-party seller.

This simplicity is something you need to be prepared to emulate for your own first-party website sales. Including a simple to use return portal for your customers will help you create a more streamlined RMA process and also promote buyer confidence for customers seeking peace of mind, knowing that they are covered should their purchase experience not go exactly as expected.

Keep Your Return Request Response Time Short

The fact that a customer can initiate a return with just a few clicks and keystrokes doesn't mean anything if their request winds up sitting in an unchecked inbox. Turn-around time matters – especially when it comes to dealing with a dissatisfied customer.

Consider adding automated communications into your returns workflow so the customer feels in the loop about the process. Include sought-after information like return request approvals, clear instructions, next steps, and tracking information. This data can help keep the customer cool, while also saving your customer service

employees from getting swamped with predictable information requests.

Establish a Fair Return Window

While many times customers decide that they are returning a purchase the instant they receive it, there are also instances where the decision is made later. Common practice is to offer a set return window of 30, 60, or 90 days. When setting these windows, there are several key considerations to take into account:

- **The nature of the merchandise – If you are selling single-use or perishable items, a shorter return window typically makes more sense.** Conversely, more durable or non-perishable items could benefit from longer windows.
- **Product quality – The more confident you are in your product's quality and durability, the longer a return window you can offer.** This factor is something some customers pay particular attention to, especially when comparing two or more similar products.
- **Special circumstances – Some marketplaces and sellers publish specific return windows for gifts or times of processing delays (like the holidays or during a pandemic).**
- **Willingness to make exceptions – There may be times when customers seek a return after a return window has expired.** When that circumstance happens, you need to have a protocol for evaluating when/if a return will still be accepted. This type of good faith can help strengthen positive feelings toward your brand.

Make Return Exceptions Clear

Whether on a third-party marketplace or on your own e-commerce website, be sure to make explicit what items you consider to be eligible for return.

If you offer particular products that do not follow your typical return policy, make this crystal clear at multiple points before the point of purchase. These exceptions should never be surprises that pop up when an unhappy customer is trying to return a product. Some marketplaces may even override these exceptions if you cannot establish that you adequately made the customer aware of them before they checked out.

Clarify What Customers Can Receive in Return

Be deliberate and explicit about what the end result of a return will be. If there are multiple possible outcomes (refund, credit, exchange, etc.), be sure that customers know which returns qualify for each end result.

If certain outcomes are more cost effective for you, consider making them more enticing. For instance, guaranteeing a speedy turnaround for an exchange is a way Amazon tries to steer customers in that direction instead of a cash refund.

Prepare to Pay for Return Shipping

Regardless of the reason for a return, offering to pay for return shipping will keep your e-commerce business competitive with other sellers, retailers, and marketplaces. Although this feature adds additional cost and

overhead, it's yet another act of good faith that shows you stand by your brand and your products.

Use Pay-on-Scan Shipping Labels

Whenever you offer to pay for customers' return shipping needs, opt for shipping services that allow for pay-on-scan services. They work exactly as you would assume – your payment method is not charged until the return package is scanned and accepted by your shipping partner. This service allows you to avoid paying for shipping labels that don't get used or get lost in transit to your customer.

Choose the Right Return Shipping Speed

Dissatisfied customers only grow in their disappointment the longer they are made to wait. It may be tempting to opt for the most inexpensive shipping option (especially if you are paying for return shipping), but the ultimate goal should be to complete the entire return process as quickly as possible. This strategy will reduce the chances of negative feedback and also reduce the rate of repeated follow-up inquiries to your customer service department.

Be Smart About Your Return Acceptance Locations

A lot of the considerations involving return costs revolve around geography. Creating a returns workflow that operates as "reverse logistics" allows you to pay attention to details that you might otherwise ignore.

In particular, attempt to position your returns acceptance locations strategically in relation to your customer base. When packages don't have to travel as far, it can help keep both return costs and turnaround times down.

Make Your Return Policy Visible and Easy to Find

As mentioned, a great returns policy means nothing if customers don't know it's there. Rather than burying your returns-related information in the bottom of a terms of service document or nested in an ever-growing FAQ page, make it visible and accessible. Link to your terms in your website footer, in every customer service email, in your shopping cart, in your receipts, in your order details, and on your product pages.

Showing that you are committed to speedy and fair returns shows a commitment to customer satisfaction and your brand's quality. Wield it as the marketing tool that it is.

Enlist Legal Help

Before putting any policy live on your website or marketplace landing pages, it may be worth having a legal professional give it a once-over. You may think you have dotted your i's and crossed your t's, but unintended missteps could prove costly if challenged by an exceptionally disgruntled customer.

Have a Plan for What Happens to Your Returned Merchandise

Last but not least, know what you are going to do with the products that get returned to you. Some may be able to be refurbished and re-sold. Others may need to be destroyed. Regardless of their fate, these products need to be processed and dealt with quickly to avoid getting lost in dead stock purgatory.

Ultimately, the better your returns workflow, the better terms you can offer your customers. The more buyer-centric you can make your brand, the easier it is to attract new customers and retain existing ones. A clear and fair returns policy improves your e-commerce business's overall customer satisfaction and thus can help improve your standing on third-party marketplaces.

Sellercloud's omni-channel e-commerce platform is ideally suited to help you optimize not only your online sales, but also effective and efficient return workflows. Contact us for a free demo of how we can help you create and support a returns process that attracts customers to your brand and keeps them satisfied with their shopping experiences.

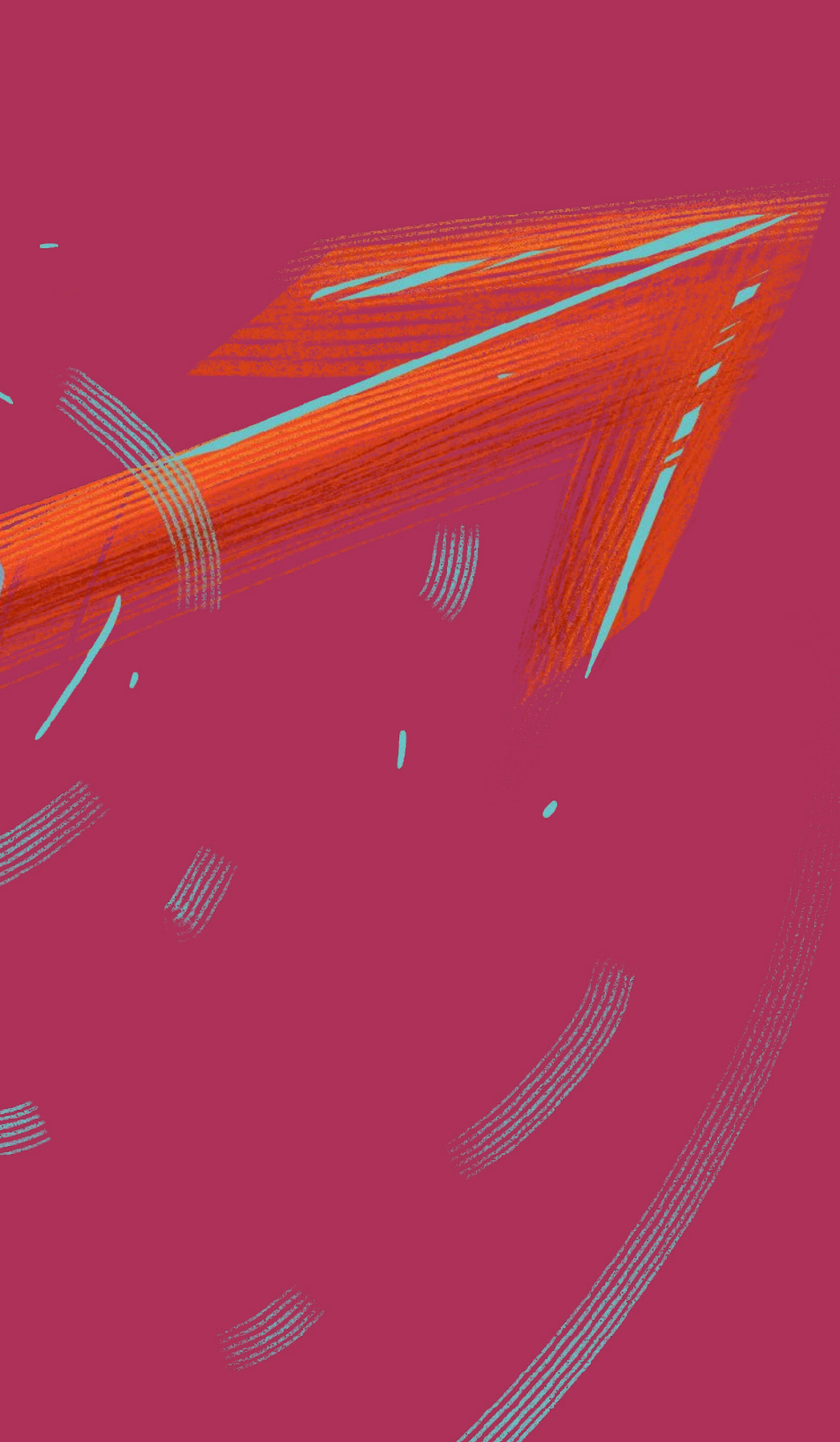


Read it online:





FEBRUARY 5, 2021



Use Familiar Modern Technology to Optimize Workforce Productivity

While the e-commerce industry continues to grow and evolve, the same cannot be said for all of the warehouses and stock rooms that make it work. Even as orders flow in from omnichannel listings and channels, many online sellers are stuck in the past with archaic inventory and fulfillment workflows. This behaviour is especially true for the countless brick-and-mortar retailers just making the jump to e-commerce.

Sticking with “what we’ve always done” may be comforting in the face of new, uncertain times like these, but it is a far cry from the best practices that lead to growth and customer satisfaction. Relying on clipboards and outdated computer interfaces to track inventory is a surefire way to fall behind your more forward-thinking competitors.

This attitude is particularly true when it comes to both recruiting and getting the most out of your logistics team members. Providing intuitive technological tools will not only streamline how your warehouses function, but it will help you attract and retain an increasingly digitally-empowered workforce.

Removing Antiquated Interfaces Also Removes Barriers to Onboarding New Staff

First impressions matter. On day one, you don’t want to be handing clipboards to new warehouse employees and walking them through the click-clack button presses of your warehouse’s Windows CE desktop interface. Do that, and you likely have a brand new employees who are already looking for their next job.

Sure, these systems still work, but as younger generations continue to become more prevalent in the workforce, antiquated technology and workflows require additional training. Let’s face it, most of Generation Z is likely to resent working with clipboards and older unintuitive programs.

On the other hand, when you bring new hires onboard with tools and technology that is similar to what they use in their everyday lives, you are more likely to have an engaged and productive team. Touchscreen-based input, intuitive graphical user interfaces, and modern operating systems embed a critical familiarity into your warehouse workflows.

For your workers, learning to use your company’s technology should be more akin to upgrading to the latest cell phone model than trying to learn a new language. Considering the technological comfort levels of your employees not only simplifies the training process, it speeds up your entire fulfillment experience, while also reducing opportunities for mistakes. An employee’s mistakes using an antiquated record-keeping system or an outdated computer should not be the cause for fulfillment delays or disappointed customers.

Modernizing Your E-Commerce Inventory and Fulfillment Systems is Now a Necessity

Upgraded technology is one of the soundest investments you can make for the future of your business. The ability to scale your operations is tied directly to the tools

you use to do so. That's why we at Sellercloud continue to prioritize innovation as a cornerstone of successful omnichannel e-commerce. In order to compete in modern online retail, "the way we have always done things" isn't good enough anymore. This perspective is especially true when it comes to maximizing the output of your staff.

By consolidating the catalogs, shipping data, and inventory tracking requirements from across all the channels where you sell into a single, intuitive interface, Sellercloud makes it fast and simple to increase your brand's exposure across multiple marketplaces and ensure consistent customer satisfaction. All the while, employees across your entire organization are able to input, access, and maintain accurate data about the comings and goings of your products.

Taken even further, our Skustack WMS system uses patented technology to make scanning, counting, and tracking inventory simple and streamlined across all of the channels where you sell and all of the warehouses and bins where your products reside. Skustack's cloud-based recordkeeping integrates seamlessly with Sellercloud to eliminate overselling and maximize your ability to track every piece of merchandise by SKU, serial number and even lot numbers and expiration dates.

What's more, Skustack's Android-based tools and interfaces make scanning both intuitive and scalable. Onboarding additional team members and adding additional devices is quick and simple. If you can use a smartphone, you can use Skustack.

Skublox brings simplified fulfillment and overall ease-of-use to a whole new level by making scalable pick-to-light, put-to-light technology accessible to e-commerce businesses of all shapes and sizes. Rather than relying on cumbersome sorting protocols, warehouse workers simply scan items and match them to the corresponding colored light. Your shipping team members enjoy a similar, simplified experience – only in reverse. Green lights indicate shipping readiness, and from there, a simple scan provides the correct packing and shipping information to get the merchandise out the door. Just like with Skustack, simple touchscreen user interfaces keep everything running quickly and smoothly.

Modernizing your fulfillment technology is the key to unlocking the full potential of your 21st century workforce. Sellercloud is here to help make that goal a reality for your e-commerce business. Contact us directly for a free demo of any of our products and experience first-hand what a difference simplified and optimized technology can create.

Read it online:





FEBRUARY 11, 2021

Customer-Facing Inventory Visibility is a Modern E-Commerce Necessity



Of the many significant changes to online shopping behaviours in 2020 was the role that product availability factored into many customers' purchasing decisions. Supply chain issues and fulfillment delays extended estimated delivery dates days, weeks, and even months beyond the speedy 1-3-day turnaround times typically offered by several major marketplaces.

Early in the pandemic, this realization often came as a surprise – either at checkout or when fulfillment delay notifications popped up. Many avid online shoppers had grown accustomed to clicking on a “Prime” product listing and having their merchandise in hand in under 48 hours. Among marketplace inventory policy shifts, increased shipping carrier volume, and generally lower inventory levels across the board, these delivery expectations on Amazon and other online retailers were quickly dashed.

As a result, shoppers in 2021 have been trained to pay closer attention to when their orders will actually arrive rather than assuming pre-pandemic results. As such, inventory visibility is now a critical component of an effective e-commerce listing.

Your Marketplace Inventory is Now a Selling Point

Amid the pandemic, brand intelligence firm Upwave (formerly Survata) did a deep dive into e-commerce consumer habits and decision-making rationales. Among the key takeaways was the fact that 64% of 1,016 respondents cited “product inventory” was a “big influence” on their shopping behaviours. Even more striking was that 72% stated

they were “much more aware of product availability compared to before the COVID-19 pandemic.”

This awareness is something that is not going to go away. It is something online shoppers cannot unsee or unknow (especially those who received aforementioned fulfillment delay notifications at one point or another during the pandemic).

Although eliminating overselling should always be a priority for any e-commerce business, now there is added incentive to avoid even the appearance that an order may go unfulfilled. Any low-stock warning or “only 6 items left!” teaser popping up on one of your listings or your digital storefront is more likely to trigger a shopper to move on to a new search result than make a quick, impulsive purchase out of the fear of missing out.

Maintaining a steady and reliable inventory flow to all of your e-commerce channels has always mattered, but now there are customers who are taking notice. Two of the key selling points of online shopping are speed and convenience. An item being out of stock instantly eliminates both. More than ever, online shoppers are likely to buy from a competitor than they are to wait for a restock or gamble on a possible unfillable order.

Sellercloud Takes the Guesswork Out of Inventory Visibility for Both You and Your Customers

Inventory management and tracking has long been one of the most valuable components of the Sellercloud

e-commerce platform. Its value has increased dramatically as customers have become more attuned to perceived inventory levels as well.

With Sellercloud, you can ensure your inventory levels stay updated in real time across all of the channels where you sell. This omnichannel approach to inventory visibility is a clear best practice in the modern e-commerce landscape. By taking advantage of our robust yet intuitive feature set, your customers can make purchases with the confidence that you can and will be able to fulfill their orders.

On your end, our inventory management features provide you with the tools you need to proactively maintain the stock levels your customers demand. You can have peace of mind that your inventory counts will accurately reflect both what you have on hand and where you have it.

When stockpiles get low, Sellercloud's automated low-inventory alerts let you know when it's time to reorder. Using powerful business intelligence (BI) data, you can even track customer buying habits to ensure that the right merchandise is on hand for seasonal rushes, or that particular items are being distributed from warehouses closest to their most likely customers. This level of predictive purchasing is critical to eliminating under- and over-buying. In today's world, that also means keeping inventory-conscious customers clicking "Check Out."

For more on how Sellercloud can streamline and optimize your omnichannel e-commerce sales experience, contact us for a free demo.

Read it online:





FEBRUARY 18, 2021

The Time is Right to Expand Your Omnichannel E-Commerce Internationally



As e-commerce continues to thrive and grow with each passing quarter, many businesses are looking for opportunities to extend their reach and maintain their positive momentum from 2020. Omni-channel exposure, data-driven workflows, and expanded logistics partnerships all make it possible to bring your merchandise to a wider audience of customers.

That said, your competitors know this, too. By the beginning of the new year, seemingly every retailer has gotten into online sales in some way, shape, or form. This trend has led to some astounding industry growth metrics, but as with any period of rapid expansion, it can be trickier to carve out your own lane.

One area that is becoming an increasingly viable pathway to growing your online sales is the pursuit of international customers. This is a sector that has been steadily growing and will likely continue to do so well into the future.

Last year's year-end statistics bear this out. Even with the supply chain and fulfillment disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, foreign e-commerce sales still represented 11% of 2020's total volume – a 24% year-over-year increase. According to industry experts, this overseas volume is projected to rise to \$500 billion globally by 2025.

Adding an international focus to your e-commerce strategy may seem like a daunting task, with the right

partners and tools, but it is actually more feasible than you might think.

Location, Location, Location – The Key to International Logistics

The biggest hurdle to clear when targeting online retail customers outside of the United States is finding a way to quickly and reliably fulfill orders. Moreover you must do so in a way that can compete with your potential customers' local alternatives.

In some cases, this goal may not seem feasible. There are certain realities of cross-border e-commerce that cannot be ignored:

- **Shipping costs** – Not all of your products may be a good fit for international sale. In most cases, international shipping is more expensive than domestic shipping. This tendency can make it prohibitive to sell merchandise with already slim margins over-the-border.
- **Shipping speed** – The farther a package has to travel, the longer it can take. Furthermore, the longer merchandise is in transit, the more opportunities there are for a package to get mishandled or lost. Customers are not quick to overlook delayed, damaged, or missing purchases.
- **Customs** – Even if you can safely get a package from the U.S. to its destination country quickly, that package can wind up in a purgatory of customs bureaucracy for days, weeks or longer. These types of

delays can cause international customers to choose local options over importing your merchandise.

However, there are moves you can make to position your e-commerce business for international success. There are proactive steps you can take to help minimize the negative impacts of the aforementioned issues:

- **Strategic domestic warehouse locations** can help keep international shipping times down. A shipment from a west coast warehouse will reach destinations in Asia much faster than one from ports east of the Mississippi. Likewise, shipping to Europe is most convenient from the east coast. Should international orders become a focal point of your e-commerce strategy, having bi-coastal fulfillment centers is a crucial consideration.
- **International warehouse locations** are also a viable option should your across-the-border sales merit them. When you have a cache of products already housed in the same location as your customers, you can bypass the paperwork and delays associated with clearing customs.
- **Third-party logistics (3PL) partners** can give you the benefits of either or both of the options above, but without the overhead of maintaining additional warehouses yourself. These providers accept bulk shipments of your inventory and will use that supply to fulfill orders on your behalf. This commitment means that you make periodic bulk shipments across the border to your 3PL partner rather than paying (and waiting) for individual orders to make

the trip. The result is the ability to sell internationally with domestic-level fulfillment.

For instance, should you wish to begin selling on Walmart Canada (an excellent first-step in expanding internationally), partnering with a 3PL provider with Canadian warehouses allows customers to order from your American e-commerce business, while receiving fulfillment speeds on par with your Canadian competitors.

In each of these cases, Sellercloud's omnichannel inventory management platform and patented Skustack warehouse management system (WMS) work across multiple warehouses, keeping you organized and streamlined – you can keep track of the whereabouts of all your merchandise, anywhere in the world. Skublox – our pick-to-light, pack-to-light fulfillment workflow solution – allows you to create an efficient and optimized process for getting orders out quickly and accurately across all of your inventory locations.

Similarly, our fulfillment solutions, Shipbridge and Exactship, allow you to create optimized shipping protocols leveraging all of your warehouse locations. Among other things, these tools allow you to take into consideration factors like package weight, item value, and shipping destination when determining the most cost-effective and efficient shipping option.

Demystify International Payments

The other obvious consideration when introducing international e-commerce as a pillar of your brand is

creating a plan for dealing with foreign currencies. While most third-party marketplaces will gladly handle currency conversions for you, the volatility of international currency markets (not to mention the potential for hefty conversion fees) can take a serious bite out of your international sales' profits.

Being proactive about your international payment options can help you leverage those same foreign currency markets to your advantage. Sellercloud has P&L tools that not only allow you to track and accept foreign currency payments, but also track currency conversion rates to help optimize when and how you choose to convert to USD. Sellercloud can also auto-adjust listing prices in your international catalogs to match fluctuations in currency rates.

Sellercloud also boasts integrations that make handling international e-commerce payments even simpler. PayPal allows you to accept and hold payments across multiple currencies while Quickbooks' multi-currency features help you to keep your books in order.

By most metrics, international e-commerce is poised to continue to grow in the coming years. We at Sellercloud are committed to providing our users with the tools not only to participate in across-the-border online retail, but to deliver a truly competitive and optimized experience. Contact us directly for a demo of how our omnichannel suite of tools and products can help you expand your reach to a truly global customer base.





Read it online:

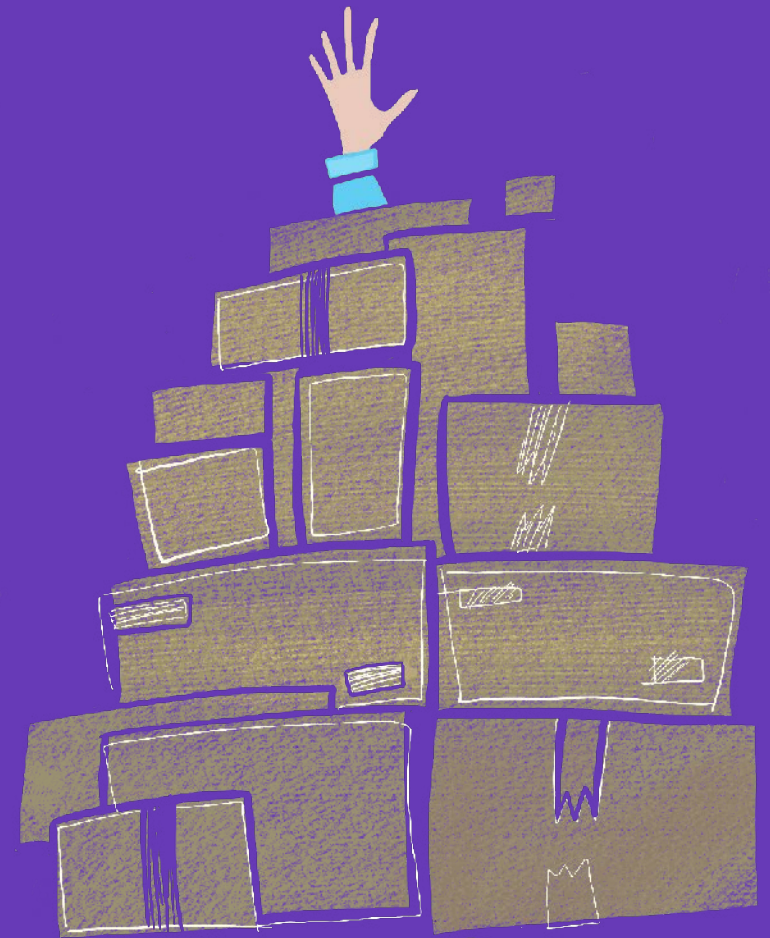




Eliminate dead stock
and expired products



Avoid loses caused
by broken products



Stop overstocking

FEBRUARY 25, 2021



Do regular audits

5 Ways to Save Money by Taking Care of Your Inventory



Use a reliable WMS

system like  **skustack**
by SellerCloud

Being a successful e-commerce business means paying attention to a host of listings, marketplaces, inventories, and fulfillment workflows all at the same time. Adding to the challenge is the fact that selling online is a constantly evolving experience. As a result, the more agile and strategic you are in your decision making, the greater your potential for success. Making routine, purposeful adjustments across your entire business can result in huge savings – which, in turn, can mean larger profits.

One area that is particularly ripe for optimization is how you handle your inventory. Poor inventory management can wind up costing you big. In contrast, making smart moves about things like warehousing, carrying costs, record keeping, and real-time inventory tracking can reduce your overall cost of goods sold (COGS) and increase your profit margins.

Here are 5 of our favorite recommendations for saving money by being smart about your inventory:

1. Eliminate dead stock and expired products

Paying carrying costs on inventory that can't or won't sell is pure waste. Whether it's damaged merchandise, returned products, out-of-date stock, expired goods or items that simply aren't selling (regardless of how many times you reprice them), paying to store this inventory in your warehouse is costing you money.

The first challenge is recognizing that this dead stock exists in the first place. Regular inventory audits can help to prevent these unsellable products from hiding in the cobwebs (more on this later).

The second challenge is locating and removing the offending merchandise. If you use multiple and/or offsite warehousing locations (like with FBA or a 3PL provider), you may not have easy access to actually hunt for these space-wasters yourself. It is up to you whether it is worth paying to have this inventory located and returned to you, or if you're better off giving the go-ahead to have it destroyed.

Amazon has specific protocols for issuing a remove inventory order, as do most marketplaces and 3PL providers. When entrusting your warehousing to third parties, be sure to know what these inventory procedures are and how to initiate them.

2. Avoid losses caused by damaged products

If your e-commerce business sells fragile merchandise, it is important to make warehousing and shipping decisions that account for these unique types of products. You need to be sure the entire fulfillment process, from warehouse to customer, includes the required degree of handling care to get your products to their destinations safely and in one piece. This goal may come with added costs, but in the end, maintaining overall customer satisfaction needs to be a high priority – particularly for third-party marketplace sellers.

Shipping insurance can surely help offset the financial ramifications of damaged goods, but it also places a burden on customers to document and report issues. Customers are expecting their orders to arrive in perfect condition; they aren't expecting to receive broken products and then have to spend their time filing claims (and/or waiting for a replacement to ship).

3. Stop storing more than necessary

Just as carrying costs on unsellable merchandise drive up your COGS, so does carrying too much merchandise.

Bulk purchasing and production can seem like cost-effective business decisions, but oftentimes sellers overlook the cost of storing these large quantities of inventory. Optimizing the inventory quantities you are holding according to your typical rate of sell-through can prevent unnecessary storage and warehousing fees. In addition, proper automated inventory reporting (like the cycle counting features offered by the Skustack WMS) can help ensure that you are set to reorder new merchandise at precisely the right moment to keep your listings live and avoid "out of stock" messages – or worse, oversold merchandise.

Another option is to make the transition from third-party sales to first-party drop-shipping. This arrangement allows you to serve as a vendor to popular marketplaces like Target, Walmart, Amazon, Wayfair, or Kohls without actually carrying any inventory yourself. What's more, Sellercloud offers Electronic Data Interchange (EDI)

integrations that allow sellers of all sizes to expand into this unique flavor of e-commerce.

4. Do regular audits

Taking manual inventory counts isn't fun, but for serious e-commerce businesses, there's no way around it. From time to time, your business needs to prioritize a hard count of the products you have on hand. These audits should be purposeful, consistent in practice, and supervised to help eliminate the potential for human error.

While there is a definite labor cost involved with inventory audits, this procedure typically outweighs the costs associated with inconsistent inventory data. When your financial and inventory data are out of sync, you expose your company to a variety of problems and liabilities.

From a record-keeping standpoint, your inventory is likely a large portion of your business's worth. You need to be confident that, at any given moment, you can report on this value truthfully and accurately.

Furthermore, you need to be able to know when the stock of products you are actively selling online need to be replenished. When counts are low, the corresponding listings either need to be updated accordingly or temporarily paused to prevent overselling issues. Having to cancel orders due to an inability to fulfill them hurts your standing with customers and marketplaces. When these errors become commonplace, their frequency raises a red flag that could result in marketplace suspensions or even account terminations.

5. Use a reliable WMS system

A dependable warehouse management system (WMS) can eliminate many of the headaches associated with inventory management. Our patented solution, Skustack, has been designed from the ground up with e-commerce merchants in mind.

Skustack is particularly helpful for e-commerce businesses selling across multiple marketplaces. Every piece of inventory can be tracked by a number of identifiers, such as serial numbers, lot numbers, expiration dates, and/or location.

As a result, inventory tracking, order picking, managing RMA requests, cycle counting, and PO receiving can all be reliably simplified with Skustack. Whether your inventory is in a warehouse down the hall or spread across fulfillment centers worldwide (or some combination of both), Skustack helps you be sure that you know what stock you have, where it is, and that you can manage it. Contact us directly for more on how Skustack can become your all-in-one e-commerce WMS.



Read it online:



MARCH 4, 2021

8 Best SEO Strategies for Boosting Your Brand's E-Commerce Traffic





Search engine optimization (SEO) is a crucial component of an effective e-commerce marketing strategy. In most cases, the ability of customers to search for and find your products is the primary driver of your top-of-funnel (TOFU) sales experience. Simply put: if potential customers can't find your products, it means that they are likely buying from your competitors. Optimizing your omnichannel e-commerce brand's exposure on both third-party marketplaces and internet search engines must be a priority.

There is a lot that goes into driving web traffic – especially web traffic with intent to purchase. SEO strategies are constantly evolving and changing as marketplaces and search engines adapt and modify their search algorithms. At the same time, there is an ever-growing web of internet destinations vying for clicks. It should be no surprise, then, that SEO services designed to help users improve their online visibility have become an upwards of an \$80 billion a year industry.

That said, SEO best practices aren't the exclusive domain of expert consultants. There are a number of simple SEO steps every e-commerce business can (and should) employ on its own. These will not only help direct customers to your listings, but most are future-proof best practices that will remain relevant regardless of the latest algorithm evolutions.

1. Properly categorize your products

Whether you're optimizing your listings on third-party marketplaces like Amazon, Walmart, or eBay or setting

up your own first-party website, providing users with accurate and useful product categories is a must.

Categories make it simpler for customers to come upon your products while browsing. Clicking through a tree of nested product types and features helps users find exactly the items they are looking for. If your products aren't properly oriented in that organization structure, you may be missing out on potential views and sales.

Search engines like categories, too. Properly classified listings make it easier to return relevant results when users conduct a search.

For most products, selecting the appropriate category is a multi-step process. Start with the most general descriptor you can and gradually drill-down into specifics.

It is worth noting that some marketplaces will take your most specific category and nest it appropriately within its existing category structure. For instance, assigning an item to the category "griddle pan" may automatically include it in the more general categories of "kitchen cookware" and "home & kitchen." However, some marketplaces (or first-party hosting services) may require you to do a bit more legwork to ensure that your listing is included in all the appropriate subcategories.

2. Target long-tail keywords

Not all keywords are created equal. When it comes to SEO, the more general a keyword or a search term, the more competition there is for clicks. Thus when you focus

on generic, highly competitive search terms as your main keywords, you are unlikely to see any substantial uptick in traffic. As a rule, less popular results get pushed so far down the search engine results page (SERPS) that they are hardly ever seen.

The best way to get noticed and climb in the SERP rankings is by hyperfocusing on longer, more specific keyword phrases – often referred to as “long-tail keywords.” The more specific you are, the less competition you have and the more likely you attract customers who are looking for your exact product.

Take the griddle pan example. Searching for the word “pan” on Google generates over 1.5 billion results. “Griddle pan” narrows that down to 17.1 million –still far from ideal. “Griddle pan nonstick” brings that number down to 1.56 million. That amount may still seem like a lot of competition (to be fair, it is), but it is a far cry from the 1.5 billion results from the first search. Including additional related long-tail keywords like “for glass cooktops” and “dishwasher safe” can enhance your specificity even further.

Focusing on long-tail keywords not only increases your odds of being seen by a potential customer, but it also drives down the cost per click of web marketing campaigns like Google Adwords and Amazon Advertising. When fewer people are competing for the same keyword phrase, a winning bid costs less.

3. Use search boxes to your advantage

Unsure if you have the right keywords or categories? Let the auto-complete features of major marketplaces and search engines help you out. Try typing relevant product categories into Google and Amazon search bars. The list of autocomplete suggestions is a treasure-trove of keywords and SEO insights.

Not all of what pops up will be 100% relevant to your products, but it lets you see what both the algorithms and site users tend to look for based on the term you enter. If the results are way off from your particular product, that occurrence can be a surefire sign that you may not have selected the best categories or keywords. On the other hand, if the fit seems good, you may have just scored a few more keywords and categories to attach to your listing.

Taken a step further, clicking on different suggestions will let you see the top-ranking competitors for each long-tail keyword. Check out their categories, descriptions, and keywords to see if there are any you missed in your own listings.

4. Sign Up for Google Analytics

If you haven’t done so already, consider signing up for Google Analytics. This free service keeps tabs on how users arrive at and engage with your website. There are a number of useful metrics that can help you refine your SEO strategies and identify how the pages on your site are performing.

You can track the keywords that are attracting visitors to your pages, which pages they visit, where they are visiting from, how long they are viewing your pages, and what visitor actions most directly correlate to sales conversions.

It can take a little tinkering to get set up, but once you do, the provided data can be extremely helpful in honing your SEO strategies.

5. Keep your page structure simple

When you create a listing on a marketplace, you don't have control over your URL. However, you do have agency when creating the URL structure of your own first-party website. Take advantage!

It turns out that customers and search engines appreciate short, keyword-rich URLs. They make it easier to figure out what the page contains and makes sharing cleaner and easier. As a rule, try to include both category and long-tail keywords in your URLs whenever possible.

6. Optimize your title tags

Few things matter more to SEO than a strong title. Titles are the first thing that search engine scrapers and internet users encounter when making a decision about your web content. The goal is to create titles that are both as engaging and accurate as possible.

In most cases, title accuracy is measured based on the actions of your visitors. If your bounce rate is low (meaning visitors don't quickly leave your page after arriving),

this occurrence sends a signal to the search engine that the user likely found what was being searched for. Actions like clicking on additional links and pages from the same domain are positive signs as well. The more a search engine sees positive user engagement, the more users will be steered to your pages.

Of course, getting users to click on your page in the first place is about more than just descriptive accuracy. Including certain high-value, high-action terms can help attract more clicks to your listings. Some of the best terms to boost your e-commerce click through rate (CTR) include:

- Cheap
- Deals
- Review
- Best
- Online
- Free shipping
- Fast shipping
- Lowest price
- Overnight shipping
- Sale
- Guarantee
- X% off

Data has shown that including these words and phrases in your title tags and descriptions can help steer potential customers your way.

Getting started might be challenging – especially when character counts limit how much you can write, but tools like Sharethrough’s headline analyzer can help you try out different phrasing and title lengths to find the most SEO-friendly result.

7. Write longer, keyword-rich content

In the early days of SEO, people tried to game the system by cramming their titles, descriptions, and code full of keywords. The result was a word salad of horrible copy that search engines loved, but actual human visitors could hardly digest.

Thankfully, keyword stuffing is now largely a thing of the past (and can actually negatively impact your SEO). However, keywords still matter to search engines. To get the best results, place your strongest keywords 3-5 times throughout your pages in ways that make logical sense.

As algorithms have improved, so has the focus on rewarding content that meets visitors’ expectations. Creating titles and listing descriptions that properly describe your products is important, but so is doing so with an engaging tone and visual appeal that draws readers in.

Generally speaking, the longer a visitor remains engaged on your page, the better your page is deemed a fit for their search intent. The result: better SERP ranking and more clicks.

Sellers often overlook the SEO value of longer-form content. Visitors certainly aren’t looking to e-commerce pages for engaging prose, but making quality, purposeful written content available provides insights into your brand that customers and search engines alike may be looking for.

Take advantage of opportunities to provide useful and descriptive content in your listings and on your brand pages. Aim to hit the upper limits of character counts afforded to you by third-party marketplaces. Consider adding a blog, a testimonials page, or other long-form content to your e-commerce storefront. These opportunities will increase the odds that the right visitors come to your listings, stay longer, and convert to customers.

8. Prioritize omnichannel keyword consistency

Similar to your other branding and marketing efforts, unified, consistent messaging is important. Making



SEO-focused revisions to your listing content is most valuable when it is applied across all of your channels.

This is where Sellercloud's omnichannel e-commerce platform can be a tremendous asset. Our robust catalog features allow you to make changes to listing titles, descriptions, and categories that can populate across all of

the channels where you sell. Staying on top of your content and messaging can be done from within a single, user-friendly interface – saving you time and effort.

For more on how Sellercloud can help you keep up with your latest SEO strategies, contact us directly for a free demo.

Read it online:





MARCH 12, 2021

3 Hot E-Commerce Product Niches and Where to Sell Them



As expected, the e-commerce industry is continuing its record-setting growth from 2020 well into 2021. Sales continue to rise as customers continue to demonstrate their willingness to shop online. For e-commerce businesses, some deliberate product choices can help you maximize your benefits from this ongoing wave of online retail success.

Whether you are looking to start up a new e-commerce venture or expand your existing one, the key is to focus on profitable niches – product categories that are both in high demand and particularly conducive to online sales success. Focusing on the right types of products can mean the difference between inventory flying off your warehouse shelves or stacks of stock collecting dust.

The other piece of this puzzle is making sure that you put your merchandise in the best possible positions to sell. This goal means creating an omnichannel e-commerce strategy that allows you to list your products on the sites and marketplaces where your most motivated customers are looking.

Thankfully, the Sellercloud omnichannel e-commerce platforms can make it easy to fold new products and new channels into your selling strategies. Along the way, you can be sure that you not only have the ability to provide end-to-end order management, but that you also have access to the data calculations you need to inform your longitudinal decision-making.

Currently, there are several areas that are particularly hot in online retail:

1. Home Exercise Equipment

When the pandemic closed local gyms across the country, fitness buffs scrambled to find ways to get their workouts in at home. Online sales spiked. As a result, everything from weight benches to bicycles were sold out throughout much of the spring and summer.

Fast forward a year, and the demand for these products remains high. You should continue to see strong returns from fitness niche e-commerce sales.

Why it's selling

Even as gyms slowly start to reopen across the country, many former gym members may not be as willing to shell out monthly membership fees if they have established a home workout system that works. Conversely, many gyms are in need of supplies and equipment to help bolster their reopening efforts. Ideally, if you have the right listings in the right places, you could be marketing to both sectors of the fitness market simultaneously.

Search and sales data suggest that, in addition to adding new exercise equipment, people are looking to add to or upgrade components of their existing workout setups – new bike seats, extra weights, more complex exercise machines. Some of these items are simple, inexpensive products (think bike chains, wrist guards, tension bands), but there are also high-end options that enthusiasts are willing to splurge on if they feel it might

give them some type of edge or additional comfort. If you are looking to make a splash in this space, covering both the basics and upselling opportunities may prove a profitable strategy.

Where to sell home exercise equipment online

Smaller exercise items perform well on traditional e-commerce marketplaces. Listing on Amazon or Walmart should be a priority in these cases. There will likely be plenty of competition, but there will also be plenty of potential customers. Keeping your inventory levels up can help entice customers to give you a chance when other retailers are out of stock.

Larger items like ready-to-assemble exercise machines can be trickier to sell online simply because of their bulk. That said, this factor can work to your advantage. If you have the ability to store and ship big items, you can be valuable as a dropship supplier to sellers and channels that can't (or simply don't want to).

However, if you are sticking to a traditional third-party sales strategy, marketplaces that focus on larger items and furniture, like Wayfair or Overstock, tend to be solid additional channels where people would naturally look for larger products.

Thinking outside the box, other retailers are getting on-board with fitness-related sales. Nordstrom is making a big push into the exercise space. Also, as the worlds of technology and fitness continue to grow in concert,

even Best Buy has become a destination for exercise products.

2. Organizational Products

There's nothing like spending time stuck at home to realize how disorganized and cluttered your life has become. No matter what the catalyst is – the pandemic, snowstorms, working from home – online shoppers have shown a distinct drive to get their “stuff” in order. Supplies and solutions for getting organized remain popular.

Why they're selling

With the time and initiative to commit to organization, materials that make the process simpler are in high demand. Storage bins, organizational furniture, and labeling tools are all selling extremely well. Smaller organizers for decluttering the junk drawer or straightening up the home office are also popular. Furthermore, “Spring Cleaning” season is upon us; the trend is unlikely to reverse anytime soon.

Where to sell organizational products online

For generic organizational products, Amazon and Walmart are solid channels to lean on. As the most popular in-house items sell out (which they have done off and on for the past year), customers are willing to explore the other offerings on the marketplaces. If you have inventory and well-crafted listings, you can set yourself up as the next best option.

It is also a strong long-term strategy to list these types of storage and organizational merchandise on more specific marketplace channels. Staples and Newegg are popular landing spots for all things home office and (home) classroom. Wayfair and Overstock are obvious places to list organizational furniture, desks, and cabinets, but they are also great sites to list the accessories and organizational accoutrements to match.

Don't sleep on Bed Bath & Beyond or Home Depot either. These brick-and-mortar stalwarts are places people think to go to make these types of home organization purchases; naturally the ".com" versions come to mind when these shoppers are looking to shop virtually as well.

Most importantly, all of these channels have experienced sizable boosts in e-commerce customers and revenues since the onset of the pandemic. The shoppers are there, so your listings should be as well.

3. Kitchen Tools

As with most things, the pandemic forced many people to spend a lot more time doing things from home – cooking included. This behaviour meant that as amateur chefs across the world looked to hone their culinary skills, they also started to upgrade their kitchen tools.

Why they're selling

For many people, spicing up the eat-at-home menu has meant new recipes, new appliances, and new kitchenware. From a shopping standpoint, customers are

looking for items that will help them put new spins on old classics or refresh the overall home cooking experience. The trend seems to be continuing as everything from kitchen gadgets to dish towels continues to sell like hotcakes across many online channels.

Where to sell kitchen tools online

Traditional marketplaces like Amazon and Walmart will always be destinations for shoppers looking for housewares. However, as customers have become more savvy, their willingness to comparison shop and branch out to other marketplaces has increased. Consider expanding your omnichannel listing approach to more niche, houseware-focused channels like Bed Bath & Beyond, Houzz, Hayneedle, and Zulily.

Another thing to consider: smaller kitchen products make excellent candidates for dropshipping. They tend to be both inexpensive and easy to move quickly. These characteristics can serve as a solid entry point into the housewares niche with minimal overhead or risk.

Awareness of product niche trends is critical when assessing and evolving your e-commerce business. However, having the ability to respond to these trends is equally as vital. Sellercloud's suite of omnichannel sales, inventory management, and fulfillment tools make it simple to bring your products to customers across all the marketplaces and online destinations where they shop. Contact us directly for a free demo and see for yourself how our platform can help you grow and target today's most profitable niches.



Read it online:





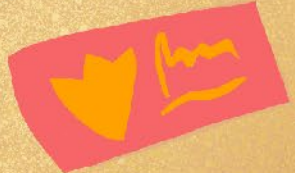
Your
Brand



Your Brand



BUY



Your Brand



MARCH 18, 2021

5 Ways to Build and Boost Your Brand with E-Commerce Marketplace Listings



Establishing a brand is a complex proposition. It is so much more than just a sleek logo, name recognition, or a strategic plan. Effective branding is all about evoking an emotional response in customers as well as creating connections between your products and consumers.

It's the difference between "Snap, Crackle, and Pop" and a bag of rice puffs. It's why people will pay more for coffee in a white paper cup with a green mermaid on it rather than in a plain white one. It's why a laptop with a half-eaten piece of fruit on its lid just seems to "run better" than one without.

Without even mentioning a company name, you know exactly what these brands are. While you may not share these same feelings, you understand that countless people out there – many in your own life – do.

To reach this level of brand awareness takes a multifaceted approach. SEO experts, like Neil Patel, have their own theories and strategies for reaching this status of notoriety and customer mindshare. However, some experts warn that e-commerce marketplaces have little or no role in establishing an effective brand image. While this argument makes sense on the surface – selling on a marketplace is both competitive and in service of the marketplace brand as much (if not more so) than your own – it overlooks many of the positive brand-building opportunities these channels can provide.

With Sellercloud's omnichannel e-commerce platform, you can leverage listings across a broad swath of channels to help establish, define, and grow your brand's stature.

1. Marketplaces Offer Opportunities for Customer Acquisition and Retention

Your brand doesn't mean much if no one sees your products. One of the areas where e-commerce marketplaces excel is in putting your product in front of an astounding number of potential customers. With over 2.4 billion website visits in September 2020 alone, Amazon Marketplace has an unbelievable reach as an online retailer. Similarly, other e-commerce channels of all types and sizes are enjoying one of the most drastic periods of growth in history.

Getting your products into these ecosystems is a great way to build a customer base. Although people may not be coming to your merchandise by searching specifically for your brand, the reach of these marketplaces gives you a chance to prove the value of your products and establish a reputation. Customer satisfaction that is surfaced through positive reviews can expedite this growth and provide testimonials that can help in future brand marketing efforts.

What's more, consistent positive performances in these spaces can set the table for repeat purchases – one of the Holy Grails of e-commerce success. When satisfied customers return to their order histories to seek out your

products and your brand to buy from you again, you know you are on to something.

Sellercloud's omnichannel e-commerce platform makes it easy to list your products across multiple marketplaces from a single interface. You can bring your listing catalog to a wider audience, while also tracking key metrics like sales, profit and loss, inventory, RMA requests, and shipping trends to optimize your ability to keep customers satisfied.

2. E-Commerce Marketplaces Are Great Testing Grounds for Product Marketing and Establishing Your Brand's Tone

Because e-commerce marketplaces are full of competitors from across the globe, they are a great laboratory for working out what will make your brand stand out from the crowd.

Part of what makes a good brand is a personality – an almost intangible belief of what your brand is and what it means. You are trying to create an overall comfort and appreciation for all of the products and the level of service you provide. Everything – from your product name to your logo, your listing descriptions to your social media presence, your product packaging to your product's color options – comes together to create that feeling (there's that word again) of what your brand brings to its customers. It can take some serious trial and error to land on how to get all of these elements to work in concert. However, once you do, customers begin to feel what

your brand is and what it is about across all of these characteristics.

You can utilize your marketplace channels for this trial and error as you craft your brand's persona. Sellercloud's catalog features allow you to create, manipulate, and tweak your listing content across all of the places where you sell from within a single, easy-to-use interface. Using our shadow SKU features, you can even A/B test different titles, descriptions, and images to see which perform the best. Ultimately, when sales and repeat orders trend upwards, you're onto something!

3. E-Commerce Channels Can Help You Establish and Assess Your International Appeal

Although selling internationally is not as complicated as you might assume (especially with Sellercloud's international shipping and payment integrations), it may not always be the right move for all brands and products.

Listing products on third-party marketplace channels with international customer bases can serve as a good litmus test for what products are best suited for selling abroad. Furthermore, you can work out listing characteristics like tone, images, price, and even vernacular that resonate with different international buyers.

Furthermore, you can take advantage of marketplace fulfillment programs like Fulfilment by Amazon (FBA) or eBay's Global Shipping Program to reduce some of the

logistical challenges that come when you are expanding beyond being a domestically focused brand.

4. Leverage E-Commerce Listings to Boost Your General Brand Exposure

It can be difficult to get noticed online. This factor is why search engine optimization (SEO) has become and will remain a multi-billion dollar industry.

SEO is a critical consideration across your brand's entire web presence and one worthy of time and monetary investment. SEO is a critical pathway to increasing your visibility and accessing both new and existing customers. All of the effort you put into crafting the impressions that your brand creates needs to be seen to work. Thankfully, there are plenty of strategies that can help you to boost your search engine rankings.

One of the most important (and one that often gets overlooked from a brand-building perspective), is using marketplaces to increase your search engine exposure. The same algorithms that comb through your brand homepage also crawl through e-commerce channels – big and small. This fact means that if you are listing products across multiple marketplaces with keywords and content that match what people are looking for, your brand could ideally appear multiple times across a single search engine results page (SERP).

The same notion holds true for multimedia searches. With the proper keywords and description content, images and videos tied to your marketplace listings could

fill up the search results of potential customers. This circumstance presents a valuable opportunity to help bring the look and feel of your product experience to life in relatable and intriguing ways – all while also doing so in profitable sales channels.

5. Use Your Brand's Status as a Competitive Advantage

Third-party e-commerce channels can provide big value even after you are farther along in crafting and honing your brand's image (and even after you are thriving as a first-party seller on your own).

Although there is something to be said for the profit margins and control afforded by transitioning from third-party to first-party sales, your brand could grow for years and never come close to the customer bases of some of the world's most popular online marketplaces. Rather than abandoning third-party marketplaces as your brand grows, consider how your brand's reputation can be used to outmuscle products from lesser-known or unknown brands in your products' categories.

With high enough volume, you could sell at a discount and compete for Buy Box supremacy. Alternatively, you could lean on your brand's reputation to command a higher price and avoid the cutthroat repricing race altogether.

In the end, a strong brand gives you the flexibility to wield marketplace channels strategically – generating profits, while also attracting more and more people to what it is that defines the feeling of your products and company.

Sellercloud's omnichannel e-commerce platform is the perfect partner for establishing and growing your brand both through marketplace listings and your own first-party sales channels. Contact us directly for a free demo of all that our brand can do for yours.



Read it online:





MARCH 25, 2021

How Much Warehouse Space Does Your E-Commerce Business Need?



Dollar for dollar, the decisions surrounding how much warehouse space to keep are some of the most critical to an e-commerce business's bottom line. Too little space can hamstring your brand's growth. Too much means you are wasting money paying for space you don't need. Striking the optimal balance is the goal.

Making things even more challenging, the demands for warehouse space continue to outpace the supply – driving up costs and forcing businesses to make bolder predictions about their current and future warehousing needs.

If you're reading this article, you're probably asking yourself, "So, how much warehouse space do I actually need?"

The reality is: This is a question that must be asked and re-asked many times throughout an e-commerce business's life. There is a plethora of factors that shape the answer – many of which stem from other critical questions and self-assessments.

What are you selling?

No decision about warehousing (or any element of your logistics for that matter) can happen without giving thought to all of the SKUs your e-commerce business ships out. You need to consider physical factors like differences in size, shape, and weight as well as specific product variations like color and style. You need a

space that can both house and organize these varieties in logical, accessible ways.

Thought must also be given to special product needs like climate control and seasonality. Housing heat-sensitive merchandise in a unairconditioned space is a nonstarter. Having to store your off-season merchandise in and among your highest-moving products is also not ideal.

Taken a step further, every time a new SKU is added into the mix, it can have meaningful implications for your warehousing needs. Adding products with differences in size, shape, weight, and packaging can lead to a significant reshuffling of your warehouse floor and rack planning.

Do you have enough room to grow your e-commerce business?

E-commerce continues to grow and thrive as a global industry. Individual e-commerce sellers are riding this wave as they see their individual brands and businesses take off. More sales equal greater inventory needs. More inventory requires more space.

As such, any calculations about your warehousing needs today must account for your anticipated needs for the future. Establishing and optimizing warehouses is an expensive and time-consuming process – especially for the first time. Having to frequently repeat the process as your business scales can take a big bite out of your newfound success and hamper future growth.

This stage is where the ability to track your sales performances and inventory movements comes in. Sellercloud's omnichannel e-commerce platform helps you to generate and track the business intelligence (BI) data that can provide the most reliably predictive insights into both where your business is right now and where it will be tomorrow. With these figures, you can make profit-driven decisions about your optimal warehouse conditions.

How long does it take to pick, pack, and ship your orders?

When considering how much warehouse space you need, don't forget to allow adequate space for processing. Of course, there needs to be enough space for your products, but there also needs to be dedicated space for warehouse employees to transition those products both in and out of the warehouse quickly and accurately.

Beyond their obvious roles in product storage, warehouses have a profound effect on how efficiently your merchandise gets shipped to awaiting customers. This factor is one of the most drastic differences e-shop owners feel when transitioning from picking and packing in their garage to running (or outsourcing to) a more streamlined, professional warehousing operation.

We at Sellercloud not only understand the logistical implications of a high-functioning warehouse team, but we understand the financial implications as well. Many of the products and warehouse management systems

are priced prohibitively high – especially for smaller and emerging e-commerce businesses. That's why we have made it a point to develop patented technology and scalable order processing tools to help your warehouse run as efficiently and cost-effectively as possible.

Skustack is a warehouse management platform that makes tracking your inventory simple and reliable – no matter where it is stored or where it is in transit. Our patented technology has been designed from the ground up to be the ideal solution for omnichannel e-commerce businesses looking for total control over their stock and warehouses.

Similarly, Skublox is our scalable pick-to-light, put-to-light, pack-to-light system created to make warehouse efficiency affordable and dependable. Warehouse workers can trade clipboards and printouts for scanners and touchscreens – increasing productivity through the use of familiar and intuitive technological tools.

In the end, part of selecting the ideal warehouse is also about ensuring the space for efficient logistical workflows. Pairing your ideal space with the tools and platforms to get the most out of it matters.

Where are your customers?

The needs for more space or a more streamlined order processing workflow aren't the only reasons an e-commerce business may need to invest in warehouse space. Having your inventory in proximity to your highest-volume customer bases can provide significant savings

in shipping costs and fulfillment time. This condition is particularly true for international sales. Establishing bi-coastal warehouse locations can shave days or even weeks off the time it takes for customers to receive their orders.

What about returns?

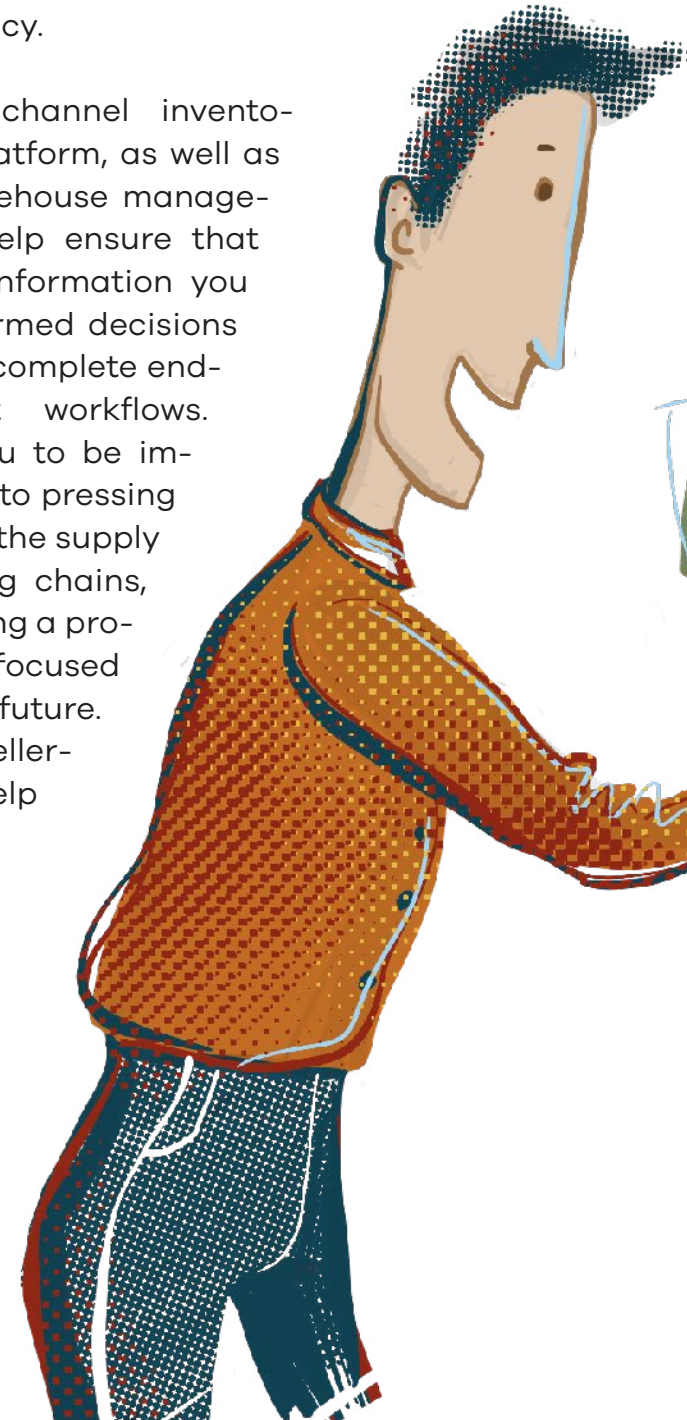
Returns and RMAs are an inescapable component of selling goods online. That said, with the proper plans and procedures in place, you can ensure that they don't cost your business more time and money than necessary.

When planning for warehouse space, don't forget that you will need places for these returned products to be shipped, assessed, and processed. Failure to do so could result in delayed customer service and logjams of incoming and outgoing shipments. Stacks of unprocessed, returned merchandise can eat into valuable rack and floor space. Furthermore, but the distance customers must ship returned merchandise (something that has increasingly become a seller's burden) can also add extra cost. Although this expense may not be your biggest concern when choosing warehouse sizes and locations, it should definitely not be ignored.

When all is said and done, there is no easy answer to the question of how much warehouse space you truly need. It is a moving target that ebbs and flows with the industry, your growth, and your needs. The key is accepting that it is an aspect of your business that is worthy of routine evaluation and doing what you can to make

data-driven, growth-focused decisions to minimize cost while at the same time maximizing efficiency.

Sellercloud's omnichannel inventory management platform, as well as our full line of warehouse management tools, can help ensure that you have all the information you need to make informed decisions pertaining to your complete end-to-end fulfillment workflows. Our tools allow you to be immediately reactive to pressing needs anywhere in the supply or order processing chains, while also supporting a proactive and growth-focused look toward your future. For more on how Sellercloud is ready to help take your e-commerce business to the next level, contact us for a free demo.





Read it online:







APRIL 22, 2021

Forget 4PL and 5PL: Running Your Own Warehouse is Possible and Affordable

Many e-commerce businesses start out small. Whether it's a small business run from home or a brick-and-mortar store looking to open up to an online customer base, there comes a point where the process of storing inventory and fulfilling orders outgrows the back room. As your orders increase, so do the work hours required to get them out the door and the amount of inventory you must keep on-hand to do so. It's time to scale.

For many brands, this concern can lead to a search for outside help. Marketplace-based third-party logistics services like Fulfillment by Amazon (FBA) or one of our other integrated omnichannel 3PL solutions can take some of the burden of storing and shipping orders off your hands. Increasingly, logistics services are touting 4PL and 5PL models that take even more of the responsibilities of acquiring and maintaining fulfillment partnerships off sellers' plates.

Although turning to a third party can be a quick fix to help you keep up, it cuts into the control you have over your brand as well as the profits you should be reaping with each sale. The more reliant you become on outside partners for your logistical success, the less benefit you will reap as your e-commerce business grows and scales.

How the Differences Between 1PL, 2PL, 3PL, 4PL, and 5PL Impact Your Bottom Line

E-commerce supply chains and order processing routines can look very different, depending upon the degree to which companies keep their logistics in-house and how much of the storage and movement of products is outsourced. Generally, the fewer partners and services involved, the greater the potential for profitability. Ultimately, there is a balance that must be struck between the costs and time associated with remaining independent and the potential for savings that can come with outside service partners.

- **1PL – first-party logistics** handling is the model of independence. In a 1PL model, the business is solely responsible for its own warehousing, order processing, and shipping. It requires storage space, transportation vehicles, and all the employees that go with them. Given the far geographic reach of most modern e-commerce businesses, 1PL is pretty rare. It is a challenge to establish and maintain timely and cost-effective product distribution alone.
- **2PL – second-party logistics** models are a sweet-spot for many e-commerce brands. The business is largely responsible for warehousing their own products but relies on shipping partners to handle distribution – both internally and when orders are shipped out to customers. Sometimes outsourced warehousing is considered part of a 2PL service – particularly when the storage happens as part of the shipping process.

With strong inventory management (IMS) and warehouse management systems (WMS) like Sellercloud and its family of supporting products, 2PL can be the ideal way for e-commerce businesses to maintain as much profitability, scalability, and independent brand control as possible (more on this later).

- **3PL – third-party logistics** is a widely used model for outsourcing e-commerce order fulfillment. In addition to handling product and supply chain shipments, 3PL partners will take on the warehouse-level responsibilities of picking, packing, and shipping orders on a business's behalf. Sellers must still be sure to keep their 3PL partners supplied with inventory to be able to do so. This circumstance is one area where Sellercloud's omnichannel inventory management features can be especially helpful. The combination of inventory tracking, low stock alerts, and predictive purchasing can keep your business running smoothly even if you are working with a 3PL provider. What's more, Sellercloud's profit and loss (P&L) calculations can include 3PL service costs so you can keep on top of how effectively your 3PL partnerships are paying off. Simply put, 3PLs are attractive options for businesses looking to scale without having to cross the threshold of full-blown warehouse management.
- **4PL – fourth-party logistics** take things a step further beyond a simple 3PL arrangement. Rather than managing the physical movement of a business's products, they outsource the outsourcing. In other words 4PL services select and contract a 3PL partner on your behalf. The pitch is that they can use their

expertise and business partnerships to find the ideal service to save your e-commerce business money. However, this concierge service comes at a cost that can quickly eat into those savings. Moreover, contracting a 4PL partner means handing over a significant part of your e-commerce operations to outside companies. Should mistakes happen and customer complaints arise, third-party marketplaces and sales channels aren't going to care that it was the company selected by your 4PL that dropped the ball; the complaints will still be tied to your brand. As such, venturing into the worlds of 4PL and beyond becomes a significantly riskier (and costlier) proposition.

- **5PL – fifth-party logistics** services select and contract multiple 3PL, shipping, and other logistical support partners on your behalf. 5PL providers aggregate multiple 3PL services for your company (and their other clients) and use the sheer volume of their partnerships to try and drive down shipping and storage costs. Again, these savings of both energy and cost are attractive but they come with a price tag and an even further relinquishment of control over your e-commerce brand.

Managing Your Own Logistics and Warehouses is a More Profitable Approach

For a growing e-commerce business, a 2PL approach is likely the ideal. You have significant authority and oversight over your products and your fulfillment

workflows, but also get the benefit of partnering with an established, reliable shipping infrastructure.

Yet, the sticking point for many growing e-commerce businesses is warehousing. On the surface, running a warehouse can seem overly complicated; but when your e-commerce business grows to the point where your inventory and order fulfillment needs outpace your ability to keep up, a warehousing solution becomes an unavoidable necessity. In these pivotal moments, many brands choose to sign on with a 3PL.

Unfortunately, this reliance on 3PL partners can become increasingly costly. That said, for many e-commerce sellers, the prospect of moving away from a trusted third-party logistics service and taking control (and responsibility) for their own fulfillment logistics can feel risky. The comfort and security of outsourcing distribution workflows is a tough thing to walk away from.

That's where Sellercloud comes in. We have made it our goal to make it possible for e-commerce businesses of any type or size to take the reins of their logistics. The Sellercloud omnichannel inventory management platform makes 2PL fulfillment affordable, intuitive, and scalable. Every aspect of managing and moving your inventory can be coordinated and tracked through a unified, cloud-based interface, keeping every member of your team on the same page – even across multiple offices and warehouses. We offer integrations with over a dozen domestic and international

shipping providers as well as over 120 other top-name e-commerce partners.

With Skustack, our omnichannel e-commerce WMS platform, your warehouse can take advantage of patented inventory scanning and tracking technology to ensure that every item in your inventory can be accounted for, located, shipped, and tracked with precision. Even as you scale across multiple locations, warehouses, and shipping partners, you remain in total control of your stock.

Skublox, our scalable pick- and pack-to-light warehouse management system, can help you to create user-friendly and error-proof warehouse fulfillment workflows. No matter how many or how few products you move, you can have the confidence that every customer order is being processed and packed quickly and correctly. No more worrying about incomplete or incorrect orders.

Ready to take the next step in controlling the growth and profitability of your e-commerce business? Contact us directly for a free demo.

Read it online:







APRIL 27, 2021

Removing Dead Stock Must Be More than Just a Spring Cleaning



Spring is here! At your house, this season probably means spring cleaning time – breaking out the cleaning supplies and getting to work prepping for the new season. Unfortunately, this concern may not be the case at your warehouse. At this moment there are countless piles of merchandise collecting dust in warehouses across the globe. It is dead stock; most has been forgotten and none of it will ever be purchased.

However, even if you were planning to do an annual inventory spring cleaning, it's not enough. Carrying dead stock, even for a little while, is a massive mistake that is costing you money.

Dead stock costs you in a variety of ways:

- **Manufacturing costs** – if you fabricate or in some way make the products you sell, there are associated costs you can't recoup. The materials, supplies, shipping, and labor to produce these dead stock products has already been spent.
- **Purchasing costs** – if your e-commerce business purchases inventory to resell that then becomes dead stock, you lose money on your investment. In most cases, you can't simply return these products to your supplier or recoup your acquisition costs.
- **Shipping costs** – if you pay to ship merchandise to a 3PL or fulfillment center, you won't see a return on this investment if said merchandise becomes dead stock. Furthermore, depending upon your 3PL partners, you may have to pay again to have this

unsellable merchandise removed or shipped back to you.

- **Carrying costs** – unlike the aforementioned dead stock costs, this is an area where you can cut your losses. Paying month after month to store inventory that won't sell is something you can put an end to. As long as you know where this inventory is and how to remove it, you can prevent these unsellable products from becoming a perpetual drain on your resources.

Having a plan to proactively recognize and eliminate dead stock is an oft-overlooked way to cut your costs and boost your bottom line. As an e-commerce seller, you have many factors that affect your cost of goods sold (COGS) calculations. By reducing these costs, you increase your profit margins as well as your pricing flexibility – potentially making you even more competitive on the marketplaces where you sell.

Given the stakes, eliminating the waste of space, time, and money caused by dead stock cannot be a once-in-a-while task; it must be an integral part of your overall warehouse management system (WMS) plan.

You can't fix a dead stock problem you don't see

One of the main reasons that e-commerce businesses wind up carrying dead stock quarter after quarter is that they don't realize the problem exists. Without a proper WMS like Skustack, it can be easy to lose track

of unsellable products in your (or someone else's) warehouse.

This specific issue was one that we sought to cure when developing Skustack, our patented WMS platform. Among its cadre of features, Skustack includes a precise and accurate inventory tracking system that helps you know where all of your inventory is at all times across all of your warehousing locations. Skustack even allows you to pinpoint the location of a particular piece of merchandise down to the bin level.

This degree of precision makes it possible to maintain accurate inventory records across your entire company. For added peace of mind, Skustack's cycle counting feature allows you to conduct automated audits for all of your stock, no matter which bins or warehouses the pieces may be hiding in.

Together, these features can make it easy to suss out where your dead stock is lurking and decide how to deal with it.

Know your fulfillment partners' and Third-Party Logistics (3PL) companies' dead stock removal policies

Many e-commerce sellers rely upon outside help for their inventory storage and warehousing needs. Whether it's the Fulfillment by Amazon (FBA) program or an arrangement with a 3PL provider, these partnerships can ease much of the burden that comes with storing, picking, and shipping orders to customers. That said,

when you can't physically lay hands on your products, it can be challenging to identify and eliminate dead stockpiles. Skustack will undoubtedly help you to locate dead stock, but then what?

Thankfully, most outside logistical services offer ways of handling dead, damaged, returned, or otherwise unwanted merchandise. If you know what the dead stock is, where it is, how much you need removed, and how you want it handled (destruction or return shipping are the most common options), your fulfillment/3PL partner should have a plan to help you do so.

However, it's not going to come cheap. Most providers charge fees for locating and removing your dead stock for you. This expense becomes yet another dead stock cost that you won't recoup. The best plan is to try to avoid the problem in the first place.

Make identifying and removing dead stock a year-round priority

Regular inventory audits need to be part of any warehouse management plan. Yet, ask any warehouse employees how they feel about hand counting stock. Not only is it tedious, time consuming, and costly, but it is seldom wholly accurate. If that's your only option, it becomes easy to justify conducting these periodic checks only a handful of times per year. Unfortunately, this practice means that it may be months before dead stock in your warehouse gets the attention it needs to stop costing you money.

On the other hand, cycle counting with Skustack is a streamlined, perpetual alternative that helps you keep much more accurate inventory counts – all without wasted time or labor disrupting your day-to-day business. You know what you have on hand and where it all is. In this way, Skustack makes it easy to find and flag dead stock before it becomes even more costly than it has to be.

Of course, not having dead stock in the first place is the real goal. Skustack makes it easy for you to keep tabs on what is selling and what refuses to move. With our patented WMS tool, you can carry out a two-pronged approach to combat the dead stock problems: clearing your unsellable inventory and minimizing how much of your inventory actually becomes dead stock in the first place. Contact us directly to see how we can not only help you keep tabs on the locations of all of your inventory, but also how we can help you keep all of it moving.

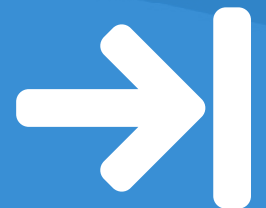
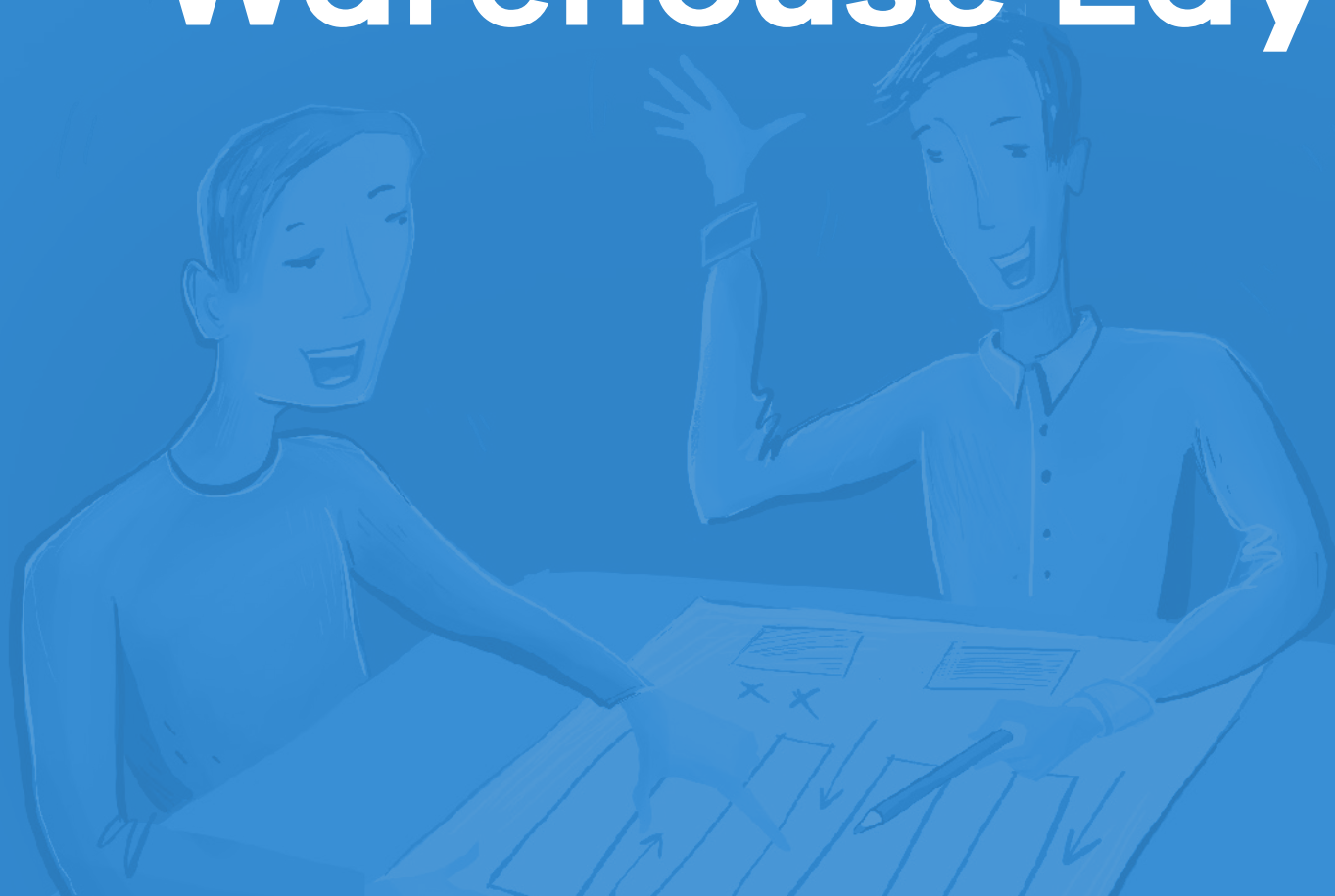


Read it online:



APRIL 29, 2021

Best Practices for Optimizing Your Warehouse Layout





As your e-commerce business scales, so do your needs for warehouse locations to store inventory and fulfill orders. Beyond the physical space, you need a warehousing plan that can expand and adapt as well. When facing this challenge, it can be tempting to outsource your inventory and fulfillment responsibilities to a third party.

Not so fast.

The reality is: with the right planning, tools, and warehouse management system (WMS), creating and maintaining your own warehouse space isn't as overwhelming as you might assume. Moreover running your own safe, efficient, and optimized warehouse will both maximize your profits and put you in the driver's seat toward further growth.

To start, you need to figure out how much warehouse space your e-commerce business needs. The next step is to map out the best use of that space. In doing so, there are several best practices worth considering.

E-commerce Warehouses Need Dedicated Spaces for Dedicated Purposes

Instead of looking at your new warehouse as a daunting blank canvas, start breaking down the space into regions and critical locations – compartmentalizing all of the inventory management and fulfillment responsibilities into designated areas.

Reception

You need a dedicated space where you can receive incoming supply and transition it into your inventory. This requirement means space to sort, catalog, and scan this merchandise so it can get moved into the appropriate storage area. Depending on what you are selling, this provision could require anything, from rows of sorting bins to pallet landing spots.

Whatever your storage and organizational needs are in this space, your receiving area needs to function accurately to make sure that your newest inventory is properly accounted for. Reception must also work quickly to avoid logjams at your receiving dock.

Skustack, Sellercloud's patented warehouse management platform, has been designed from the ground up to create and maintain accurate inventory records for every piece of merchandise that enters your possession. Whether you are receiving purchase orders (POs) or returns, Skustack makes the process simple and intuitive. This workflow is made even more effective when you commit to a dedicated reception area in your warehouse design.

Inventory Storage

The largest footprint of any region of your warehouse will likely be your storage area. This combination of bins, racks, and stacks needs to be organized and optimized so that products can be quickly sorted and stored, while at the same time, be picked for outgoing orders.

Laying out the storage section of your warehouse can be a puzzle in and of itself. Typically, your highest volume SKUs should be most easily accessible to the other areas of your warehouse. Conversely, your seasonal and over-stock merchandise can be tucked farther back from the main pick path. Other considerations like product variations, inventory sizes, and forklift accessibility may also come into play when determining what goes where.

All things considered, an optimized storage plan allows your sorting and picking teams to get to what they need as quickly as possible. Similarly, as customer patterns shift, you should be able to adjust your stock locations accordingly. Flexibility is a key component of effective warehouse planning. If properly managed with an effective WMS in place, a dynamic warehouse will always outperform a static one.

Working together, Sellercloud's robust inventory management tools can provide you with the metrics to recognize these changing patterns, while Skustack can provide the means to adjust stock locations without disorienting your warehouse staff. In the end, an optimized storage area means a worker can scan a code and know exactly where the item they are looking for is located. From there, the product can be picked and moved through the warehouse workflow toward packing and shipping.

Returns

Returned merchandise needs to be processed and handled separately from new inventory. What's more, RMA

stock must be dealt with before it becomes a pile of dead stock, wreaking havoc on your customer service metrics.

This is an area where Skustack is especially valuable as a WMS tool. Workers can quickly scan, assess, and process returned shipments quickly and move them along to either be re-sorted, refurbished, or destroyed. Making space for this workflow in your warehouse design helps maintain prompt and accurate RMA processing as a priority.

Picking and Packing

You will certainly want to have a specific location for your picking team to procure and organize the goods ready for outbound orders. Doing this undertaking on the fly in either the storage or shipping areas of your warehouse can quickly lead to issues like gridlock or hazardous clutter. Instead, having a dedicated space for orders to be picked and assembled can keep things running smoothly.

Skublox, our modular put-to-light, pick-to-light system, is a useful tool for driving this type of workflow. Goods can be picked in batches, scanned, and placed into dynamically color-coded slots that show workers what goes where. Once an order is fully sorted, the lights on the picking side go out, and the shipping side can take over pulling and packing for shipment.

Shipping

This department of your warehouse is the end of the road for your outgoing packages. This stage also means it is your last chance to ensure that everything is labeled

correctly and loaded onto the appropriate outbound vehicle. Even if everything has gone perfectly up to this point in the package's lifecycle, an error here can really cost you.

Such an important part of the fulfillment workflow definitely requires its own dedicated space. In some cases, packing may be included as part of this area. In others, it makes more sense to give the packing process its own separate space. Factors to consider include the quantity of packages you ship, the number of different shipping options you offer, and the variety of products that can be packed into a single order. The simpler your average order, the more reasonable it may be to include this as part of your shipping department's charge.

Regardless of your shipping circumstances or the size of your e-commerce business, Shipbridge, Sellercloud's included shipping platform, can help keep this aspect of your warehouse running efficiently. Shipbridge makes it easy to create custom rules based on package characteristics, such as shipping provider, destination, package weight, order value, marketplace, and more. No matter how many different channels and shipping carriers you partner with, you can be sure that the packages all get properly labeled and shipped the right way.

When In Doubt, Follow the Physical Flow of Your Inventory

Having dedicated spaces for every stage of the inventory management process is essential, but so is properly

configuring where these dedicated spaces fit into your overall layout.

When arranging your warehouse, putting the puzzle together starts with tracing the lifecycle of your SKUs. Do it well, and your inventory should be entering and exiting like a well-oiled machine.

Start with your shipping docks – where inventory comes in and where it ultimately goes out. If your warehouse has the option of separate dock spaces for loading and unloading, that is the ideal. You can lay out a path from receiving, to storage, to picking and sorting, and to shipping that flows like a river. It doesn't matter if your warehouse is shaped like a U, an L, or an I. If you can create a direct path from reception to shipping, do it!

If you are forced to use the same docks for both shipping and receiving, recognize that this shared space is a prime location for bottlenecks. You will need to design warehouse workflows that can account for this circumstance. The key is to have systems in place that prioritize keeping that shared dock space clear as much as possible.

Regardless of your warehouse shape or dock configuration, the tightest loop from receiving to shipping should be reserved for processing the orders for your best-selling merchandise. Prioritize physical efficiency when settling on your final layout.

In all of this process, don't forget about returns. Oftentimes, returns get unloaded and relegated to piles off in the corner, quick to be overlooked. In the highly competitive world of e-commerce marketplaces, it matters to process returns as quickly and efficiently as you do your new orders. It is a key part of maintaining your marketplace standing and customer satisfaction ratings.

Have a strong RMA workflow and designated physical space where processing returns can be regularly carried out. In most cases, returned merchandise will wind up getting processed and stored separately from your new stock. As such, opt for a location close to both your receiving area and where this storage will be situated, so as not to interfere with your other logistical workflows.

Whole-Warehouse Considerations

Zooming out to look at your warehouse layout as a whole, there are several general items that you should always keep in mind when optimizing the warehouse's physical efficiency:

- **Open space is critical.** In the big picture, extra space provides room to grow – giving you the potential to carry additional inventory levels and add additional SKUs to your catalog. At the granular level, however, space means every person, item, and piece of equipment has the ability to easily move and maneuver through stacks, around bins, and between areas.

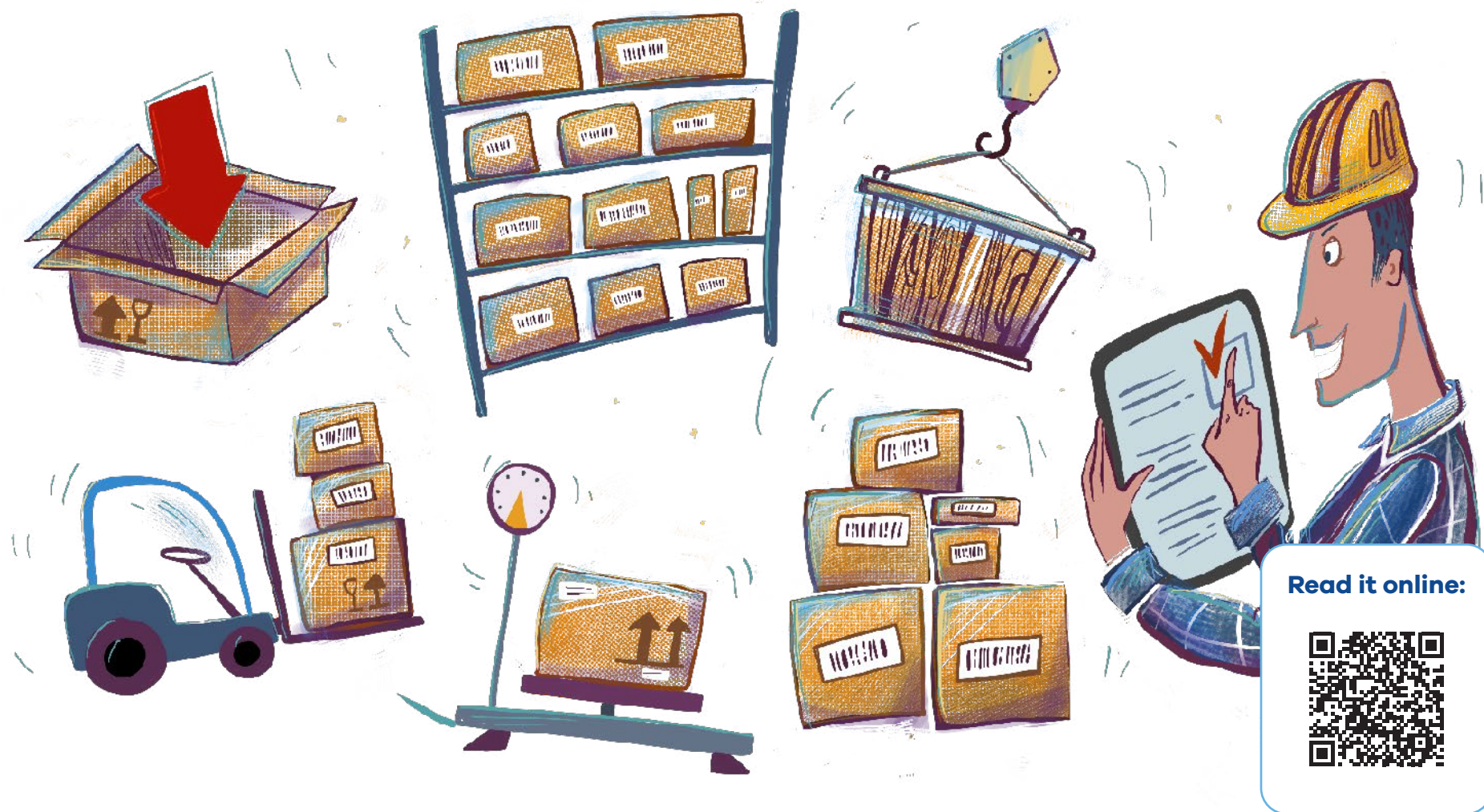
Ultimately, space is something that must be planned for in advance to help maintain a smooth physical workflow

and promote a safe working environment. Even the most optimized pick path becomes irrelevant if inventory and warehouse workers can't move through it freely. When aisles and movement areas begin to get cluttered, it may be a sign that you need to reconsider your warehouse layout (or even consider expanding to a larger one).

- **Lighting matters.** Every shelf, bin, packing surface, loading dock, and corner of your warehouse should be brightly lit. Not only does this procedure make it easy for your warehouse team to find items and correctly process orders, but it also reduces the likelihood of on-the-job accidents. Properly positioned LED lighting can illuminate every corner of your warehouse and help keep operating costs down compared to traditional fluorescents or halogens.
- **Plan ahead for technology integration;** it becomes infinitely more challenging if left to the last minute. When designing your warehouse spaces, be sure to account for the power, networking, and charging needs of the tech tools you will be using. Identify convenient and secure locations for your critical tech so that it is always within reach and ready to go when your workers need it.
- **Training your staff on warehouse protocols and procedures is a necessity.** Having a perfectly designed warehouse system is pointless if it lacks the team for implementation. Moreover, there are safety and security concerns that you must be proactive about. This can be a time-consuming process, but it is unavoidable.

That is why we have designed the Sellercloud platform and technologies to be as intuitive and user-friendly as possible. With Skustack's android-based scanning interfaces, onboarding new employees is made easier by design. Similarly, Skublox's put- and pick-to-light system keeps accurate order processing simple and streamlined, while Shipbridge takes the guesswork out of matching the right shipping labels to the right packages.

In each of these cases, our technological tools allow both your warehouse and staffing to scale with ease, while keeping training hours to a minimum. Want to see for yourself how Sellercloud, Skustack, Skublox, and Shipbridge can help you optimize your own e-commerce warehouse? Contact us directly for a free demo and consultation.





MAY 13, 2021

Make Improving Your Amazon Order Defect Rate a Priority



Compliance is critical when selling on third-party marketplaces. Failing to live up to a channel's terms of service can mean account suspension or even termination.

For Amazon sellers, being compliant also means keeping up specific seller metrics. Perhaps the most important of these is Order Defect Rate (ODR).

ODR is measured over 60-day intervals and is calculated using a simple formula: the total number of orders with at least one defect divided by the number of total orders.

Amazon calculates "defects" in the following categories:

- **Negative Feedback Rate** – This metric is negatively impacted when customers leave 1- or 2- star reviews on their experiences ordering from your e-commerce business.
- **A-to-Z Guarantee Claims** – These claims are made by customers when they do not receive their product on time, receive the wrong product, receive a damaged product, and/or you fail to respond to a refund request.
- **Credit Card Chargebacks** – Every time you issue a refund to a customer (or a bank does so on a customer's behalf), this rate increases. Although Amazon is clear that this rate calculation does not include chargebacks due to customer fraud, in some cases, the burden of proof may be on the seller.

Any time an order qualifies for at least one of the defects listed above, your ODR rate increases (NOTE: orders with multiple defects only count as a single defective order). Once your ODR rises above 1%, Amazon reserves the right to deactivate your account – temporarily or permanently.

Account suspension is no joke. Amazon instantly removes the "Buy Box" from all of your non-FBA listings. Payments from customers are frozen so that they can be used to refund customers. You are given 17 days to issue a written remedy plan detailing exactly how you will get your account back on track. Ask any seller who has gone through the process – it's a headache you most certainly want to avoid.

Be Proactive About Your ODR

Even for merchants with large order volume, 1% doesn't leave much wiggle room. If you take your Amazon sales seriously, you need to keep an eye on your ODR metrics and be proactive about keeping them in check. You can be sure Amazon will be watching.

The Customer Service Performance section of Amazon's Account Health page gives you the ability to download your Order Defect Rate report at any time. This convenience should be a regular part of assessing your third-party marketplace efficiency. Ignorance will never be a valid excuse should Amazon find fault with your ODR numbers. Be proactive and ensure that you have the proper tools and workflows to prevent customer satisfaction issues.

Compliance is a key component of the Sellercloud family of products and services. Our omnichannel inventory management platform features native integrations with Amazon to help our customers keep on top of every aspect of their marketplace orders – end-to-end. No matter what the issue, you can feel confident that you know where all your orders, payments, and inventory are at all times.

Skustack is our patented warehouse management system (WMS) that gives you even more granular access to the ins and outs of your inventory movement. It doesn't matter whether your products are in your own warehouses, sitting in an FBA fulfillment center, being handled by a 3PL provider or in transit somewhere in between every movement is tracked, recorded, and instantly accessible.

Tools like these help you keep negative customer experiences to a minimum, while also giving you instant access to the information you need to help respond to customer complaints promptly.

That said, selling on a third-party marketplace all but ensures that you will have customer service issues to respond to. There are several ways you can keep them to a minimum and prevent them from disrupting your Amazon sales.

Improving Your Negative Feedback Rate

You can't control what people say about your products or your service, but you can do your very best to ensure

as positive an experience as possible. Even so negative feedback can provide useful opportunities to interact with customers and find ways to improve your e-commerce business.

- **Reply** – Use negative feedback as the start of a conversation about the areas where your products, sales, and/or fulfillment experiences aren't delivering – literally or figuratively. Negative feedback is a cry for attention. Be prepared to offer that attention as quickly, calmly, and professionally as possible. Will you be able to make every customer happy? Probably not. However, there is a lot to be gained from the effort.
- **Look for patterns** – A random negative comment is bound to appear from time to time, but when the comments appear with regularity, it can be the sign of a larger underlying issue. Pairing negative feedback with order data can surface issues stemming from product defects, fulfillment center issues, packaging mishaps, or other order processing slip-ups.
- **Assess your product quality** – The higher the quality of your products, the less likely customers will be dissatisfied when their packages arrive. Negative feedback could be a sign that you need to adjust your catalog or seek alternative suppliers. Although upgrading your products or cutting certain items entirely can eat into your margins, both are much better options than losing your Amazon account altogether.
- **Catch cancellations quickly** – Order cancellations can trigger hits to your ODR once payments have

been processed. Resolving a cancellation quickly can sometimes help you avoid this negative outcome.

Not only can catching these errors early help minimize customer dissatisfaction scores, but it can also help prevent unnecessary losses. Using an inbox management platform, like Memaila, allows you to automate order holds the second that cancellation request emails are received. Your products stay in your warehouse and your customer's payments stay in their accounts.

Reducing Your A-Z Guarantee Claims

Most A-Z Guarantee claims boil down to customers feeling that you were unable to deliver on the promise of your transaction. The problem could be anything from an incorrect item, a lost shipment, a damaged item, or a claim of false advertising. Much like negative feedback, there are elements of A-Z Guarantee claims that may feel like they are beyond your control. Yet, when patterns emerge, you need to take notice and remedy them as quickly as possible.

- **Listing accuracy** – One of the big challenges in online shopping compared to brick-and-mortar retail is that customers can't put their hands on the products before they purchase them. As a result, they are left to trust the listings and product information you provide. Routinely review your listings to ensure they are as accurate and truthful as possible. Everything from the color clarity of your images to your shipping policies needs to be crystal clear to avoid the potential for dissatisfied customers. This

practice both reduces the odds of receiving an A-Z Guarantee claim and also cuts down on credit card chargebacks.

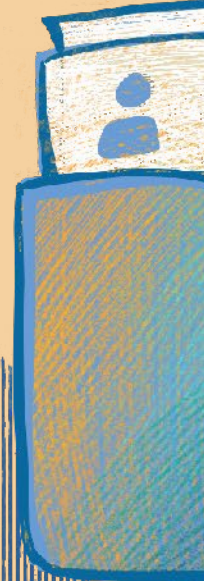
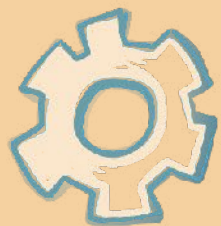
- **Fulfillment workflows** – Even if customers are 100% satisfied with the physical products they purchase, a poor order fulfillment process can sour the entire transaction. One of the leading causes of A-Z Guarantee claims is orders that arrive after the maximum estimated delivery date (or simply don't arrive at all). Keeping order processing times as low as possible is a must for selling on Amazon and avoiding ODR spikes. Regularly audit your order processing routines and be prepared to remain flexible in your shipping options.

Looking to up your order processing game? Seller-cloud products like Shipbridge, Memaila, Skustack, and Skublox can keep your order fulfillment workflows quick and optimized. Contact us directly for a free demo of our entire family of omnichannel e-commerce platforms.



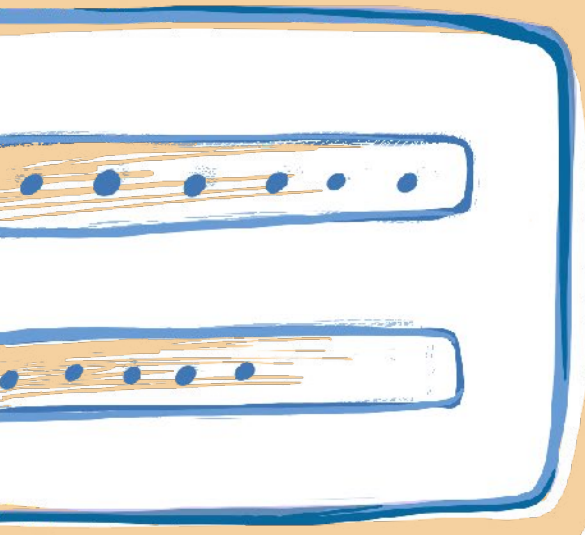
Read it online:





MAY 21, 2021

CCPA Compliance is Critical for Your E-Commerce Business



If your e-commerce business sells to customers in California, you need to be familiar with the California Consumer Protection Act (CCPA).

Since January 1, 2020, companies that interact with California residents have been required to take extra care with what personal information they collect, store, share, and sell.

The basic requirements of the CCPA law include:

- Businesses must disclose what personal information they collect about California residents.
- Businesses must disclose what personal information they share and/or sell about California residents.
- California residents may request copies of any and all of their personal information that a business has collected (businesses must comply within 45 days).
- California residents have the right to request that any or all of their personal data collected by a business be corrected or deleted (businesses must comply within 45 days).
- Businesses must disclose to whom they share and/or sell any personal information about Californians.
- Businesses must allow California residents to opt out of the collection, sharing, and/or sale of their personal information. Should someone opt out of data collection and/or sharing, the business cannot treat that individual any differently than someone who did not choose to opt out.

Failure to comply with these regulations can subject a business to costly fines (up to \$7,500) and lawsuits (ranging from \$100 to \$750 per incident per affected California resident).

As with any law, ignorance is no excuse for noncompliance. To protect your e-commerce business from crushing financial penalties, you need to be careful with how you collect, store, and share customer and website visitor data.

Personal Information Has a Broad Definition in the CCPA

It is important to pay attention to what qualifies as personal information according to the CCPA. The term “personal information” itself shows up in the text of the CCPA law 586 times.

Some details of personal information are identifiers that a customer may not want to be freely sold and shared on the open market. There are some obvious examples:

- Names
- Addresses
- Phone numbers
- Emails
- User names
- Birthdates
- Government-issued ID numbers (social security numbers, license numbers, etc.)
- Biometric data

- Employment information
- Educational background
- Racial/cultural background

But the CCPA goes further than that. The law also extends to how Californians use and access digital media. Information like search histories, browser choices, operating systems, and device types also qualify as personal information under the CCPA.

All of these pieces of data are extremely valuable to marketers looking to target advertising and evaluate customer behaviour trends. Historically, this information was collected without any explicit approval or even awareness that such a practice was happening.

With the CCPA, the state of California is following the likes of other consumer protection initiatives – like the European Union’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) or Amazon’s Personal Identifying Information policies – designed to give people more control over their own personal digital footprints.

Who Must Follow CCPA Regulations?

The CCPA is not a blanket law that applies to everyone doing business in California. According to the letter of the law, your business must meet one of the following thresholds for the CCPA to apply:

- Annual gross revenues in excess of twenty-five million dollars (\$25,000,000).

- Alone or in combination, annually buys, receives for the business’s commercial purposes, sells, or shares for commercial purposes, alone or in combination, the personal information of 50,000 or more consumers, households, or devices.
- Derives 50 percent or more of its annual revenues from selling consumers’ personal information.

If you are a smaller e-commerce brand, particularly one that does not make money by selling customer data, you may not be subject to the CCPA yet. That said, the moment in a given year when your business makes a penny over \$25 million or collects the 50,000th customer’s data, you are expected to be fully compliant with all CCPA regulations.

As mentioned previously, failing to comply can be a costly proposition. As your business continues to grow, you must prioritize compliance with these types of laws in order to seamlessly scale.

In other words, if you haven’t already adapted your business practices to align with the CCPA, it’s time to start.

What CCPA Compliance Looks Like for Your E-Commerce Business

The CCPA applies to all sorts of companies. However, it is particularly relevant to e-commerce businesses due to the amount of customer data that is used to complete transactions and assess customer behavior. CCPA compliance does not mean that you have to stop

these practices. It just means that you need to be sure you are doing so in a way that conforms to the law.

Some of the forward-facing pieces that need to be a part of your CCPA compliance plan should include:

- Visible and accessible notice to consumers that you plan to collect some element(s) of their personal data.
- Multiple channels for customers and website visitors to contact your business about accessing, correcting or deleting their personal data.
- Clear opportunities for consumers and website visitors to opt out of data collection and/or the sale of their personal information.

There are additional considerations when it comes to data collection and information storage. When a customer's request comes in, you only have a 45-day window to fully comply. In the case of an alleged CCPA violation, you only have 30 days. In that time frame, you must be able to locate and either deliver or delete all of the information relevant to the request. If you have to scour multiple databases and applications for each request, it can be easy to waste time – or worse, make a costly error.

To keep these requests from grinding productivity to a halt, CCPA compliance needs to be as quick and painless as possible. Your business needs a way to keep customer data centralized, organized, and instantly accessible. This feature is one of the prime benefits of adopting an omnichannel e-commerce platform like Sellercloud.

Make CCPA Compliance a Priority for Your E-Commerce Business Now, Not Later

Sellercloud makes it convenient to record, store, access, and delete relevant customer data. We know how important this type of compliance is and will continue to be to online merchants.

Even if your online sales business does not yet meet one of the thresholds that compel you to abide by CCPA, it is best to be prepared. The odds are, many of the marketplaces where you sell have their own PII requirements that you must adhere to.

As you scale, you can be confident that your data tracking and storage protocols align with industry best practices. Our security safeguards and data handling practices have been vetted through tough audits by leading e-commerce marketplaces.

What's more, when a consumer information request comes in, our omnichannel toolset allows you to access the data and take swift action to process their request.

Schedule a free demo and see for yourself how Sellercloud can streamline your e-commerce workflows, while providing essential compliance features like these.

Read it online:





FBA



VS

FBM





MAY 25, 2021

Amazon FBA vs. FBM: How to Choose the Best for You

Want to learn the difference between FBA and FBM? This guide compares Amazon FBA vs. FBM so you can choose the BEST option for YOUR e-commerce business.

E-commerce is a booming industry with a predicted 2.14 billion global digital buyers, and Amazon is at the center of it all.

As a result:

Small business owners, investors, and people working 9-5 jobs are starting to pick up on it — and each year, more and more find success.

Since the birth of Amazon, it has continued to add numerous features to its ever-growing platform. One of the most impactful ones gives the ability for third-party sellers to list their own products and make a profit.

Now, there are over 1.9 million active sellers on Amazon in 2021.

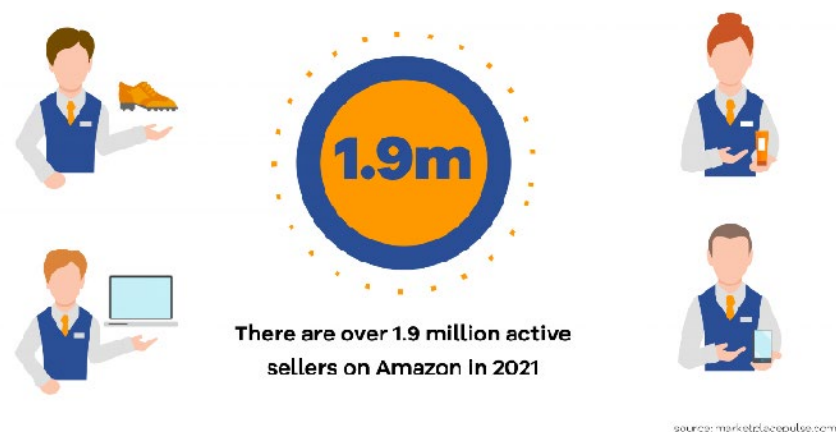
If you want to sell on Amazon too, there are two ways you can choose to store, handle, and ship your products:

Amazon FBA or FBM.

In this blog post, you're going to discover:

- The differences between Amazon FBA vs. FBM
- The pros and cons of Amazon FBA vs. FBM

- 8 Factors to consider before choosing
- When to use each method



How to strengthen your FBA or FBM processes

Amazon FBA vs. FBM: What's the difference?

The difference between FBA and FBM is simple.

They're both fulfillment options for sellers on Amazon — but they're structured in two different ways.

FBA stands for "fulfilled by Amazon."

When using this method, the seller is NOT responsible for warehousing, packaging, shipping out their customers' products, customer service, and processing any returns.

Instead, the sellers send all of their inventory to Amazon warehouses, where Amazon staff does the packaging and shipping for them.

On the other hand, FBM stands for “fulfilled by merchant,” and is when the seller is responsible for warehousing, packaging, shipping, and customer support.

There are several reasons why an Amazon seller would choose either of these methods. They each have their own pros and cons.

For example, factors like product weight, size, shipping cost, and more must be considered when determining how you’ll fulfill orders.

But before you make the decision, you need to know how each process works.

How FBA (Fulfilled By Amazon) works

According to Statista, 73% of Amazon sellers in the US use FBA, which makes it the most popular fulfillment method for third-party Amazon sellers.

Amazon FBA does fulfillment for your products — AND handles customer support issues, such as refunds and returns.

But that’s not to say Amazon FBA handles everything for you.



As an FBA seller, you’re responsible for listing, selling, and keeping your products at Amazon fulfillment centers well-stocked.

If your inventory ever runs out, Amazon won’t be able to fulfill orders because they’re unable to restock your products.

To keep FBA running smoothly, sellers will need to:

- List their products as fulfillment by Amazon.
- Prepare their products to be shipped to Amazon fulfillment centers, while abiding by Amazon packing guidelines and shipping & routing requirements.
- Send inventory to fulfillment centers for products to be in stock and ready to sell.

Amazon FBA can be a much-needed relief for big third-party sellers who don’t have logistics in place, and have high-turnover products or else because fulfillment will be less expensive if they outsource it to Amazon.

But as expected, its advantages come with a cost.

To use Amazon's FBA services, sellers must pay more fees, such as fulfillment charges starting at \$1.97 per unit for small and light items — and go up to \$100+ per unit for special oversized items.

How FBM (Fulfilled By Merchant) works

The FBM route isn't as popular — with 43% of Amazon sellers using this method to fulfill orders (JungleScout).

FBM is as straightforward as it seems. The seller buys inventory, warehouses it, sells the product, packages it, and ships it.

However, this process also means that those using the FBM method must handle returns, refunds, and customer support themselves, too.

Sellers who choose FBM don't have to pay as many Amazon fees, which can lead to higher profit margins if they have the logistics in place.

However, sellers using FBM will have to pay for their Amazon selling plan, referral fees (these mostly range between 8% to 15%, depending on their products' categories), and any costs associated with fulfillment.

To get started with FBM, all you have to do is create a seller account and start listing products.

Pros and cons of Amazon FBA

Now that you know how Amazon FBA works, let's take a look at some of the primary benefits (and troubles) it offers e-commerce sellers.

Pros of FBA

There are a few reasons why Amazon sellers would choose to take the FBA path.

Here are some of the most popular reasons:

- Amazon adds more features to its FBA services.

It's constantly evolving, which means your job as a seller on the platform can become easier and easier.

In 2020, Amazon started offering features like comingling of inventory and the Inventory Performance Index.

- The Inventory Performance Index lets you improve efficiency and sell-through rate.

The relatively new feature lets you monitor things like your in-stock inventory, excess inventory, stranded inventory, and sell-through rates.

The IPI uses a score to demonstrate how well your inventory is performing, which is calculated using the aforementioned elements. Your goal should always be to have a score above 500.

- FBA reduces the workload for your operations.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to realize that the greatest benefit of FBA is that it handles the dirty work for you.

FBA allows you to scale without your own fulfillment operations in place and to focus on other parts of your e-commerce business.

- Shipping costs are cheaper for smaller items.

Because Amazon handles shipping, you'll notice that you spend less on shipping costs than before (if you're selling items that are small and light).

- Amazon acts as your customer service department.

With FBA, Amazon handles customer service (especially returns and refunds) for you.

This feature means you won't have to be responsible for customer service reps who cost your company resources.

- Products are delivered faster.

As an FBA seller, all of your products will instantly become eligible for free Prime shipping.

When chosen by the customers, they'll receive the product significantly faster.

Also, you won't be charged extra when customers choose Prime shipping because it's included with FBA.

Cons of FBA

Of course, there are also a few reasons why sellers are reluctant to use FBA or simply choose not to.

- You might experience more returns.

Amazon's policies are pretty return-friendly for buyers, which makes it an attractive marketplace.

But Amazon can also cause more of a hassle for FBA sellers since the return policy favors buyers.

Amazon's "open return policy" lets customers return products fulfilled by Amazon and receive a full refund for up to 30 days.

- Amazon has its own product prep requirements.

Even though Amazon prepares all your products for shipping when purchased, you still have to prepare them for delivery to Amazon's warehouses.

Amazon has its own list of requirements for inventory entering its facilities, which means you're obligated to do the checking, prepping, and sending of products to Amazon fulfillment centers yourself.

- Cost is fairly expensive, especially for startups.

If you're a veteran Amazon seller, FBA is probably more affordable and convenient for you.

But for new sellers, the price might not be worth it just yet because it could lower your profit margins and increase risk. This disadvantage is especially true if you decide you no longer want to sell on the platform.

- The longer your products sit in their inventory, the more they cost you.

Amazon charges long-term storage fees if your products sit in their inventory for too long.

While these fees aren't unreasonably expensive, they're still essential to consider when budgeting.

- Some large marketplaces prohibit using Amazon FBA for fulfillment.

FBA is a great way to outsource your e-commerce fulfillment. But it's not a one-size-fits-all solution for selling on other large marketplaces.

Why?

Other marketplaces, such as Walmart, strictly prohibit sellers from using FBA because FBA packaging advertises Amazon, which may confuse customers.

Pros and cons of Amazon FBM

So, why would someone choose FBM (Fulfilled by Merchant) instead of FBA?

Here are four convincing reasons to do FBM.

Pros of FBM

Although FBM would resolve many of the cons posed by FBA, there are a few other elements that make it some sellers' ideal storage and fulfillment option for e-commerce on Amazon.

Let's take a look at them now.

- You can enroll in the new Prime Program.

Did you know that you can still make your products eligible for Prime shipping without being an FBA seller?

All you have to do is manage stricter shipping standards (which Amazon requires you to prove).

- Fewer fees from Amazon

When you don't have to pay Amazon FBA fees (such as Amazon's long-term storage fees), your profit margins may be a bit higher every time you sell a product.

If you have the systems in place to handle labor, storage, product handling, and shipping, you become more in control of your business's expenses — which in turn affect profitability.

- More control over your inventory.

When your products are sitting in an Amazon warehouse that's far away, it's difficult to quickly resolve inventory issues.

With FBM, you get to decide where your inventory goes (you can even get your own warehouse or office space) and thus, make it easier to access.

- Exemption from Amazon's open return policy.

Earlier, we discussed how — due to Amazon's open return policy — products fulfilled by Amazon can be fully refunded for up to 30 days.

When you aren't an FBA seller, your products aren't fulfilled by Amazon, meaning that they don't fall under the policy.

Thus you might experience lower return rates.

Cons of FBM

Below are three common struggles with doing FBM.

- FBA sellers are more likely to dominate the Buy Box.

Amazon openly favors FBA sellers when it comes to getting in the Buy Box, meaning FBM sellers are at a disadvantage.

Plus, customers tend to purchase products that are labeled as "fulfilled by Amazon" or contain the Prime badge, making them less likely to purchase from you.

However, it's still very possible for FBM sellers to outperform FBA sellers.

- Shipping mistakes.

FBA sellers don't have to worry about shipment and delivery dates, but as an FBM seller, it's all on you.

If you do happen to make a shipment mistake — such as shipping late or to the incorrect place — you'll receive a penalty from Amazon.

If it happens too often, your account can even be suspended.

- You take on the fulfillment expenses.

The big deal surrounding Amazon FBA boils down to one thing: convenience.

As an FBM seller, you're taking on the responsibility of running your own fulfillment and storage, which comes with added expenses.

With FBM selling, you can expect to dedicate a decent chunk of your company's resources towards inventory stocking, prepping, packaging, shipping, and customer service.

8 Factors to consider before choosing Amazon FBA vs. FBM

Aside from the primary pros and cons of each Amazon selling type and your personal priorities, there are six other factors you should keep in mind when choosing between FBA vs. FBM.

1. Product size and weight

Shipping is more expensive for products that weigh more.

Depending on the size and weight of your items, this issue should be a major factor when deciding which route to take.

As an FBM seller, you'll have to cover the cost, whereas FBA sellers don't pay for shipping, handling, or packaging.

Amazon does charge FBA users based on size and weight, which makes it ideal for smaller items like books. However, if a seller was selling something heavier and bulkier like a couch, it would probably be more profitable to use FBM.

Be sure to use the Amazon FBA calculator to get an idea as to which will be better for your products.

2. Customer experience management and control



Both options allow you to improve customer experience in different ways, though one is more hands-on than the other.

FBM allows you to have direct contact with the customer, thus giving you more control.

However, FBA lets you boast customer-winning benefits (such as the Prime badge and "fulfilled by Amazon" label).

3. Seller feedback

Amazon's "seller feedback" feature lets customers see reviews and feedback from others who have already bought your product.

According to eConsultancy, 61% of customers read reviews before making a purchase decision.

Sellers using FBM are more actively responsible for their customers' experiences. This condition, in turn, means more control over their customer feedback.

4. Product turnover rate

How quickly you sell products will play a vital role in your choice between methods.

If FBA sellers have longer turnover rates, they may be subject to long-term storage fees that'll subtract from their profit margins.

For this reason, many sellers with longer product turnover rates choose FBM to avoid those extra fees.

Sellercloud tip: FBA and FBM sellers can use Sellercloud's predictive restocking tools to prevent dead stock or to keep products from going out of stock.

5. Fees

No matter which route you take, you'll always have fees to pay.

For Amazon FBA, the fees cover the services that Amazon performs for you — such as warehousing inventory and fulfilling orders.

For FBM sellers, various costs associated with fulfillment and storage become business expenses that they're responsible for handling.

6. Logistics

The logistics of running an Amazon e-commerce business — picking, prepping, and shipping — can require a lot of resources, systems, and labor.

Some sellers prefer to handle the logistics themselves, while others would rather outsource them to Amazon.

7. Restrictions from other marketplaces you sell on

Another thing to keep in mind for choosing FBA vs. FBM is the marketplaces you sell on.

Amazon allows sellers to do Multi-Channel Fulfillment (MCF) which means they can have orders — from their website or other marketplace — be fulfilled by Amazon.

However, some marketplaces have shipping restrictions that forbid Amazon from doing fulfillment.

8. Top product categories for Amazon FBA vs. FBM

Believe it or not, whether you choose FBA or FBM can affect your success in different categories.

This factor is because certain categories are more heavily populated with either FBA or FBM products.

Therefore if you're looking to do e-commerce in a specific niche, use these data points to consider whether FBM or FBA will be best for you (Jungle Scout).

FBA top product categories:

- Home & Kitchen (44%)
- Toys & Games (26%)
- Sports & Outdoors (24%)
- Health, Household & Baby Care (22%)
- Beauty & Personal Care (21%)
- Kitchen & Dining (19%)
- Office Products (19%)
- Tools & Home Improvement (17%)
- Grocery & Gourmet Food (16%)
- Garden & Outdoor (16%)

FBM top product categories:

- Home & Kitchen (50%)
- Health, Household & Baby Care (29%)
- Toys & Games (29%)
- Sports & Outdoors (28%)
- Beauty & Personal Care (27%)
- Tools & Home Improvement (25%)
- Books (22%)
- Office Products (22%)
- Garden & Outdoor (21%)
- Kitchen & Dining (20%)

When to use Amazon FBA

If you don't mind spending a bit of cash to get your Amazon business off the ground (or keep it sailing smoothly), FBA could be the right path for you.

FBA is for those wanting to rid their company's workflow of preparing products for shipping and responding

to customers in exchange for paying (potentially hefty) Amazon fees.

In other words, FBA is best for sellers looking to out-source most of the "dirty" work.

Also, FBA is better suited for selling on Amazon, their own website, or marketplaces that do not restrict using FBA.

Sellers using FBA are more likely not to have their own warehouse, resources, and workers to properly package and ship products — and do customer service.

Using FBA as a startup can be risky and rewarding.

On one hand, it makes starting your e-commerce career easier (with logistics already in place).

But on the other hand, you risk wasting money if your products don't sell quickly or you decide that FBA isn't for you.

When to use Amazon FBM

FBM is perfect for sellers who want control over every possible part of their business (from packaging the product to customer experience) and don't mind spending extra resources to compete with FBA sellers dominating the Buy Box.

Sellers using FBM might also have an easier time diversifying their e-commerce channels since they

don't have to worry about FBA restrictions from other marketplaces.

In the end, you're taking on more responsibility, which can lead to more reward with FBM.

If you value higher profit margins without the Amazon FBA fees or monthly subscription costs — in exchange for more control, then FBM is likely the best choice for you.

Strengthen your Amazon FBA or FBM processes with Sellercloud

Regardless of your business choice, you need to make sure your purchasing, inventory management, fulfillment, and shipping are all connected.

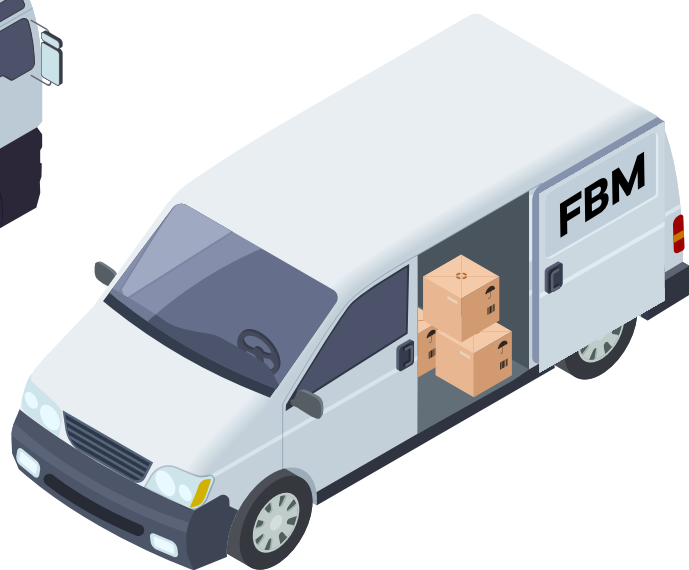
And if you're doing FBM, this point is increasingly crucial because you're responsible for all aspects of e-commerce.

An easy solution?

Using an all-in-one e-commerce platform like Sellercloud.

Sellercloud is your end-to-end management solution for your e-commerce business that puts an end to inefficient restocking, overselling, poor inventory management, and much (much) more.

Request a demo today to see how Sellercloud can make your e-commerce business more efficient and profitable.



Read it online:





MAY 28, 2021

Upgrade your E-commerce Business's Unsecure SMTP Email to an API- Based Platform

There are two main methods for transmitting an email: a Simple Mail Transfer Protocol (SMTP) and an Application Programming Interface (API). Both allow you to send and receive emails between customers, marketplaces, and your team, but a web-based API email platform has several key benefits over the aging SMTP relay:

- Better security
- Faster transfer speeds
- Greater reliability
- Enhanced data collection and automation capabilities

If your e-commerce business is running its emails on SMTP relays, your messages may not be getting through as effectively as you'd like. What's more, you may be missing out on a host of features and analytics only made possible by an API-based email platform.

Industries are Moving Away from SMTP Due to Security Concerns – So Should You

While SMTP has been an email standard since the early days of the internet, it has begun to fall out of favor – particularly when it comes to data security.

Every time an email is sent using SMTP, the email client and the server must communicate back and forth several times. Each of these communications returns a message that the process is either a success or there is an error. Each of these communications is also

unsecured and susceptible to being intercepted by a bad actor.

Think about all the information that your e-commerce business transmits through email:

- **Internal communications** with your team that may include trade secrets, critical product information, accounting data, or personnel records.
- **Communications with your vendors, suppliers, and marketplaces** outlining – among other things – sensitive agreements and payment information.
- **Customer information**, such as email addresses, physical addresses, order numbers, payment methods or any other identifying data.

A SMTP breach could potentially give attackers access to all of this. Suffice it to say that a data breach of any information could be catastrophic to your brand.

Commonly, hackers will leverage an SMTP attack to do one of the following:

- **Launch a Denial of Service (DoS) attack** that cripples the network of your business and/or email recipients.
- **Send malicious emails from your domain** to either spam customers' inboxes or to commit fraud by getting recipients to volunteer sensitive information about their account and/or payment details.
- **Spread viruses** by convincing unsuspecting recipients to open infected files.

Although there have been innovations in end-to-end encryption to help secure SMTP transmissions, the solution requires complicated add-ons like Transport Layer Security (TLS) or Multipurpose Internet Mail Extensions (MIME) to achieve true protection. When combined with SMTP, each has flaws that still can leave email data exposed – especially if the sender and recipient are not using the same protection protocols.

Conversely, web APIs can be a much more secure email option. APIs handle the entire sending and receiving process with a persistent HTTP connection. The complete back-and-forth communication between the sender and the receiving ISP happens through this single channel.

These connections are created using a unique API key – a special authentication token that is totally separate from your login credentials. This feature makes it that much harder to breach the data being transmitted between the email client and the recipient.

Similarly, API connections also allow users to add two-factor authentication (2FA) to their accounts and programs. This attribute gives users the option for further account protection by requiring verification through secondary applications and/or devices before allowing a login or email transmission.

With Memaila – Sellercloud’s own email and collaboration tool – shifting to an API-based delivery system has opened the door to allow 2FA support for both Google

App and Office365 applications (for Gmail-based accounts and Outlook-based accounts, respectively). We know that the security of your e-commerce business and your customers matter. API has proven to be the optimal way to protect both.

API-Based Email is the Fastest Option for Bulk Email Transfers

Email security is paramount, but so is speed. E-commerce businesses often have the need to send emails to bulk lists of recipients. Whether it’s a flurry of tracking updates or a mail merge marketing campaign, a well-designed web API can perform these tasks faster and in fewer steps than an SMTP relay can.

Once again, emailing with SMTP requires repeated chatter between the client and the server. Certainly, this process is quick when sending a few emails at a time, but this delay gets multiplied as the sender list grows.

On the other hand, an API’s secured communication channel helps to ensure that information gets through, while also maximizing the potential data throughout. There is no per-message latency to contend with. The result is a much faster, more reliable transmission with fewer possible failure points.

Moreover, email APIs typically receive updates that can continually improve this efficiency and security. Simply put: trading your SMTP-based email for an API-based system like Memaila can help ensure that your

emails always reach their destinations quickly and safely.

API Emails Are Less Likely to Get Blocked by Firewalls Than Emails Sent with SMTP

When you send an email, you need to be confident that it is going to get through to its recipient. Due to the rising security and spam concerns over SMTP, many ISPs and firewall programs are starting to block the default ports used by SMTP relays. Try to send an email to a recipient behind one of these barriers, and it will result in errors and delivery failures.

APIs get around this issue by using secured HTTP ports (typically HTTPS port 443). Although some firewalls block SMTP ports, hardly any block HTTP – the application layer protocol that is the foundation of the World Wide Web. This feature gives API-based email platforms yet another clear edge over SMTP-reliant options.

API's Open the Door to Brand-Boosting Email Automations, Data Collection, and Analytics

Beyond safety and efficiency, API-based email platforms open the door to several useful features not natively available in SMTP-based email:

- Mass-mailing from directly within applications and platforms

- Creating and maintaining automated email processes
- Generate useful data on email engagement (e.g. who interacted with an email and how)

These abilities can be a significant asset to a growing e-commerce business. Not only can they help reduce the time spent managing and sorting through email processes manually, but they can also provide actionable insights into the effectiveness of your email communications.

All told, the benefits and versatility of API-based email is outpacing the limitations of SMTP. The security and functionality of an API platform is something every e-commerce business can benefit from.

As part of our dedication to keeping your email and data secure, we are replacing SMTP in Sellercloud with our API-based Memaila communication platform. Along with a bevy of integrated time-saving and automation tools, Memaila provides reliable security and authentication features designed to keep your information and that of your customers safe. Contact us for a free demo of how Memaila and its API-based toolset can help streamline your e-commerce business's communications workflows.

Read it online:







JUNE 3, 2021

5 Marketing Tactics That Will Get You Banned From E-Commerce Marketplaces



The ultimate goal of a third-party e-commerce marketplace is to match customers with the products they want and need. There is a complex series of algorithms working behind the scenes to make this outcome happen.

When sellers do things to manipulate marketplace algorithms, these maneuvers interrupt the marketplace's ability to maximize sales and satisfy customers. As such, it is common practice for marketplaces to outline specific prohibited activities in their Terms of Service (ToS) documentation to try to keep everything fair and honest.

Break a marketplace's rules and you risk getting suspended or banned from the platform – something many unfortunate e-commerce businesses have found out the hard way. Don't give in to the temptation.

Violating Marketplace Terms of Service (ToS) is Risky Business

Outlawing a practice is one thing, but without enforcement, it holds little weight. Many of the manipulative e-commerce tactics outlined in this article are quite commonplace. Today's e-commerce environment is more competitive than ever thus some sellers are willing to play fast and loose with the rules in order to gain even the slightest edge.

The fact of the matter is that the sheer size of the e-commerce industry makes it nearly impossible to suss out all the bad actors. This condition leads some merchants to gamble that they can work around the ToS to compete.

However, the risks associated with noncompliance are real. Losing access to third-party marketplace customers – even temporarily – can make a deep cut into your profitability and hinder your ability to scale.

In May of 2021, Amazon carried out a sweeping ban of a series of brands that violated their ToS – specifically for manipulating reviews. It wasn't just small up-and-comers trying to build their credibility; big, high-ranking consumer electronics brands Aukey and mPower were included in the ban wave. The move gained headlines because Amazon wiped out some of the largest international private-label sellers on their marketplace.

Earlier this year, Amazon India carried out a similar suspension wave for over 2,000 sellers whom they deemed to be carrying out "deceptive, fraudulent, or illegal activity." In addition to losing the ability to continue selling on the site, sellers lost access to their pending disbursements and were unable to sell off their FBA inventory, while Amazon sorted out their violations.

Walmart, eBay, and other third-party marketplaces have also carried out similar stings to clear out ToS violators. In the end, the goal of these regulations and enforcement efforts is to create a fairer playing field for merchants and a more positive overall experience for shoppers.

The lesson is simple: when selling on a third-party marketplace, you need to abide by the marketplace's rules.

Some of the most prohibited marketing tactics to avoid include:

1. Bribing Customers for Positive Reviews and Feedback

Customer feedback and product ratings are two of the most important sources of information that customers use when making purchasing decisions online. The majority of online shoppers report using product reviews to help inform them about the products they buy. As such, it should be no surprise that marketplaces like Amazon and Walmart would want to protect the integrity of these metrics. In 2019, Amazon spent over \$500 million and employed more than 8,000 people to target fraud and misinformation on its marketplace.

There are a number of tactics unscrupulous sellers have tried to manipulate the way customers rate their products and brands.

Two of the most common incentivized review schemes are:

- **Thank you gifts** – Sellers include instructions for customers to receive free gifts in exchange for positive reviews. These gifts can include things like discount codes, vouchers for additional products or even Amazon gift cards. To claim these “gifts,” customers are often asked to take a screenshot of their review and order number to verify that it has been posted on the marketplace.

These tactics are clearly against the rules, but

customers receiving free bonuses are unlikely to file formal complaints.

- **Soliciting reviews from free products** – Many marketplaces do allow sellers to offer free products to customers for review purposes. This strategy can be a great way to increase the visibility of a new product or brand. However, marketplaces usually flag reviews of free products and make sure they are identified as such so that future customers have fair warning that the reviewers did not pay for the merchandise that they are commenting on.

Sellers who circumvent these processes make it impossible for shoppers to know that reviews may be from customers who did not have to put up their own money to pay for the product that they are praising.

Amazon’s latest ban wave is a very public display of how seriously they take product reviews and feedback. There are certainly sellers who will continue to use these types of tactics, but it isn’t worth the risk. The consequences of losing access to millions of customers can be devastating to your brand’s integrity and bottom line.

2. Manipulating Your Sales Rank with Illegitimate Sales

Your sales numbers on Amazon and most e-commerce marketplaces are not a forward-facing metric, but they influence your search results rank. The more a product sells, the higher in the search engine results pages (SERPS) it climbs.

Some merchants have attempted to game this system by making purchases and shipping products to unsuspecting recipients. The orders are received by an actual address and thus appear to be fulfilled, legitimate purchases. The recipients are usually unaware of how or why they have received the free products, but typically either accept them (after all, the packages were addressed to them) or discard them.

Sellers usually double down on this type of scam by posting their own reviews for the “fulfilled” orders.

In any event, these orders produce deceptive metrics that violate the ToS of nearly every e-commerce marketplace.

3. Paying for Traffic

Another way marketplaces determine where products rank in customer searches is based on how much activity a listing generates. This factor has led sellers to employ deceptive practices like pay-for-click services and automated web bots to try and boost their product visibility.

This plan is a common practice used to boost website search engine rankings. Thus, it should come as little surprise that similar tactics have emerged on e-commerce marketplaces. However, just like major search engines are constantly adjusting their algorithms to try and suss out unfair or suspect activity, major marketplaces are doing the same.

These illicit strategies are still being used to try and boost listing visibility, but they are becoming less viable as

marketplaces get better at identifying fake listing traffic. Whether or not you are successful get caught paying for listing views and your account will most certainly be suspended.

4. Direct Customer Contact

Amazon’s Seller Code of Conduct clearly states:

“You may not send any unsolicited or inappropriate messages. All communications to customers must be through Buyer-Seller Messaging and be necessary for fulfilling the order or providing customer services. Marketing communications are prohibited.”

Simply put, Amazon requires all communication you have with your customers to be handled through Amazon’s servers. This stipulation creates a complete paper trail of every interaction between buyers and sellers. Should an issue arise or an A-Z complaint be filed, this strategy should theoretically make it quicker and easier to resolve disputes.

This control over communication also reaffirms the fact that Amazon (or other marketplaces with similar communications rules) is in charge.

As much as a marketplace wants to protect the integrity of the online shopping experience, there are also ulterior motives. If sellers are able to open direct, back-channel conversations with Amazon customers, they could potentially poach those customers for future business outside

of the marketplace – leaving the marketplace without their cut.

In the end, merchants selling on sites like Amazon need to be comfortable with the fact that marketplace customers belong to the marketplace, not the marketplace sellers. To remain in compliance with the ToS, every communication needs to remain in plain view and aboveboard. Any attempt to circumvent this rule could result in getting suspended or banned from Amazon's platform.

5. Participating in Complex E-Commerce Review Schemes

All of the above marketing tactics are used to try to boost sales, while also circumventing marketplace policies. In some cases, self-proclaimed "e-commerce marketing companies" offer sales-boosting packages that are just some combination of these illegal tactics.

In one of the latest Amazon fraudulent review schemes, a network of over 200,000 individuals shared addresses, contact information, and payment addresses in order to complete fake orders and generate fake positive feedback. Customers would make Amazon purchases from participating sellers and then have their costs heavily discounted or completely reimbursed once positive reviews were verified. In some cases, the participating customers were able to keep the reviewed product and receive a cash bonus on top of their reimbursed costs.

What made this scheme both possible and so hard to detect was off-marketplace communication between sellers

and customers. Third-party channels like WhatsApp and PayPal meant that the conversations brokering the arrangements and the reimbursement payments to customers were all done outside of Amazon's view.

In the end, the scheme was brought to light and a lot of accounts were immediately removed from Amazon's marketplace.

This is not a new concept. Pay-for-review companies pop up all of the time on social media platforms like Facebook and gig-economy sites like Upwork and Fiverr. The thing to know is that if they are this easy to find, Amazon can and will find them eventually, too.

Establishing Your Own First-Party Sales Channel Can Give You an Edge Over Marketplace Sellers

The fact that marketplaces like Amazon and eBay take listing integrity seriously should provide some comfort for honest sellers. That said, sometimes the same ToS that are designed to protect merchants and customers can interfere with legitimate efforts to build a brand and promote your business.

This condition is one reason why operating a first-party sales website is such a critical component of an omni-channel e-commerce strategy.

For one thing, there is no ban on how you opt to build customer loyalty through your own sales channel. You are allowed to establish direct consumer contact, offer

marketing promotions, and cultivate a brand relationship in ways that you choose.

Although you can't divert an Amazon customer to your own storefront, including a web address in your product documentation can help increase the odds that repeat customers will seek you out directly.

On your own website storefront, you are free to solicit reviews and testimonials for your products. What's more, you can share them as you see fit – feature them on your website, share them on social media, and include them across your product marketing efforts.

As long as you are abiding by consumer protection regulations like CCPA and GDPR and staying within FTC and IRS guidelines, you are free to run your e-commerce business as you wish.

The Sellercloud omnichannel e-commerce growth platform is perfectly suited to help you develop and scale your e-commerce brand across third-party marketplaces and first-party channels. Our integrations with Amazon, Walmart, and dozens of other channels are designed to help you remain compliant with each marketplace's ToS, while also giving you the ability to manage every aspect of your orders from a single, convenient interface.

Our integrations with storefronts, shopping carts, 3PL providers, shipping partners, and more help you optimize your order fulfillment and customer relations workflows across both first- and third-party channels.

For more on how Sellercloud can help you build your e-commerce brand the right way, contact us directly for a free demo.





Read it online:





JUNE 10, 2021



Walmart Fulfillment Service (WFS) Gives FBA Sellers a Viable New Option

In the simplest of terms, Walmart Fulfillment Service (WFS) is Walmart's version of FBA. Both are marketplace fulfillment options designed to help make selling online easier.

WFS allows approved sellers on Walmart Marketplace to send their stock in bulk to Walmart fulfillment centers, which will pick, pack, and ship orders to online customers. Just like with FBA, once an e-commerce business ships its products to the fulfillment center, WFS effectively removes the seller from the rest of the logistical equation.

This concept of marketplace-based fulfillment provides serious benefits to e-commerce sellers of all sizes looking to scale and build an e-commerce business without having to create or modify their order-by-order fulfillment workflows.

Since its launch in February 2020, WFS has proven itself to be a worthwhile and reliable fulfillment partner. Although there are several notable differences between WFS and FBA, many sellers will see value in utilizing both services as part of a broader omnichannel e-commerce business plan.

WFS vs. FBA – What Are the Similarities?

There are several key similarities between Walmart's and Amazon's fulfillment services:

Fast and Accurate Order Fulfillment

Both WFS and FBA handle the picking, packing, and shipping of your customer's orders for you. What's more, both services are able to leverage their robust infrastructure networks to do so quickly. Just ship your products to the fulfillment centers and let Walmart and Amazon take care of the rest.

One major benefit of this model is that Walmart and Amazon have logistics chains that can handle speedy fulfillment turnaround times. Depending on the product and the customer's location, this time frame can range from two-, to one-, to same-day delivery.

As an added bonus, opting for a marketplace-based fulfillment service also means that your listings are guaranteed to meet the strict demands of the marketplaces' respective membership services – Walmart+ and Amazon Prime.

When looking at listings, customers look for these labels, as well as shipping speed, when making purchasing decisions. According to a February 2021 Digital Commerce 360/Bizrate Insights survey exploring e-commerce conversion trends, "68% of consumers said fast shipping would lead them to place an online order." This attitude makes WFS and FBA strong partners from both a logistical and marketing perspective.

Reliable Customer Service

Both WFS and FBA take responsibility for fulfillment-related customer service inquiries so that sellers don't

have to. Anyone with customer service experience will tell you that shipping and fulfillment issues account for the vast majority of all customer complaints and issues. Removing these from the equation can free up valuable time.

Sellers still should keep tabs on their feedback. Even so, complaints about product quality or manufacturing defects fall outside the purview of a third-party fulfillment provider. Failure to address these types of complaints can result in order defect rate (ODR) issues that can quickly damage your brand's reputation and even your ability to sell on certain marketplaces.

Simplified Returns

Returns are an inevitable component of selling products online. Every e-commerce business needs an RMA strategy to figure out what to do about products that get shipped back from customers.

Both WFS and FBA simplify the returns process by handling everything on your behalf, from the RMA requests to the shipping labels. Customers also have the option of returning their products to partnering brick-and-mortar locations. The ubiquity of Walmart stores nationwide makes this an especially attractive option for Walmart Marketplace shoppers.

WFS vs. FBA – What Are the Differences?

On the surface, WFS and FBA are quite similar in the value they bring to both sellers and their customers. Below

the surface, some key differences affect the types of sellers and products best suited for each service:

Who Can Sell on WFS and FBA?

FBA is open to virtually anyone looking to sell on Amazon. This feature means that sellers of all sizes and from all over the world have access to the same robust fulfillment support.

In contrast, Walmart vets and approves its third-party sellers before allowing them to list products on Walmart Marketplace. Participating in WFS is subject to approval as well. This barrier to entry weeds out competition and aims to keep customer satisfaction high.

The results of this policy difference are eye-opening. Each of Walmart Marketplace's 33,000 sellers can expect to get approximately 13 times more listing views per month than Amazon's 2+ million sellers can. With that level of performance, increased visibility can quickly lead to increased sales conversions.

Subscription Fees

A professional selling account on Amazon (a requirement for FBA) costs \$39.99 a month. This price may not seem steep – especially given the revenue that the service generates for its customers – but Walmart does not charge any seller a subscription fee for WFS. We'd be remiss not to point that out.

Product Size Limits

Both WFS and FBA have limits on the maximum sizes of items that can be shipped using their respective services.

WFS has a hard cap of 30 lbs. And 25"x20"x14" per product.

FBA will accept oversized items up to 151 lbs. and a maximum package length of either 108" or a total length and girth of up to 165".

How Products Are Stored

WFS inventory is sorted by seller. Your products remain together and do not get commingled with other merchants' items. When a customer makes a purchase from your listing, it comes from your stockpile.

FBA inventory typically gets commingled. The idea is that if you are selling the same product as another merchant, Amazon will ship the item that is closest to the customer's address – regardless of which seller's pile it comes from. The result is the customer gets the product as quickly as possible.

You can opt to have your inventory kept separate, but in some cases, this choice can lead to a decrease in fulfillment speed.

The downside of commingled inventory storage is that your customers may be receiving damaged and/or inferior versions of the products you sell. Commingled

inventory is particularly problematic when it comes to easily counterfeited items. If your reputation as a seller hangs in the balance, commingled inventory may pose too much of a risk.

Storage Fees

Both WFS and FBA charge sellers storage fees of \$0.75 per cubic foot, per month from Q1-Q3. For items that meet Amazon's criteria for "oversized," the price is reduced to \$0.48 per cubic foot, per month (Walmart does not have an "oversized" product tier).

In Q4, due to heightened holiday demand, these fees increase.

For WFS, items stored during Q4, but for less than 30 days, are still subject to the same \$0.75 per cubic foot rate, but stock older than 30 days increases to \$2.25 per cubic foot, per month.

For FBA, there is no 30-day grace period. All products are subject to a \$2.40 per cubic foot, per month storage fee. Oversized products are subject to a \$1.20 per cubic foot rate.

Sellercloud users can take advantage of our cost of goods sold (COGS) reporting features (which include these storage fees) to help determine the most cost-effective options.

Fulfillment Fees

WFS fulfillment fees are calculated using very simple formulas. Sellers are charged based on the weight of their shipment (using 1 lb., 2 lb., 3 lb., 4-20 lb., and 20+lb. increments) or the dimensional weight (package length x width x height, divided by 139) – whichever is greater.

FBA fulfillment fees are much more complicated, depending upon product size, type, and shape. There are too many tiers and possible charges to list here. For most smaller to medium-sized packages, the fees are competitive with WFS.

Dollar for dollar, it is impossible to make a blanket statement about which service is more cost effective. Once again, Sellercloud's robust inventory management and COGS reporting tools can help sellers navigate these differences and give you a better idea of whether either or both services make sense for your products.

Access to Fulfillment Support Experts

Included with a WFS account is access to one of Walmart's fulfillment experts. These professionals offer support and guidance on how to best take advantage of WFS to grow your e-commerce business through the service.

FBA offers similar consulting services, but with a hefty price tag. Amazon's Account Manager programs require a \$1,600 monthly investment as well as an increased fee per sale.

All told, these differences matter, but neither fulfillment service is so drastically inferior to the other that it should be disqualified. The reality is that both WFS and FBA have their own unique advantages that can be leveraged to help grow your e-commerce business.

The Advantages of Selling on WFS

High Growth Potential

Sellercloud data over the past year has shown tremendous average month-over-month GMV and total sales growth for FBA sellers who have added WFS to their omnichannel e-commerce sales strategies.

Increased Visibility

Walmart's gatekeeping over third-party sellers on its marketplace means the sellers who are able to list there have less competition than more wide-open marketplaces like Amazon. WFS sellers get the added bonus of the coveted "Two-Day" shipping label, which can increase listing visibility in search results and lead to increased sales.

The Advantages of Selling on FBA

More Customers

Amazon's status as the industry leader for e-commerce in the US means it is the first stop for many people looking to make a purchase online. With over 200 million unique visitors per month, you almost can't afford not to sell on Amazon.

Prime Subscribers

As of April 2021, Amazon surpassed 200 million Amazon Prime subscribers. These subscribers pay a premium for the privilege of quick fulfillment; FBA gives you a way to guarantee and flaunt it. Gaining access to the coveted Prime label on your listings is almost a necessity when it comes to outranking your competitors in the search rankings.

Larger Products

FBA's ability to handle fulfillment of larger items can drastically reduce your storage and shipment overhead compared to self-fulfillment alternatives.

To be fair, there is definitely a point of diminishing returns. Extremely large and/or heavy products can be subject to hefty additional oversized-item fees. Thankfully, Sellercloud's cost of goods sold (COGS) reporting can make it easier to figure out the most cost-effective solution.

"FBA or WFS?" is the Wrong Question – Sell on Both

Just because Amazon and Walmart are locking horns to see who can win the marketplace-fulfillment battle doesn't mean that e-commerce sellers have to pick just one winner.

An omnichannel e-commerce approach means that you don't have to choose between FBA and WFS. If anything, the competition between Walmart and Amazon

helps build value for sellers looking to list their products across both services.

FBA's position as an industry leader is not in doubt – the letters FBA have become almost synonymous with marketplace-based fulfillment. Taking advantage of the logistical benefits of being an FBA seller can help you scale your e-commerce business and win Buy Boxes more reliably. However, FBA's popularity breeds competition with other sellers taking the same approach.

In fact, WFS has yet to reach the market saturation of FBA. Walmart Marketplace has a long way to go to reach the sheer size of Amazon's customer base. That said, although Walmart's 120+ million unique visitors per month is well shy of Amazon's 200+ million, it's nothing to scoff at. For third-party sellers who earn the right to sell on Walmart Marketplace, WFS can provide a path to earning more Buy Boxes and increasing overall sales.

The emergence of WFS has created a viable alternative to FBA with less competition and strong potential to scale. But once again, sellers don't have to choose one or the other. In fact, many Sellercloud users have been able to wield a combination of both services to fuel their business' growth.

Time and time again, our data has shown that modern e-commerce growth thrives with a diversified marketplace presence. Omnichannel exposure is key.

Whether you are looking to remain dependent on marketplaces and 3PL partners to handle your fulfillment needs or are simply looking for a new sales channel for your e-commerce business, WFS is proving to be a sound partner to bring aboard.

Sellercloud's integrations with WFS, FBA, and many more leading e-commerce channels make it easy to

manage orders and track inventory across any number of marketplaces where you sell. In 2020, 80% of our users used our platform to actively sell on 6 or more e-commerce channels.

Contact us directly for a free consultation of how Sellercloud can help get you started with WFS and help scale your e-commerce brand.

Read it online:





JUNE 17, 2021

Choose the Right Shopping Cart to Optimize Your E-Commerce Sales



For an e-commerce business to transition from third-party to first-party sales, it needs a safe, convenient, and reliable way to share a virtual catalog of its products and process payments from customers. One of the main allures of third-party marketplaces is that they take these responsibilities off your plate. As a result, it is easy for sellers to become comfortable with their third-party status and therefore reluctant to leave the comfort their marketplace channels provide.

This is where shopping cart platforms come in.

Shopping carts are software solutions designed to support several key e-commerce features vital to successful first-party sales. To start with, shopping carts provide options for storing, organizing, and categorizing product information for customers to engage with. Once a user is prepared to make a purchase, shopping carts securely accept and remit their payments. They then distribute relevant logistical information to both the seller and the customer so that the transaction can be completed smoothly.

Sellercloud integrates with many industry-leading shopping carts to help you conduct first-party transactions with confidence. That said, not all shopping cart platforms are created equal. There are different options whose fit with your e-commerce business will depend on your products, your first-party web presence, and general tech comfort level. If you aren't careful, you may find that you are investing time and money into the wrong shopping cart for your needs – missing out on lucrative

first-party sales in the process (especially in the current e-commerce climate).

Here are several of the features you should consider before settling on the right shopping cart platform for your e-commerce business.

Hosted Versus Self-Hosted Shopping Carts

One of the major distinctions between shopping cart platforms is whether they actually host your catalog and transactional data on their own servers or if you need to provide a server of your own.

Hosted shopping carts typically provide features and a level of plug-and-play convenience that should be familiar to third-party sellers. Your catalog (including images, descriptions, customer reviews, Q&As, etc.) is stored and supported by your shopping cart provider. You don't need to know how to code or design a storefront. Just input your merchandise, payment, and shipping details and you are on your way to becoming a first-party seller.

Self-hosted shopping carts (sometimes referred to as seller-managed, licensed, or open-source shopping carts) can be a bit more complicated to set up and maintain than a hosted shopping cart would be. As the name implies, you are in charge of purchasing or leasing server space where your store's data will live. This responsibility adds an additional cost to consider and a fair amount of technical know-how to get everything running (and keep it running) smoothly.

The reward for this added layer of responsibility is a higher degree of customization for your storefront and its backend. Many seller-hosted shopping cart providers include useful interfaces that make it fairly straightforward to add your product catalog and relevant business credentials; however, others either require or allow for the use of additional third-party plugins or add-ons to set up your e-commerce shopping cart exactly the way you like. Sometimes these plug-ins are free, but oftentimes they come as an added expense. In any case, some general web design and coding savvy is often required to get the most bang for your buck when managing your own shopping cart hosting.

Designed well, a self-hosted shopping cart can create a unique and tailored online shopping experience for your customers that stands out from the common templated appearances of most hosted shopping cart options – delivering exactly the features you need with minimal bloat. If this choice seems too overwhelming, hosted shopping carts remain strong, reliable options as well.

Technical Specifications That Matter

Regardless of which type of e-commerce shopping cart platform you choose to enlist, there are some essential technical details you need to pay attention to. Many shopping carts operate different subscription tiers, which offer a range of cost-effective and high-performance options to choose from. These tiered subscription models typically differ and are based on the following criteria:

- **Storage space** – Whether it is the space allotted to you by a hosted shopping cart provider or the space you need to acquire to host your shopping cart on your own, you need to be sure you have enough. Every product, image, and video consumes valuable bytes. In some cases, email storage also counts against your storage cap – something to consider if email marketing, shipment tracking, and customer service are going to be handled through your shopping cart platform.
- **Bandwidth limits** – You could have unlimited storage, but if you and/or your customers can't access the information they need when they need it, the feature doesn't mean much. Most shopping cart providers and third-party server partners impose bandwidth restrictions on how much data can be transferred to and from your shopping cart (typically calculated monthly). The more customers you have, the more multimedia included in your catalog, and the more edits you plan to do to your listings, the more bandwidth you will need.

In some cases, service providers will offer unlimited bandwidth. Be sure to check the fine print to see if there is a catch. Oftentimes, unlimited bandwidth offers come with speed restrictions (grinding the process of browsing and searching your catalog to a halt) or limitations on the size of your catalog.

- **SEO tools** – A big part of selling online is ensuring that customers can find your products. Unlike on third-party marketplaces where customers arrive and search on an established retail gateway, your first-party store relies on customers either seeking

out your web address directly or using a search engine. With knowledge of this difference, many shopping carts build in search engine optimization (SEO) features that help boost the odds that search engines will match their users to your products.

Sometimes these SEO features are baked in in ways you aren't expecting. For instance, shopping carts that allow you to add and organize categories and keywords within your catalog will make store navigation more intuitive for customers as well as simpler for search engines to crawl and index.

Appearance and Responsive Design

Technical specs matter, but so does appearance. Before settling on a shopping cart partner, evaluate whether the available aesthetic options and templates are a good fit for your brand and your customers.

The most efficient site design in the world may still lead to abandoned carts if customers don't feel engaged with your interface. Similarly, the most beautiful website in the world can still lose sales by forcing customers to click through numerous hoops and pages before finally checking out. Therefore, you need to choose a design that draws your customers in, makes finding products simple, and gets customers from cart to checkout quickly.

Also, consider how your customers engage with the web. Pay attention to how your catalog will appear on various devices: smartphones, tablets, computers, and even

television screens. The best websites and hosts know to take this scalability – commonly advertised as responsive design – into account and provide options to automate page layouts accordingly.

Application Integrations

Diversifying your e-commerce presence is crucial to scaling your business. Listing on multiple channels is a key way to maximize your product and brand exposure. Shopping carts can help you do this.

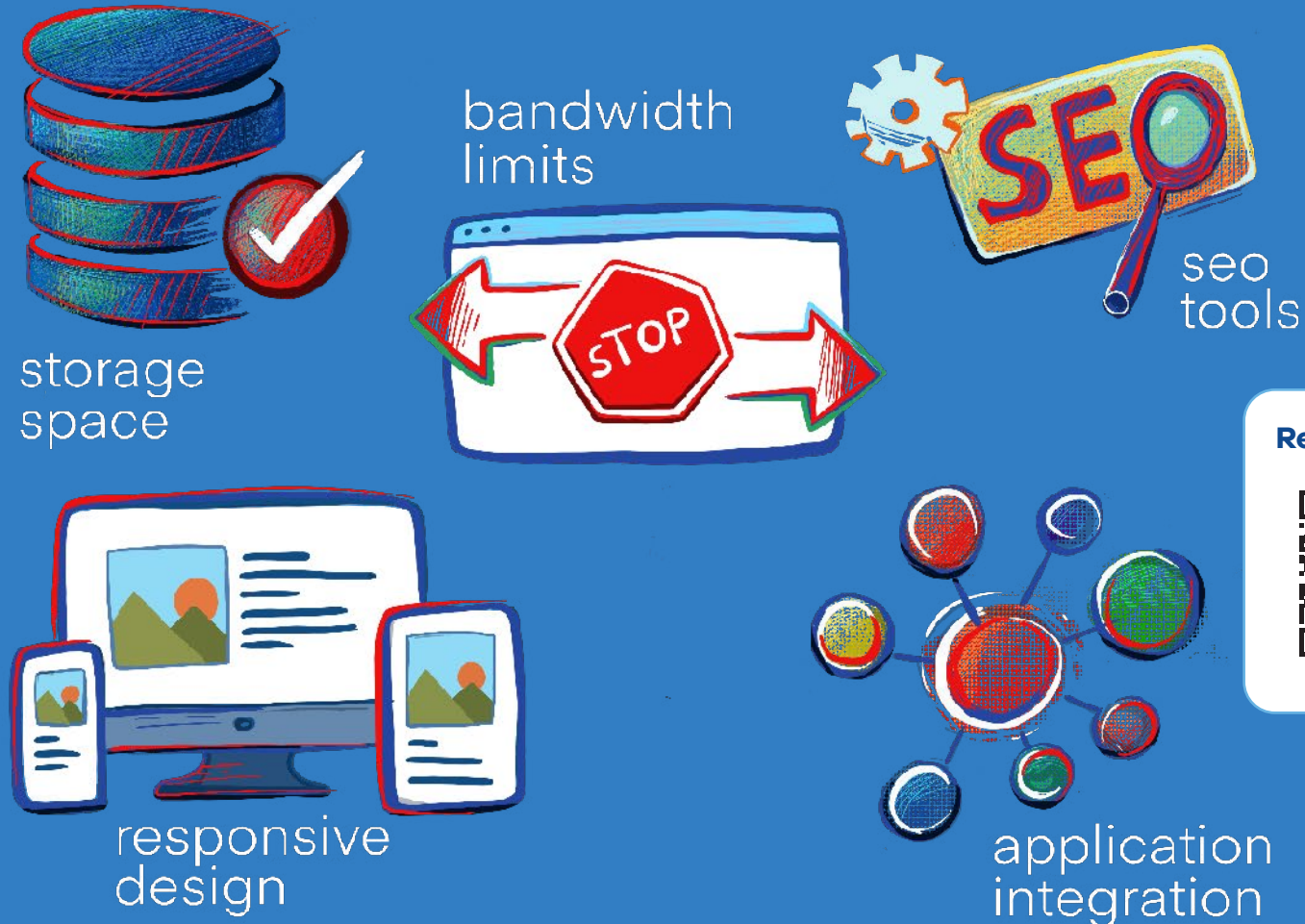
Some shopping carts offer integrations with third-party marketplaces, which allow you to share your catalog directly with sites like Amazon and eBay. Other shopping carts require you to use external plugins to make everything mesh correctly. In either case, you are responsible for maintaining listings so they are compliant with marketplace channel terms of service. You also have to have a plan for keeping track of your inventory levels. Without a plan to track and update inventory data in real time, spreading an entire catalog's worth of listings can be a recipe for disaster.

Thankfully, most shopping carts have other application integrations beyond just marketplace channels. The Sellercloud omni-channel e-commerce platform integrates with many of the most popular and reliable shopping cart providers. With it, you can manage your entire product catalog from one convenient location, while also ensuring compliance across all channels where you sell.

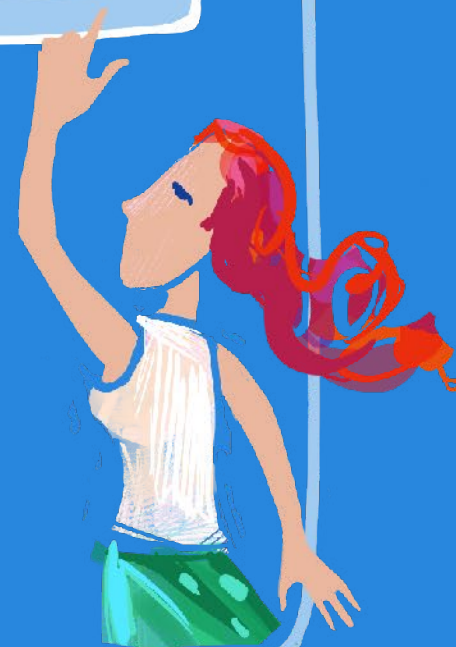
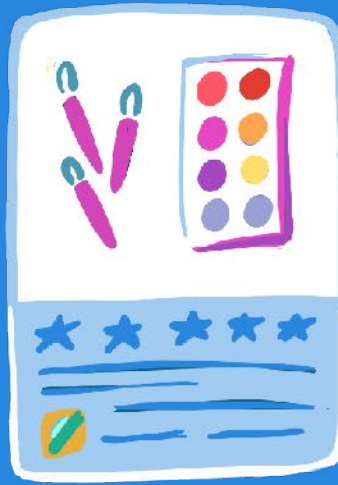
Perhaps even more valuable, Sellercloud features a robust, industry-leading inventory management platform that not only tracks where every piece of your inventory is, but also uses cloud-based technology to keep your inventory levels up-to-date across all of the channels where you sell. What's more, predictive purchasing alerts let you know when it's time to restock. This feature makes life especially easy for e-commerce retailers looking to

maintain both a first- and third-party selling presence. No more overselling products or out-of-stock listings.

For more on how Sellercloud's shopping cart integrations can help increase your business's visibility, convenience, and productivity, contact us directly for a free demo.



#Google



JULY 1, 2021

Google's Shopping Graph Uses AI to Surface Your E-Commerce Listings

Google may not be the first name that comes to mind when you think of online sales, but the tech giant continues its push to become the ultimate e-commerce middleman. The announcement of Google Shopping Graph, Google's new AI-driven product discovery engine, will further enhance that role.

Shopping Graph follows the successful 2020 rollout of Google's commission-free Buy on the Google program. This initiative, built on partnerships with third-party service providers like Shopify and PayPal, has allowed e-commerce sellers of all sizes to gain exposure with shoppers who initiate their buying journeys on the search engine.

That said, Google still has a long way to go. According to an August 2020 survey, the majority of all e-commerce searches still begin on Amazon. However, Google continues to be a go-to tool for online comparison shoppers – a growing trend throughout the pandemic and beyond. Shopping Graph is Google's latest effort to be the most powerful non-marketplace e-commerce destination on the web.

How Google Shopping Graph Works

Announced at 2021's Google I/O Event, Shopping Graph is Google's attempt to (in their words) "democratize e-commerce." A bold claim, but one that may be closer to a reality than a dream.

When a user searches for a product, the Shopping Graph results box pulls together a selection of relevant products

from across marketplace listings and brand websites. A series of helpful metrics is provided for each product.

Some of the most common data points surfaced in Shopping Graph results include:

- Websites
- Prices
- Reviews
- Videos
- Images
- SKUs
- Inventory data

Unlike Google Ads, which require sellers to pay for exposure, Shopping Graph surfaces products based on Google's own search algorithms. Google is explicit that these results are not paid advertisements. Clicking on the "About this result" link takes users to an info box stating:

"This is info that Google gathered about products available to buy. This is a search result, not an ad. Only ads are paid, and they'll always be labeled with 'Sponsored' or 'Ad.'"

Ultimately, the aim of Shopping Graph is to provide shoppers with products most likely to match their shopping intent, while also providing the most relevant information they would need to make a purchasing decision. In theory, the fact that these outcomes are not the result of any form of paid advertising should lead to increased consumer trust in them.

Complete and Accurate Product Data is the Key to Getting Featured in Shopping Graphs

For E-commerce sellers, there is likely to be a tremendous value in landing featured spots in Google Shopping Graph results. Essentially, the program provides free advertising tailored directly to customers with purchasing intent.

So how do you get your listings to appear in Google Shopping Graphs?

The key is making sure Google has access to as much information about your products as possible. It starts with high-quality listings.

- **Keyword-Rich Descriptions** – Google’s algorithm crawls the text associated with your products to determine what you are selling and how closely it matches what customers are searching for. Regularly audit your catalog to ensure that you are making the most of your listing character counts. This strategy provides yet another reason why investing time and energy into search engine optimization (SEO) is such a valuable proposition for e-commerce sellers.
- **Multiple Product Categories** – When given the opportunity, select as many relevant categories for your products as possible. Not only will this procedure help the Google Shopping Graph algorithm properly define your products, but it is also a best practice for nearly all e-commerce marketplaces where you list.

Top 15 Microwave Ovens :

Wattage	Finish
1,100 watts	Stainless St...

Wattage	Finish
900 watts	Stainless St...

Wattage	Capacity
700 watts	0.7 cubic feet

- **Images and Video** – You want to be sure that your product listings have clear and attractive multimedia. Photos and video continue to be driving forces in engaging customer attention and conveying the value of your products. Google Shopping Graph results rely on these factors as well. Moreover, strong visuals will help your Shopping Graph appearances stand out from the competition.

Once you have optimized your product catalog entries, the next step is making sure that Google knows what you’re selling.

There are two main ways you can help surface your listings so that Shopping Graph is more likely to pick them up:

- **Google Merchant Center Product Properties** – If you are already using Buy on Google (and you should be!), your Merchant Center product properties pages are filled with the relevant details Google Shopping Graph is looking for. This product data should be kept up-to-date and as complete as possible. Sellercloud's catalog features include tools to make this process simple.
- **Google's Shopping Cart Partnerships** – Alongside the Shopping Graph announcement, Google spotlighted an expansion of its existing partnership with the popular shopping cart platform Shopify. A few weeks later, a similar partnership was announced with Shopify rival WooCommerce. Google is committed to leveraging these relationships (and others like them) to help bolster its own e-commerce value.

These partnerships mean that with just a few clicks, sellers' complete catalogs can be integrated into the Google e-commerce ecosystem – including Shopping Graph. For Sellercloud users already taking advantage of our Shopify or WooCommerce integrations, this is an excellent option.

Omnichannel E-Commerce Positions Your Online Sales Business for Success

All told, getting the most out of Google Shopping Graph essentially boils down to search engine optimization (SEO) for e-commerce. You want to position your product

listings and brand so that Google's algorithms and AI tools can properly find and understand them. Should the stars align, you boost your brand profile and attract customers.

Despite Amazon's dominance, online shoppers are showing increased comfort in branching out beyond singular marketplaces. Google has been an essential vehicle in connecting shoppers to the products, deals, brands, and marketplaces that have what they are looking for. This shift has been made evident in the record boosts in SEO visibility for a number of marketplaces and brands over the past year. The emergence of Shopping Graph should only serve to continue this trend.

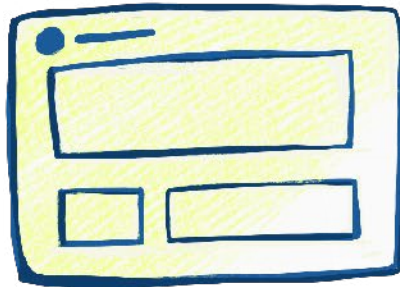
This evolution of customer online-shopping habits, alongside Google's own commitment to improving e-commerce searches, points to another critical conclusion – an omnichannel e-commerce presence matters now more than ever.

When you diversify your online visibility across multiple channels, you increase the odds that a customer can find your products, while also increasing the likelihood that your listings will get picked up by search algorithms like Google Shopping Graph. Simply put, the higher your web exposure, the more customers you will reach.

Sellercloud's omnichannel growth platform provides you with the tools you need not only to create an optimized e-commerce catalog, but also to list products across multiple channels from a single, convenient interface.

Our end-to-end order management helps to ensure efficient inventory management, reliable fulfillment, and satisfied customers – key Shopping Graph metrics.

For more on how Sellercloud can help you grow your e-commerce brand into an omnichannel business, contact us directly for a free demo and consultation.



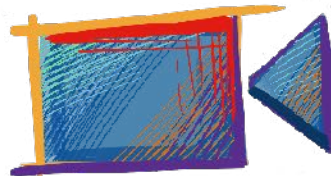
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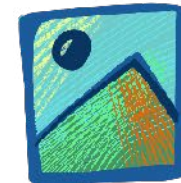
SKU & Inventory Data



Reviews



Videos



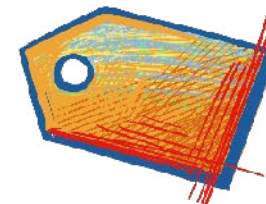
Images



Google shopping
cart partnerships



Keywords
description



Prices

Read it online:







JULY 23, 2021

7 Common Mistakes to Avoid When Expanding into B2B E-Commerce

Business-to-business (B2B) e-commerce can be a lucrative way to grow your omnichannel sales beyond business-to-consumer (B2C) sales. However, the transition is more than just adding some new business-level customers.

Entering the B2B arena requires different marketing approaches, order processing, and fulfillment workflows from what you are used to in B2C. That is not to say the crossover is impossible – far from it. You just need to be sure you have the right tools, partnerships, and logistical infrastructure to meet the unique demands of B2B e-commerce.

There are several common mistakes that can delay or even completely derail your ability to grow as a B2B seller:

Mistake #1: Assuming the “buyer” is a single person

When you sell to retail consumers, you are appealing to the wants and needs of independent buyers. B2C sales are about personal appeals and trying to connect with what customers are looking for in a product. These are individual sales made to individuals.

Conversely, the decision-making in a B2B purchase is typically spread across multiple players within a company. The individuals who will actually be using the products you are selling are unlikely to be the ones responsible for authorizing the purchase. In fact, many larger businesses have dedicated purchasing managers whose sole responsibility is handling B2B purchasing decisions.

So, while end-user input may factor into what and how much a business purchases from you, ultimately a B2B buying decision will usually have to pass through multiple stages of oversight and approval before a sale is made.

All of this process adds up to the fact that a B2B transaction usually involves a much longer and much more complicated decision-making process than a B2C one. There is almost always more than one individual involved. Your e-commerce business needs to recognize this distinction and adapt its practices and expectations accordingly.

Mistake #2: Thinking your B2C marketing will attract B2B customers

In a B2C sale, the purchase decision is a reflection of the customer’s appreciation for your product’s usefulness, style, and fit for their lifestyle – in some cases, a reflection of the customer him or herself. B2C marketing is all about matching and tailoring your merchandise to your target audiences, so they can make the necessary personal connections that lead to clicking “check out.” Odds are that if you are already experiencing success as an omnichannel e-commerce seller, you have already invested a lot of time and energy crafting your B2C marketing strategies.

Compared to B2C e-commerce, B2B purchases are complex in different ways. First of all, B2B customers and corporate purchase managers are spending company funds, not their own money. This circumstance means that B2B purchase decisions are less about style and

personal connection but instead tend to focus more on practical factors, such as cost, volume, fulfillment time, product efficiency, and safety.

When marketing to a business, focus on your ability to deliver value, dependability, and professionalism. Although things like branding and style still matter, the ability to process large-quantity orders in a timely, affordable, and reliable manner matter more. Your marketing messaging must drive these points home.

B2B purchasers are regularly faced with the challenge of making expensive decisions up against a deadline. Direct, fact-based B2B marketing materials help buyers quickly identify the value proposition you are offering. You need to be sure that your print and digital marketing materials are able to educate prospective B2B customers about your product.

While a B2C marketing campaign might play up the “wow” or “cool” factor of a product and your brand, realize that B2B customers are looking for information that allows them to accurately assess your product and understand its value before placing a potentially large order.

Mistake #3: Failing to prepare your inventory for B2B purchase quantities

As mentioned, B2B orders are usually high-quantity orders. Before making any push into the B2B e-commerce space, you need to be sure that you are able to secure sufficient inventory to meet the demand of business-sized

customers. If a large order comes in tomorrow, do you have the supply chain and logistical support to fulfill it? Will it hamper your existing B2C sales flow?

B2B purchases are primarily made to support the productivity of a business. As a result, you need to ensure that your warehousing, supply chain logistics, and stock levels are up to the demands of B2B purchasing demands. Sellercloud’s omnichannel e-commerce inventory features can not only help you assess and track these aspects of your business, but they can also help you identify your ongoing inventory needs and potential stock challenges as the B2B side of your business grows.

Another thing to remember is that B2B e-commerce can involve broad ranges of merchandise, including everything from technical equipment to office supplies, spare parts to cleaning products. The ability to fulfill orders that satisfy multiple buying needs can be a big selling point to purchase managers operating on budgets and deadlines. Pay attention to your B2B client needs and consider them as you add new products to your catalog.

Mistake #4: Expecting immediate payment at point of sale

This expectation can be a surprising pain point when moving from B2C to B2B e-commerce sales. While payouts from third-party B2C websites are rarely immediate, they are typically predictable and scheduled. Although you may not have the cash from your sale on hand before you ship, you can see that it exists in your account, waiting for the next disbursement.

On the other hand, B2B orders are almost always invoiced purchases. This statement means that a business is not required to pay up front for the merchandise they order. When a B2B order arrives, not only do you begin fulfilling the order, but you also issue an invoice that outlines what is owed and when payment is due (typically 30 days from the date the invoice was issued). If an invoice goes unpaid, it often falls to the seller to pressure the customer to make good on the debts.

If you're not careful, invoicing can create serious cash flow issues – especially in the early days of your foray into B2B sales. Your company needs to be solvent enough to ship out large volumes of inventory without receiving immediate payment. This longer sales cycle is one of the biggest challenges of the transition from B2C to B2B e-commerce.

Mistake #5: Overcomplicating the reordering process

One of the most attractive elements of B2B e-commerce is the potential for customer loyalty. Moreover, satisfied B2B customers tend to reorder at significantly higher volumes than B2C.

To help maximize the potential for this type of repeat business, you need to make the reordering process as simple as possible. Some key ways to do this include:

- Provide reordering options directly from the customer's account history page

- Create an order-by-SKU option to allow purchase managers to quickly input frequent purchases and checkout
- Offer subscription options for regular, scheduled orders

No matter how streamlined the reordering process is, consider also having members of your sales and/or customer service team specifically trained in the process and at the ready to handle any hiccups.

Mistake #6: Neglecting the relationship side of B2B

A successful B2B e-commerce brand will engage in both short- and long-term relationships with its business customers. Obviously, cultivating a stable of long-term, repeat customers (especially those ordering volume) is the ultimate goal.

Although a well-designed website, education-focused marketing, and a simple ordering and reordering process will go a long way to attracting B2B customers, loyalty is cultivated on a more personal level.

The thing to remember is that a human connection does not mean constant, high-intensity sales pressure. Businesses are looking to establish relationships with suppliers that offer more than just great deals. In fact, sending special offer emails when your records show a re-order date is approaching or offering demos of new products can lead to sales, but these are purely transactional.

More effective ways to show that your business is willing to go the extra mile for your B2B customers include:

- **Providing Top-Notch Customer Service Options** – Entering into a B2B relationship means that you need to be confident in your ability to provide on-demand customer support to your business clients. You must be prepared to offer support and instructional guidance for your products well after an order has been fulfilled.

Self-service customer service options on your website are a must, but they're not enough. Sometimes your customers will want or need to talk to a real person.

Whether you assign specific individuals as the point of contact for each B2B account or rely on a customer service team, your ability to support B2B customers effectively and respectfully can make or break your prospects for future sales. However you choose to handle person-to-person customer service, organization and efficiency are key.

We at Sellercloud know this firsthand from our own B2B relationships. That is, in part, why we created Memaila – Sellercloud's team-based collaboration and messaging tool. Among its many productivity features, Memaila can help ensure that every customer message and email gets directed to the right members on your team and answered quickly. Every customer gets the attention that is needed and deserved.

- **Sharing Industry Insights** – Your email marketing game needs to be more than just promo codes and order reminders. When your company takes the time to produce white papers and other educational materials, be sure to share them with relevant stakeholders on your mailing lists. These writings should not be sales communications, but rather they should reflect an understanding of who your customers are and what they need.

If done correctly, this type of communication fosters a degree of “we’re in this together” between your businesses and builds value for your company as a serious B2B e-commerce brand.

- **Supporting Ongoing Professional Development** – Connecting clients with relevant educational and networking experiences can be a strong opportunity to foster both professional growth and personal relationships. Hosting events dedicated to industry best practices or simply inviting a client to join you to attend a pertinent industry event can be a strong way to show a commitment to helping partners succeed.

Mistake #7: Relying on patchwork software solutions to manage your B2B and B2C e-commerce needs

Often, when expanding your e-commerce business into a new direction, the temptation is to add a new tool or software product to help simplify the process. Over time, this strategy can lead to an overcomplicated spider web of services and programs that must be constantly

maintained and updated. To make matters worse, all it takes is a single software change or new integration to throw the whole delicate balance out of whack.

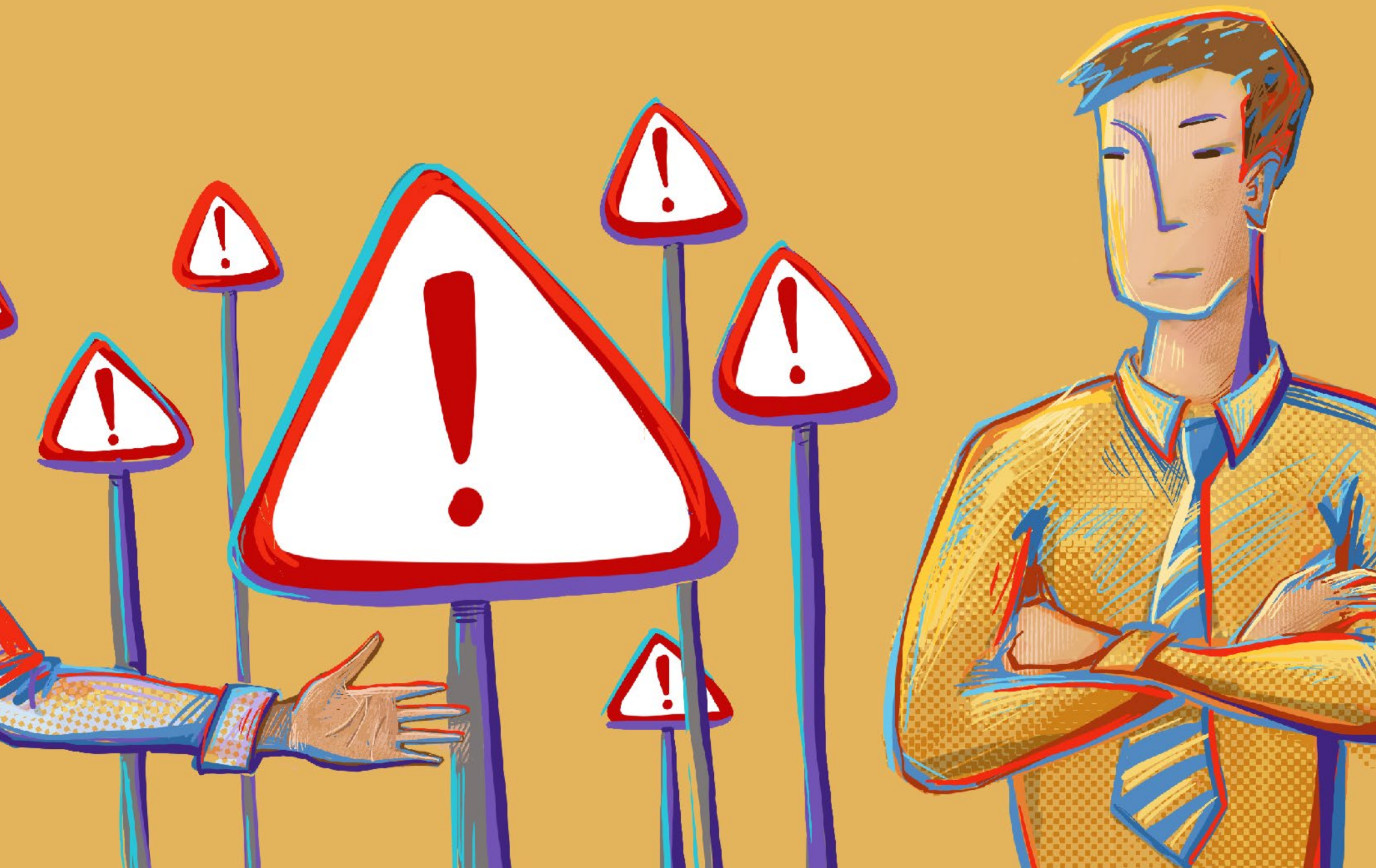
Instead, replacing your patchwork of e-commerce software solutions with a unified platform can make growing your business much more intuitive and hassle-free.

Even though expanding your e-commerce business into B2B comes with its own challenges independent of your existing B2C workflows, the Sellercloud omnichannel e-commerce growth platform allows you to seamlessly stay on top of both your B2C and B2B sales from a single, convenient interface. Our cloud-based platform allows you to track and manage every aspect of every order end-to-end. With over 120 integrations spanning marketplaces, shopping carts, payment platforms, shipping services, logistics providers, and more, Sellercloud empowers you to get the most out of your existing and future SaaS partnerships.

Contact us directly for a free demo to see for yourself how Sellercloud's omnichannel tools, features, and integrations can help your B2C and B2B e-commerce goals become a reality.

Read it online:







JULY 23, 2021

6 Essential Warehouse Roles Your E-Commerce Business Needs to Hire



Running your own e-commerce warehouse is not only possible, but it is an excellent way to transition your third-party online sales into a growth-focused, omnichannel business.

Once you have calculated the right amount of space for your inventory needs and determined the optimal warehouse layout for your fulfillment needs, you need to start thinking about staffing. The effectiveness of your warehouse depends on hiring the right people in the right positions.

The Types of Warehouse Employees and Their Job Descriptions

Typically, there are 6 different types of roles you need to consider when hiring a warehouse team. It is worth noting that each of these positions may look and operate differently, depending upon the type of e-commerce business you are running, the types of inventory you are handling, the size of your warehouse, and your order processing needs.

1. Warehouse Associates and Clerks

Associates and clerks will make up the majority of your warehouse workforce. These employees are responsible for many of the day-to-day tasks of an operating warehouse. Associates and clerks are usually hourly workers who can be employed in either full- or part-time capacities.

It is also common for the number of associates and clerks you employ to fluctuate alongside your order volume. For

this reason, it is critical to have an efficient system for training new hires in these roles. Furthermore, using intuitive warehouse technology and tools can simplify the onboarding process even further.

Common responsibilities of warehouse associates and clerks include:

- Organizing inventory
- Picking, packing, and shipping orders
- Assembling and disassembling kitted SKUs
- Scanning and tracking inventory across the warehouse
- Maintaining inventory records
- Operating and maintaining relevant machinery
- General warehouse upkeep and cleaning

Although both associates and clerks share many of the same tasks, clerks tend to focus more on record-keeping responsibilities involving inventory, ordering, and order processing. In some warehouses, associates and clerks are interchangeable roles, whereas other warehouses opt to create more distinction between the two.

2. Warehouse Technicians

Warehouse technicians are essentially higher-level warehouse associates and clerks. These employees perform many associate-level tasks, but also receive additional training that enables them to perform critical tasks such as:

- Operating machinery (like forklifts and conveyors)

- Interacting with higher-order functions of your warehouse management system (WMS)
- Receiving and signing for incoming orders
- Assessing returned merchandise
- Organizing stacks, shelves, and bins
- Transitioning inventory back and forth between long-term and short-term storage
- Facilitating order shipping

Hiring capable warehouse technicians can make a huge impact on your ability to minimize organizational issues and inventory problems. They are a vital conduit between your WMS and the day-to-day goings on of your warehouse floor.

3. Warehouse Specialists

Warehouse specialists operate as the first line of oversight for warehouse associates and clerks. Although they may, from time to time, need to step in to support the floor staff, these employees are hired for their ability to coordinate and support teams. The larger the warehouse, the more likely the need to hire employees at this assistant-managerial level.

Beyond their supervisory roles, warehouse supervisors need to be excellent problem solvers. They need to have an understanding of large-scale organizational systems and a working knowledge of your WMS and its supporting technologies to be best able to direct associates, clerks, and technicians. The better they do their jobs, the more efficient your warehouse will run and the easier it will be to onboard new team members.

4. Warehouse Coordinators and Supervisors

Warehouse coordinators and supervisors operate above specialists and have additional authority over the warehouse operations. These employees are almost entirely removed from physical warehouse work and instead deal exclusively with oversight.

Of the two positions, warehouse coordinators are the planners. They manage inventory, record keeping, organizational protocols, and generally help design warehouse workflows that promote optimal productivity and safety. They are also the more likely of the two to be called upon to interact with third parties regarding warehouse-related needs or issues.

Warehouse supervisors work to carry out the vision and planning of the warehouse coordinators and upper management. Ideally, they are a bridge between those handling the physical operations on the floor and those in charge of the larger-scale operations of your e-commerce business as a whole.

Most importantly, warehouse supervisors and coordinators must work in concert to ensure that a smooth, efficient logistics plan actually functions in practice.

5. Warehouse Foremen and Managers

These are the upper-management positions of your warehouse. Not only are they in charge of all of the aforementioned employees, but are responsible for their hiring, promotion, and training. These top-level managers

also set schedules for employees, warehouse maintenance, deliveries, and inventory audits.

Much of a foreman or manager's work will be coordinated through your e-commerce business's WMS platform. These professionals must be well versed in identifying, analyzing, and responding to trends in your fulfillment data. From there, they must create actionable plans and protocols to maximize your warehouse efficiency.

Larger warehouses may have multiple foremen and managers – each responsible for a specific team or element of your logistics plan. As your warehouse demands grow, so will your supervisory needs.

6. Warehouse Director of Operations

A warehouse director of operations is the organizational leader of your warehouse. This employee is responsible for everything coming in and out of your facility and everything in between – including, but not limited to:

- Developing fulfillment strategies in accordance with industry best practices
- Providing and facilitating customer service on behalf of the warehouse
- Ensuring compliance with health and safety regulations warehouse-wide
- Establishing and assessing performance indicators for warehouse workers and third-party partners

This is the one warehouse staffing decision that you absolutely must get right – your ability to deliver for your

customers and successfully scale your business depends on it.

Ideal candidates for this position will possess a combination of management experience and familiarity with e-commerce and your particular inventory needs.

Synergize Your Warehouse Workforce with a Scalable, Intuitive Warehouse Management System (WMS)

The right staff is only as good as the tools you provide for them. The Sellercloud omnichannel growth platform provides you with everything you need to keep your warehouse team running smoothly.

It all starts with a unified platform that brings together all the different elements of your e-commerce business into a single, cloud-based interface. Our software makes it possible for multiple employees across multiple corporate and warehouse locations to remain on the same page with every aspect of every order and every piece of inventory.

Our Skustack WMS uses patented inventory management technology to give your warehouse teams and logistics partners unparalleled access to your inventory data. Intuitive scanners and reporting features allow you to instantly locate each piece of inventory, conduct time-saving cycle counts, and facilitate optimal order-processing workflows.

Skublox is our affordable, scalable put-to-light, pack-to-light system that can further boost your warehouse workers' efficiency and accuracy. Customizable light walls can be assembled, configured, and re-configured to suit your fulfillment needs as they change and evolve.

Contact us directly for a free demo to see for yourself how the Sellercloud family of products can fuel a streamlined, synergized warehouse staff and help take your omnichannel e-commerce business to the next level.

Read it online:





JULY 30, 2021

Eliminate Your Costly E-Commerce Backorders and Boost Omnichannel Success

When customer demand outpaces your supply, your e-commerce business has a decision to make. Either you update your marketplace and website listings with an “Out of Stock” (OOS) label until you can replenish your inventory or you accept and fulfill backorders. You have to do something, because failing to take action results in overselling – a practice that can cause a major hit to your customer approval ratings.

On the surface, selling through your stock seems like a great problem to have; interest in your products is not only growing, but it is also surpassing your inventory projections. In reality, it may also be indicative of a costly underlying problem.

In this situation, you have to be prepared to address both the short-term and long-term issues. The most pressing need is to keep interested customers on the hook. After all, you have buyers who have reached the bottom of the sales funnel and are ready to purchase. This stage is where backorders come in. They give you the option of accepting orders before you actually have the inventory on hand to fulfill them. This is a common retail practice and something all omnichannel e-commerce sellers should be prepared to offer.

That said, the ideal scenario is to always have the inventory ready and available so that you can avoid having to ask customers to wait for a backorder in the first place.

Sellercloud’s catalog and inventory management features can help you not only handle backorders when the

need arises, but also set up your e-commerce business to always have the stock on hand to fulfill orders quickly and accurately.

How Do E-Commerce Backorders Work?

Backorders work slightly differently, depending on where the sales originate.

Backorder sales on your own website can be a viable option when you have more orders than inventory. To start with, you need a user-facing storefront or shopping cart capable of accepting backorders. Don’t assume that your e-commerce website automatically supports this functionality.

Although you could simply accept all incoming orders and process backorders on the fulfillment backend, it is usually a best practice to inform customers up front if their purchase contains a backordered item. This communication could go a long way to avoiding customer service headaches down the road.

When a backorder comes in, you need to have a system in place to quickly create and place a purchase order with your supplier for the OOS inventory. From there, once the inventory is received, it should be promptly matched to the corresponding outstanding backorders.

Backorder sales on third-party sales channels can get a bit more complicated. Most third-party marketplaces use seller-provided inventory counts to help prevent overselling. When the numbers that dictate you have

sold through your stock, a listing is typically marked as OOS. Naturally, this step depends on both the accuracy of your inventory counts and the safeguards offered by the channels where you sell. Backorders may or may not be an option.

If providing backorders is something that is a priority for your e-commerce business, be sure to explore how they are handled by the channels where you sell. Some marketplaces, like Amazon, have very specific guidance about what qualifies for backorders, whereas others don't allow third-party sellers to offer backorders at all. The same is true for shopping cart partners.

One workaround some e-commerce sellers take to avoid OOS notices on marketplaces without backorder functionality is to inflate their marketplace inventory counts. This maneuver makes the listing appear to be in stock, but in reality, it must be filled by the seller as a backorder. Such a practice is not only dishonest, but it is also extremely risky. It corrupts your inventory accuracy, puts an unnecessary strain on your logistics infrastructure, and breeds customer dissatisfaction. These types of overselling tactics are a recipe for customer service headaches, cancelled orders, marketplace suspensions, and bans.

Sellercloud Makes Managing Your Backorders Simple

No matter where your backorders originate, Sellercloud's omnichannel e-commerce platform is equipped to help you fill them swiftly and accurately.

Our integrated backorder workflow features help you accept, fill, and process backorders in a number of different ways.

When you receive backorders from customers, you have the ability to first check your inventory quantities across all of your warehouses and fulfillment partners and re-allocate stock as necessary. If you need to reorder merchandise, Sellercloud's purchasing features allow you to generate and execute the necessary purchase orders. As new inventory arrives, you can choose to fulfill backorders chronologically or manually allocate inventory based on backorder quantity or customer.

In terms of fulfillment and shipping, you have several different backorder fulfillment options:

- **Orders can be delayed** so that an order ships once the backordered merchandise is available.
- **Orders can be split** so that available items ship as soon as possible. This action prevents backordered items from delaying the fulfillment of the SKUs that you have in stock. You will likely spend more in shipping, but it may be more convenient for the customer than waiting for a single shipment.
- **Orders can be dropshipped directly from a vendor.** In this case, you have a supplier ship the backordered product(s) directly to the customers. This practice streamlines the fulfillment process and eliminates the need for your warehouse team to order, receive, repack, and reship a backordered SKU to awaiting customers.

- **Orders can be cancelled** outright. While this possibility is not ideal, sometimes fulfilling a backorder becomes impossible or unreasonable. In these cases, sometimes the best course of action is to terminate the order, refund the customer, and eliminate the customer's expectation that you will be shipping their purchase.

Throughout the fulfillment process, communication is key. Being proactive about sharing order and shipping status enhances customer satisfaction; this goal is especially important with backorders. Sellercloud's Memaila collaboration and communication tool is extremely helpful for automating and tracking customer communication – empowering your customer service team to provide A+ service while giving customers the most up-to-date feedback on their orders.

Eliminating Backorders Altogether is Often the Best Option

There are some theoretical benefits to offering a backorder option to customers.

- **Backordered inventory doesn't have any holding costs.** Inventory expenses can quickly drive up your costs of goods sold (COGS) and eat into your bottom line. Other than processing and shipping, backorders don't spend much time sitting in your warehouse.
- **Backorders can spur sales.** Inventory visibility is not only a strong modern e-commerce practice, but it can also create a sense of purchasing urgency as stock numbers begin to dwindle. One after-effect of

pandemic e-commerce purchasing patterns is that buyers are more attuned to the consequences of limited availability. Backorders can be seen by some as a sign that a product is so popular that it is worth waiting for. Why not give customers the opportunity to do so?

- **Backorders can eliminate guesswork about inventory level "sweet-spots."** While you should be doing routine inventory cycle counting and paying attention to your inventory turnover ratio (ITR), backorders are a surefire sign that you need to revisit your purchasing levels.

While there are positives associated with e-commerce backorders, the pros of avoiding backorders will typically outweigh the cons:

- **Backorders represent missed sales opportunities that could promote your competitors.** While the fear of missing out (FOMO) will lead some customers to pounce on backordering an in-demand product, there is no way of telling how many customers your lack of stock scared away. In the era of 1- and 2-day shipping, a backorder status on your listing could lead impatient buyers to seek out your competitors instead.
- **Managing backorders takes time and resources away from other areas of your e-commerce business.** Accepting a backorder from a customer implies a commitment to actively fulfilling the purchase agreement in a timely and reliable manner. Meeting these demands requires your entire team to divert attention

away from your standard ordering, fulfillment, and customer-service workflows to clear the backlog.

- **The hit to customer satisfaction can have big-picture consequences.** Backorders are fine as long as customer expectations are managed and satisfaction metrics remain high. However, if backorders start negatively impacting your metrics, it can compromise your standing on third-party marketplaces as well as your overall brand value.

Allowing backorders can be a useful e-commerce strategy, but in most cases, it makes sense to maintain enough inventory to avoid having to rely on them. You won't have

OOS issues driving away interested customers and your sales will be able to reach their maximum heights.

Sellercloud's inventory management tools can provide you with the stock metrics you need to be confident you can fulfill orders without delay. Low stock warnings and predictive purchasing options have you covered when sales spikes outpace your inventory projections.

Contact us directly for a free demo and see for yourself how Sellercloud can help you both manage and eliminate backorders in your omnichannel e-commerce business.



Read it online:







AUGUST 10, 2021

How to Keep the Container Shipping Crisis from Hindering Your Business

In the past year, the cost of shipping a container from China to the US West Coast has risen by over 156 percent (Washington Post). This news has led nearly all of the world's leading international shipping lines to increase rates as well as impose port congestion / value-added surcharges ranging as high as \$5,000.

This phenomenon is yet another way the COVID-19 pandemic continues to turn the retail landscape on its head. The resulting fulfillment delays, supply chain disruptions, and additional costs can pose a major problem for e-commerce sellers caught unprepared.

Regardless of the size or nature of your online sales business, you need to understand the current challenges facing international shipping and be prepared to assess their impact on your supply chain, logistics, and profit margins – both now and into the future.

Multiple Factors are Stifling International Freight

The economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to hit international shipping lanes hard. There is a perfect storm that continues to swirl over the industry, which is having negative effects on supply chains and the costs of goods worldwide.

- **A pandemic import boom** – As the COVID-19 pandemic led more and more people to stay (and work from) home, online retail surged. This spike in purchasing led to increased demand for heavily imported products. China, in particular, saw huge spikes in

exports of PPE, consumer electronics, bicycles, furniture, clothing, and other goods relevant to a shift to both play- and work-from-home living. In turn, this unexpected surge has quickly overwhelmed the international trade infrastructure in a way that it has yet to fully recover from.

- **Port congestion** – As more and more cargo containers arrive stateside from China and other international points of origin, dock space has become extremely limited. This problem has forced scores of fully loaded cargo ships to sit anchored outside some of the nation's largest ports.
- **Container supply issues** – In many cases, just finding a shipping container to fill is proving to be a challenge in and of itself. Due to pandemic trade restrictions and imbalances, containers that have been emptied stateside have sat unfilled and unable to be returned to their ports of origin. Even bolstered production of new containers has not remedied the issue. Demand and costs for available containers continue to rise. Projections are that container supply will remain an issue into next year. The fewer available containers, the slower goods will flow through international shipping channels.
- **Supply chain stress** – All of these factors amplify production, labor, and supply shortages that are hampering supply chains across a wide swath of industries. Outbreaks, port closures, container shortages, and increased competition for materials and components are driving up costs and fulfillment times.

In regard to the complex and multifaceted nature of this container shipping issue, it is unlikely to resolve itself any time soon. As such, you need to be proactive in assessing its impact on your business and the retail landscape as a whole.

Container Shipping Bottlenecks Stoking Inflation Fears and Price Increases for Businesses and Consumers

While the economic recovery is giving customers increased buying power and purchasing intent, prices are going up and inflation is becoming a real concern. The increased cost of importing goods and components from overseas is right at the center of it all. Just as profit margins are tightening for port operators, they will likely continue to be squeezed all the way through the supply chain to retailers as well.

This possibility will have serious implications for how you will have to plan for your inventory needs as well as how you price your listings. There are several ways you may want to attempt to mitigate the negative impacts that current container shipping delays will have now and going forward:

- **Consider increasing your inventory on hand** – Although there are typically negative costs associated with storing too much inventory in your warehouse, they may be lessened or nullified if obtaining a regular stream of inventory is becoming too challenging and/or costly. For the short-term, you may find that it is more cost efficient to acquire supply when you can,


rather than be forced to pay increased fees and surcharges from multiple, smaller orders.

- **Adjust your predictive purchasing thresholds** – Sellercloud allows users to avoid costly out-of-stocks and overselling merchandise with our low stock alert and predictive purchasing features. That said, the turnaround time and costs for reorders may not be the same as when you last set your inventory level thresholds.
- **Pay attention to the calendar** – There is a risk that shortages caused by the back-to-school and holiday seasons may put additional short-term strain on your ability to keep enough stock on hand to fulfill orders. If these time periods are particularly important sales stretches for your e-commerce business, you may need to order more and sooner than usual to avoid fulfillment bottlenecks.
- **Increase catalog prices as needed** – There is no shame in passing on your increased landed costs to your customers. In most cases, increasing prices to protect your margins is simply good business.

Monitor Your Cost of Goods Sold (COGS) Metrics to Assess Container Shipping Bottlenecks on Your Bottom Line

Whether you rely on imported goods, packaging, or parts for your e-commerce business directly or indirectly, the ongoing container shipping crisis will likely impact your cost of doing business. The key is knowing how much of an impact these trade challenges are actually having on your bottom line. After all, how can you make profit-based





decisions without the actual data to back them up?

Sellercloud's container workflow features will help you optimize your container imports and exports. Our tools give you the ability to fill, receive, and track your container-based purchase orders.

Profit and Loss (P&L) can be tracked on both an order-by-order and product-by-product basis. This feature gives you the ability not only to monitor your profit margins, but also gives you the opportunity to dial in your prices to target your ideal profit margins and account for logistical fluctuations like the current container shipping struggles.

Furthermore, our cost of goods sold (COGS) and inventory value reporting features allow you to access up-to-date data

on the landed costs for every item you sell and wherever you sell it. For example, monitoring fluctuations in average cost can help surface how factors like increased freight and shipping rates are affecting your COGS.

In particular, our weighted average cost calculations give you the ability to frame your average costs in relation to your inventory quantities on hand. To determine this figure, the total cost of your current stock for a particular product is divided by the number of units you are currently holding. This quantity consideration allows weighted average cost data to go beyond simple average cost figures to provide a more complete picture of your current inventory value.

Ultimately COGS figures like these will prove helpful in adjusting catalog and wholesale prices for customers as well as assessing the cost effectiveness of your supply chain partners.

Omnichannel e-commerce is full of challenges, but having the right tools can help you make the best adjustments and decisions regardless of the current retail climate. Contact us directly for a free demo of our platform's robust features and integrations. You can be sure to have the support you need so your online sales can continue to grow, even in uncertain times like these.

Read it online:





AUGUST 12, 2021

The Simplest Way to Boost Your eBay Listings



Listing accuracy is one of the most important pieces of a successful e-commerce business. The ways in which you describe and categorize the products you sell drive vital metrics such as:

- Listing views
- Customer satisfaction
- Brand growth

There are plenty of secret tips for boosting the existing listings in your catalog and keeping your listings fresh. That said, most of them will only have a limited effectiveness if your product descriptions don't contain ample and accurate product attributes.

Along those same lines, product images and videos are becoming increasingly valuable in attracting potential customers to your listings. Even so, these multimedia elements only maximize their value when paired with listings tagged with the appropriate categories and clearly described.

Your written descriptions and product categorizations are what help marketplaces and customers get a handle on exactly what you are selling. As such, you need to make sure that every one of your listings includes as many relevant and accurate product attributes as possible.

What are Product Attributes and Why Do They Matter?

eBay defines product attributes as "the important and relevant facts about a product."

Product attributes include things like:

- Brand
- Size
- Size type
- Color
- Pattern
- Style
- Materials
- Capacity
- Weight
- Add-ons

These product attributes provide essential pieces of information about your products for shoppers and marketplaces alike. The more information you provide, the easier it is to classify exactly what you are selling.

Furthermore, these product attributes create meaningful points of comparison between your products and those of your competitors'.

There are two very important ways that these comparisons are used by marketplaces to define your product:

- **Similarities** – Overlapping attributes across multiple products help shoppers and marketplaces group relevant competing options. As online comparison shopping continues to grow in popularity, making it easier for marketplace search algorithms to surface your product alongside relevant competitors will remain a valuable proposition.

- **Differences** – Unique product attributes serve as the key differentiators between your product and others. These differences can help your product stand out, even in the most crowded of marketplaces.

This is where attaching a high volume of product attributes to each of your listings pays off. When you maximize the potential points of similarity and difference between your products and those of other marketplace competitors, you wind up getting the best of both worlds: your product can be featured as a strong contender against your competition, while also possessing enough unique characteristics to be seen as the superior option.

Your Product Attributes Do Important Work Behind the Scenes

When a customer visits a marketplace, the goal is to match the shopper's intent with the products they are most likely to purchase. To this end, marketplaces have their own internal search engines tailored to that exact purpose.

When a customer initiates a product-based search (PBS), marketplaces, shopping carts, and search engines use a wide variety of data points to try and deliver the perfect products. Some of these are filters that a customer can select, while others are under-the-hood metrics that the marketplace deems relevant to converting a sale.

Some of these data points include product details that evolve and can be modified by the seller over time:

- Price

- Shipping speed
- Inventory availability
- Customer satisfaction ratings

Product attributes are critical data points in these search algorithms as well.

PBS has long been an important (albeit an ever-evolving) element of how eBay and other marketplaces curate and organize listing content. Ebay is clear about how product attributes are a key cornerstone of this process:

Providing a complete set of item specifics creates a rich set of structured data that enhances the ability for search engines to find, filter, and recall products. This outcome translates into search results that more closely target the search queries entered by users, which ultimately generates more buying conversions.

Here's the thing; marketplaces don't keep this information a secret. Their profits and popularity are directly tied to their ability to surface the right listings to the right customers. Marketplaces want you to create listings that help toward those ends. eBay even goes so far as to advise sellers directly, "Supply as many item specifics as you can."

Take this advice to heart.

Whenever you list a product, the goal should always be to correctly identify and assign as many product attributes as possible. Unlike item details, like price and inventory that fluctuate over a product's lifespan, product

attributes are typically more static. After all, your product is your product. Therefore, you should be able to assign product attributes that are as accurate and complete as possible from launch.

Indeed, certain attributes can be added and/or removed from your listings over time (a task made much simpler by Sellercloud's omnichannel catalog management tools), but product attributes require less ongoing attention, the more thought and consideration you give them from the outset.

Sellercloud Makes Adding and Managing Product Attributes Easy

Adding product attributes to your listings is important, but it's also simple. The Sellercloud omnichannel growth platform has been an eBay-certified compatible application since 2010. Our robust catalog management features allow you to add product attributes to your listings and have them populate on eBay and across every other channel where you sell.

Not only does this feature save time, but it helps generate omnichannel brand and product consistency. You can create listings that let customers know exactly what they are buying and build the trust and reliability that leads to repeat orders.

For more on how Sellercloud can help create and maintain your ideal e-commerce listings, contact us directly for a free demo.



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AUGUST 19, 2021

Increase Your E-Commerce Sales by Uncovering Hidden Secondary Audiences



When it comes to creating e-commerce listings, the goal is to drive as many sales conversions as possible. Whether you are selling on third-party marketplaces or focusing on first-party sales, your listing is what informs shoppers about your product and helps you outshine your competitors. For many brands, this result means creating a customer avatar representing the ideal customer and then tailoring listings and marketing efforts toward that imaginary person.

From there, listings need to be continually reassessed and revised as conditions (and your customer avatars) change. Successful e-commerce growth requires your catalog to be a living entity focused on showcasing your merchandise and brand in the best possible ways.

One often overlooked strategy in this process involves taking a more creative look at your products. If you are looking for ways to expand the reach of your e-commerce catalog, some simple research can identify alternative uses for your products and, in turn, alternative customers whom your marketing strategies could target as secondary audiences. In time, these hidden audiences could even evolve into your main customer avatars.

Where to Find Alternative Customers for Your Products and Brand

There are several ways to uncover pockets of customers worth your marketing efforts:

1. Stay on top of your customer feedback.

Your user-submitted marketplace and website reviews are full of useful information about your customers. Oftentimes, users who have found alternative uses for your products will be quick to boast about their own ingenuity. This input is a prime opportunity to identify new marketing potential.

2. Audit your social media presence.

Similar to customer feedback, social media is a great chance to see how people are responding to your products. Pay attention to your social media mentions across the major channels – particularly creativity-focused platforms like Pinterest and Instagram. Not only can these insights help surface new audiences, but the social media platforms themselves are also evolving into sales venues.

3. Regularly review marketplace and storefront demographic reports.

Many online marketplaces offer demographics-reporting features that allow you to unpack exactly who is buying what you're selling. Google Analytics can be set up to provide similar insights for your own e-commerce website.

Common metrics include:

- gender
- age
- geography

- education
- household income
- marital status
- unique vs. repeat customers
- time on page

Be on the lookout for outliers that don't mesh with your ideal customer avatar. These can be indicators of a hidden audience you have yet to fully tap.

4. Follow up with your customers.

Sometimes the direct approach is best. Use surveys or special offers tied to feedback to solicit additional information from repeat customers and those who seem to deviate from your typical customer profile. These interactions can bring to light alternate uses for your products and highlight new marketing angles.

NOTE: Be careful to follow marketplaces' terms of service rules that apply to customer outreach. In some cases, marketing-focused communication with customers can result in suspensions and bans.

Omnichannel E-Commerce Can Lead to Diversified Customer Bases

It is important to remember that your customers will likely look different, depending on the channels they are coming from. As a result, your customer avatars can vary drastically by marketplace.

Imagine a hypothetical brand that sells a series of durable, versatile scissors that can cleanly cut through

multiple materials. It could easily be a best-seller on different marketplaces, but for entirely different reasons.

- **Etsy** attracts a crafty, predominantly female clientele seeking out handmade, vintage, and one-of-a-kind items. Listing a strong, multi-use set of scissors on Etsy should absolutely focus on their crafting potential.
- **Bed Bath & Beyond** and HSN are ideal marketplaces for housewares. A listing for a multi-use pair of scissors could benefit from the As-Seen-On-TV style, "all-in-one gadget" appeal that shoppers on these marketplaces respond to. Shoppers looking for the perfect pair of scissors for their kitchen, desk, or junk drawer would be likely to be drawn to the notion that you are selling them the last pair of scissors they may ever need.
- **Home Depot** caters to a male-leaning demographic of home-improvement experts, tradespeople, and DIYers. A set of strong shears could be very useful for tasks like trimming vinyl tile, cutting wire, or pruning plants. A listing on Home Depot should reflect that versatility.
- **Larger Marketplaces like Amazon and Walmart** are one-stop-shops for a wide variety of online customers. Trends may emerge from the customer feedback and marketplace demographic data on these sites to help you highlight your optimal consumer targets.

That said, the reality is you will likely want to try to create listings that cast a wide net – considering all of the various use-cases and customer groups you have identified across your omnichannel brand.

An omnichannel e-commerce brand should be committed not only to selling on as many channels as is practical, but to as wide an audience as possible. Routinely diving deep into your customer data and remaining flexible in your multi-channel marketing will help you maximize your selling power.

Sellercloud's Integrated Catalog Tools Give You the Ultimate Omnichannel Marketing Flexibility

Identifying a hidden secondary audience doesn't mean much if you don't have the ability to target it. In most cases, although these customer bases may be primed for growth, they pale in comparison to your primary audience. Unlocking their full potential will take energy and effort that may take time to yield a return. Without the right tools, this task can be a drain on your marketing team's focus.

Enter Sellercloud. The Sellercloud omnichannel growth platform features a catalog optimized for multichannel e-commerce sales. From a single database, you can create, edit, and manage every listing across every channel where you sell.

What's more, Sellercloud allows you to create shadow products – linked SKUs that allow you to list, market,

and sell the same product across different listings, categories, marketplaces, and companies. These alternative product profiles are perfect for A/B testing and listing optimizations as well as creating listing variations for unique customer avatars.

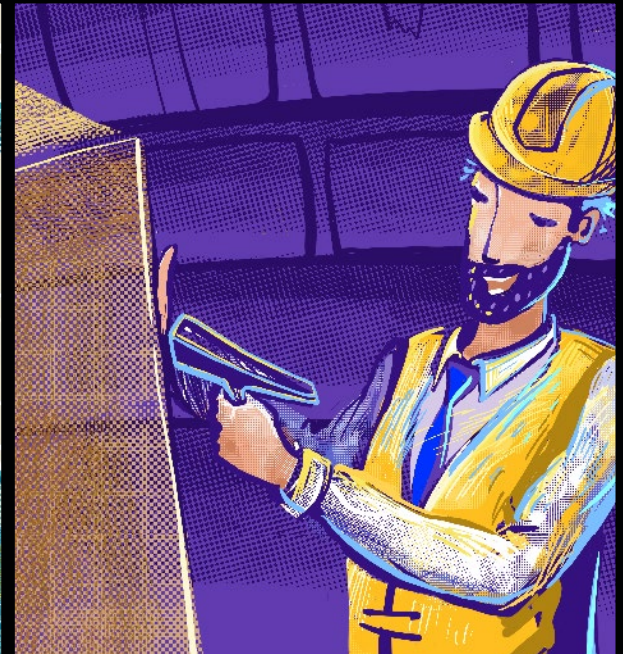
Being able to both manage and manipulate your catalog efficiently from a single, cloud-based interface saves you from having to do so on a webpage-by-webpage basis. Streamlining your listings workflow means more time to put elsewhere – including identifying new sales growth opportunities.

For more on how Sellercloud can help you get the most out of all of your customer bases, contact us directly for a free demo.

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