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5 Peak Season Success Secrets

Prepare Your Ecommerce Brand for Black Friday and Cyber Monday

A unified resource for businesses that want to amplify their reach, capitalize on high-traffic periods, and build resilient operations during the most critical selling period of the year.

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Optimize for Peak Season Success

97 million Americans made a purchase during Cyber Week in 2024.

Are your operations ready for another year of record-breaking peak season traffic?

Not sure? That's okay. You've found the ultimate resource for ecommerce businesses that want to amplify their reach and confidently navigate the high-stakes (and often unpredictable) holiday season, thoughtfully curated by the ShipStation team and our network of brilliant partners.

In this ebook, you'll learn:

- **What** selling channels work best for your business during peak season (and beyond)

- **Where** your customers are shopping (and returning) during the holidays

- **When** you need to add to your tech stack to handle peak volumes

- **Why** the customer experience is critical during high-traffic periods

- **How** to use data to optimize your selling and shipping efforts

Let's get to it.

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Which Selling Channels Can Boost Peak Season Performance?

One of the most important decisions you'll make as an ecommerce brand is where you should sell—it's not enough just to have a unique product or service. You need to choose the right mix of channels to reach your target audience, maximize sales, and optimize for conversions when competition is fiercest. In this section, we'll dig into three key selling channels:

1. Marketplaces

2. Social Media

3. Brick and Mortar

Shipping fact:

Businesses that sell on three marketplaces save up to 122 hours a year on label printing by using ShipStation over printing on each marketplace separately*

Estimated data based on comparing businesses on a Bronze plan, with businesses logging into ShipStation 3x per day and printing a label from each marketplace for every login.

Marketplaces: Your Peak Season Revenue Multiplier

Even if you already have a high-converting ecommerce website, there are several reasons to consider selling on online marketplaces or adding additional marketplaces to your mix.

Are you ready to sell on a marketplace?

Online marketplaces like Amazon, Walmart, Ebay, Etsy, SHEIN, and TikTok Shop are some of the most popular avenues for consumers to browse new products, compare prices, and check out product reviews during the holiday shopping rush.

- 83% of consumers made purchases on marketplaces in 2024

- Nearly 48% of shoppers plan to use marketplaces more frequently in the future

Pros:

- **Easy to create and maintain**: Setting up an online marketplace is quite simple and intuitive, so your team can focus on other tasks at hand.

- **Expanded customer reach**: Marketplaces have expansive reach, so your business can easily access a high volume of customers by offering your products across several marketplaces.

Cons:

- **Lack of customer data**: Marketplaces are third-party platforms, so you can't communicate with your customers outside their ecosystem. That means no branded promotional emails or post-purchase communications, which can be especially important after the holidays.

- **Intensely competitive**: Your product may be unique, but in a densely populated marketplace during the peak season rush, it may not stand out, and your brand can get lost in the noise.

Pro tip: Launch on one new marketplace 30-60 days before Black Friday and Cyber Monday to establish brand presence and optimize listings. Peak season may not be the best time to experiment with multiple new platforms simultaneously. Choose one marketplace and expand into others as needed.

How to decide which marketplace is right for you

As you evaluate which marketplace will be best for your business, you'll need to take into account several considerations, like increased costs (i.e. subscription fees), lack of brand recognition on the product listing, and limited customer data. However, the most important consideration is your customers. Where do your target customers shop and buy gifts? There's no value in putting time, effort, and money into a marketplace if your customers don't shop there.

> Let's start by reframing how marketplaces help businesses grow. It's not just a site for transactions—50% of product discovery happens on Amazon. Meaning, shoppers start at Amazon but might end at your .com for transactions. With that in mind, consider your ideal shoppers and where they might go for product discovery. Remember, ensuring you have the cleanest product data possible is integral in discoverability on crowded marketplaces.
>
> — feedonomics

Don't forget about the data

Tracking the right metrics is crucial for success in marketplaces, especially during peak season, so here are five metrics to monitor:

1 — **Sales Volume**: Keep track of the total number of items sold to gauge product demand and revenue generation.

2 — **Conversion Rate**: Measure the percentage of visitors who make a purchase. Conversion rates measure the effectiveness of your product listings and customer engagement efforts.

3 — **Customer Feedback and Ratings**: Track customer reviews and ratings to understand customer satisfaction and identify areas for improvement. Positive feedback helps build trust and attract more customers.

4 — **Fulfillment Metrics**: Monitor fulfillment rates, shipping times, and order accuracy. Efficient fulfillment processes lead to higher customer satisfaction and repeat business.

5 — **Return Rate**: Analyze the rate at which products are returned. A high return rate could indicate issues with product quality, descriptions, or customer expectations.

These metrics will help you optimize your marketplace performance and make data-driven decisions that maximize ROI.

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channelengine

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> " Creating a seamless shopping experience that eliminates friction is the key to competing with popular marketplaces that offer benefits like two-day shipping. This means building a well-designed website, offering a personalized experience, and optimizing the checkout process. "

— **BIGCOMMERCE**

Social Selling: Capture Peak Season Traffic

Social media holds immense power. It's transformed the way people connect, communicate, and, most recently, changed the way they shop. The average person spends countless hours a day on social media, giving businesses plenty of time to build relationships and create an interactive selling experience. Together with online marketplaces, social media has become a powerful selling tool for ecommerce businesses during Black Friday, Cyber Monday, and the holiday season overall.

Social selling is a marathon, not a sprint

A strong social media presence is a non-negotiable for businesses wanting to scale and grow. With 74% of Gen Z and 64% of Millennials planning to shop on social media in 2025, social media is more important than a retailer's website for purchase inspiration and product discovery (2025 ShipStation Ecommerce Delivery Benchmark Report).

Peak season social selling requires a different approach than regular social commerce. Your content needs to tap into holiday urgency, gift-giving emotions, and time-sensitive promotional opportunities. The foundation remains the same—engaging with potential customers and building trust—but the messaging and timing become critical.

Focus on building your social presence one channel at a time. It's better to have one high-performing, branded channel than five mediocre ones. Test, analyze, adjust, and build your social strategies until you find the winning mix.

Peak Season Social Strategy:

Focus on platforms where your customers are most active during the holidays. Gen Z gift-shoppers dominate TikTok and Instagram, while older generations turn to Facebook for holiday inspiration and deals.

Social selling is a marathon, not a sprint

1

Get experimental:

Social commerce is an opportunity to meet consumers in the channels where they're shopping and achieve greater scale for your business. Staying agile by testing new content and formats offered by these platforms and optimizing your content along the way will help you become better at adapting your content to reach the right customer at the right time with the right message.

2

Personalize your messaging:

By identifying your audience, you can then tailor your messaging to address real-time problems rather than send general messages or direct sales pitches.

3

Prioritize data-driven decision making:

Learn from engagement levels to help evolve your social commerce strategy over time. Make adjustments as you see what resonates with consumers versus what does not.

4 Synchronize inventory with promotions:

It's essential to promote products that are in stock for consumers to purchase. Otherwise, you risk a poor customer experience, which could cost you the sale and damage your brand integrity.

5 Simplify the checkout process:

Consumers want an easy checkout experience. Allowing consumers to make purchases within the social media app is an easier checkout experience. Consumers can increasingly pay through various social media apps using trusted methods such as PayPal, Apple Pay, Google Pay, and Venmo.

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Rithum™

Peak season shipping considerations

Selling on social media platforms successfully during peak season requires rock-solid shipping operations. Each social network has different shipping considerations, but whether you're selling on TikTok, Facebook, or Instagram, ShipStation can help you fulfill expedited social shipping orders.
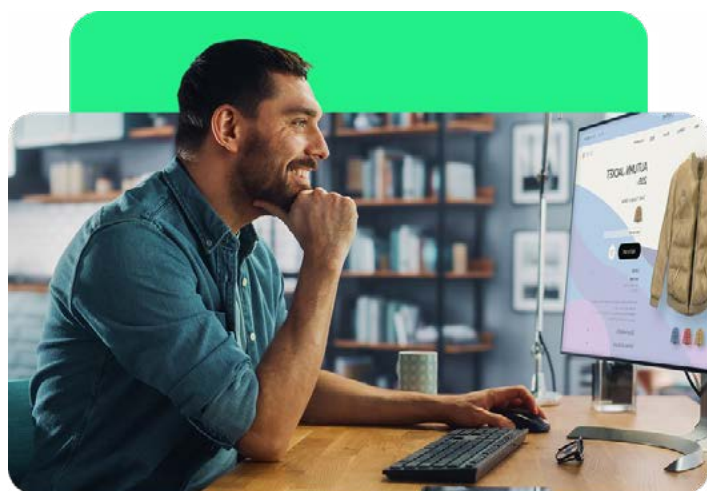
Simplify Social Shipping

GET STARTED WITH SHIPSTATION

![ShipStation]

Brick and Mortar: The Peak Season Advantage

Physical retail has experienced a massive resurgence during peak season. Last year, 126 million people made a purchase in-store during Cyber Week, up from 121.4 million in 2023. That's why businesses need multiple selling channels in their arsenal.

The best-performing peak season selling strategy is no longer an either-or situation—online or in-person—it includes both online and physical stores, reaching customers at multiple purchasing touchpoints.

Three benefits of a multichannel buying experience

1. Boost sales

2. Reach more customers (and likely new customers)

3. Create lasting customer-brand relationships

126 million people made a purchase in-store during Cyber Week, up from 121.4 million in 2023.

Five ways to recreate the in-store customer experience online

Expanding into physical stores isn't always possible, but your brand can implement virtual experiences to surprise, delight, and convert customers.

1   **Home try-on**: This allows your customers to choose a selection of products, try them on at home, and return the items that don't work for free.

2   **Augmented reality**: Customers can upload their own pictures or use images provided to "try on" items virtually.

3   **AI personalized recommendations**: AI can mimic in-store associates and recommend products based on a customer's current cart or recent purchases.

4   **High-quality images or video**: Photography is critical when shopping online, so allowing customers to zoom in and view products from multiple angles can instill confidence while shopping. Even better, include a video of the product for a realistic view.

5   **Premium holiday packaging**: Invest in special peak season packaging that creates an unboxing experience worthy of gift-giving.

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Can dropshipping maximize profits?

Dropshipping is a retail model where a business doesn't keep the products it sells in stock. Instead, the business purchases the products from a third party—usually a wholesaler or manufacturer—and the products are shipped directly to the customer. Dropshipping allows businesses to bypass the overhead costs of production and sell products that are created, managed, and shipped by a third party.

Is it too good to be true? There are some pros and cons to consider with dropshipping:

Pros:

1. **Low overhead costs**: Dropshipping eliminates massive overhead costs like product, warehousing, inventory management, and shipping.

2. **Flexible location**: You don't need a warehouse, so your business can move and grow with you.

Cons:

1. **Low profit margins**: Intense competition means that big companies can offer the same products for less, impacting your bottom line.

2. **Shipping**: If you work with multiple suppliers, managing shipping costs and times can be complicated, especially during the holiday season.

Start dropshipping with ShipStation.

START MY FREE TRIAL

Meet Your Customers Where They Are

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The holidays significantly shift consumer preferences and behaviors. During Black Friday, Cyber Monday, and the holiday rush, consumers expect a unified, convenient commerce experience—but with added urgency, higher stakes, and zero tolerance for mistakes. In this section, we'll discuss how retailers can navigate a unified commerce landscape, where shipping comes into play, and how to go international.

The first step is to discover where your customers prefer to shop and return products, whether online or in-store. Holiday shoppers may venture to new platforms, have different priorities, and expect premium service even when paying discounted prices.

Understanding the digital and physical connection: Creating a unified experience

Most customer journeys start online. Eighty-seven percent of consumers routinely use online platforms for browsing and researching products, but today's consumers appreciate having options. Many prefer to browse online, then buy in-store and vice versa—often searching for the best deal.

> "The value of both physical stores and an online shopping experience is exceptional. The future of ecommerce is also the future of physical commerce. Building a brand that integrates both puts your brand into a powerful position."
>
> — irishtitan

To create a unified experience across physical and online stores, retailers need to focus on the customer's experience with their brands. Your customers should be able to recognize your brand instantly from your storefront or website. Branding, messaging, and the overall experience should be seamless across all channels.

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Trends impacting online and in-store experiences:

1

Customer reviews:

With the slowing growth of online shopping, customer reviews are holding more weight. 56% of respondents in an Ecwid by Lightspeed customer survey check online reviews before or during in-store shopping.

2

Buy Now, Pay Later:

Buy Now, Pay Later (BNPL) popularity tends to increase around the holidays as consumers manage larger gift budgets. A consumer study found that over half of consumers (52%) had used BNPL within the past 12 months. Affirm and Klarna have already shifted to physical stores by introducing debit cards for in-store BNPL use.

3

Higher-quality customer service:

During the holidays, consumers expect the same level of in-store customer experience while shopping online. Online retailers need to consider AI-driven chatbots, extensive FAQs, and quizzes to offer personalized, immediate recommendations for shoppers in a time crunch.

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Ecwid
by Lightspeed

Shipping and delivery: Unlocking customer preferences

One of the most critical parts of the customer buying journey is shipping and delivery. And during the holiday season, it's even more paramount.

Customers aren't only concerned with the quality of a product; they want it to arrive in a timely (and cost-efficient) manner. According to DHL's eCommerce survey, 95% of global shoppers say they abandoned an online purchase because they were not offered a convenient delivery option.

That's why 67% of retailers offer multiple delivery options—including home delivery, locker pickup, and in-store pickup (2025 ShipStation Ecommerce Benchmark Report). Whether a customer wants a package left on their doorstep or in a safer location like a shipping locker, successful retailers are prioritizing premium delivery capabilities.

"Physical access and pickup points improve customer experience by providing customers with the flexibility to match a convenient delivery location to what fits best in their daily lives and the peace of mind knowing that their package is secure and waiting just for them."

— UPS

Do you need multiple shipping locations?

Peak season often exposes the limitations of single-location fulfillment. Every day matters for holiday delivery, and when your warehouse is closer to your customer base, you can:

- Reduce shipping costs

- Improve delivery times

- Help optimize your logistics

To determine if your brand is ready to expand warehouse operations, consider these three factors:

1   **Order volume:**

Did your warehouse struggle to keep up with last year's Black Friday orders? Increasing the number of warehouses in your operations can improve delivery times and reduce shipping costs. However, if your warehouse can't keep up with demand, even when it is properly staffed and has the necessary processes in place to fulfill orders efficiently, it may be time to consider bringing on additional fulfillment partners. Speak to your current 3PL first (if applicable)—it may have a network of warehouses you can leverage to help manage your volume.

2   **Order Distribution:**

Analyze where your holiday orders ship. If you're consistently shipping cross-country (or even international) during peak season, you're paying premium rates and risking delivery delays.

3   **Inventory Management:**

When your warehouse consistently operates over ideal capacity—usually 85% or more—maintaining accurate inventory becomes challenging. Crowded bins can lead to misplaced items, slower pick times, and slower put-away times. All of these add cost to your operations. Adding more space allows you to better manage your inventory as volume ebbs and flows throughout the season.

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Do you need to consider a 3PL?

When brands experience consistent volume spikes, condensed delivery windows, and customer service pressures, a 3PL is typically the solution.

A 3PL provider is a company that provides logistics and supply chain management services to businesses. Think of it as an intermediary between shippers and carriers. It provides a multitude of services, including transportation, warehousing, parcel delivery, freight forwarding, inventory management, distribution, and more, to reduce costs and improve supply chain efficiency.

You may want to start researching 3PLs if you relate to the following:

- ☐ I spend several hours a week packing boxes and shipping orders.

- ☐ I don't want to fulfill orders myself anymore.

- ☐ I'm running out of space to store my inventory.

- ☐ I need more time for strategic projects like marketing and product development.

- ☐ I don't want to invest in a distribution infrastructure (i.e., warehouses, forklifts, equipment, certifications, labor, etc.)

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International expansion: Capture global peak season opportunities

As a DTC business, it can be easy to think of yourself as a citizen of the internet. The internet doesn't have borders, so the idea of selling internationally can seem less complicated than it really is. If international expansion is becoming a conversation for your brand, be sure to consider the following:

1 **Tariff and Trade Policy**

- 75% of consumers are concerned about the costs of online orders (2025 ShipStation Breaking Benchmark Data), up 13% from November 2024.

- The impact of tariffs goes far beyond the simple cost of goods. Tariffs increase shipping costs, result in higher carrier rates, lead to inventory delays, and can cause administrative burdens.

- Investing in flexible shipping technology and smarter workflows allows ecommerce brands to offset rising costs, streamline cross-border operations, and build customer trust.

2 **Market Opportunity**

Is there a demand for your brand abroad? Your site analytics can tell you what country potential customers are coming from. You can also use tools like Google Trends can help your brand understand the competitive landscape and if international shoppers are looking for similar products.

> " The world is a big place—it's okay to start small. Focus your time and energy on the few markets where demand for your product (or service) is greatest. Identifying where that demand exists is easier than you think, and DHL Express makes reliable, fast delivery possible. "
>
> — **DHL** Express

![ShipStation]

3 Advertising and Marketing

Have you researched the new market's customer? Do you know their wants and needs? Each global region has unique buying behavior and preferences, so your international marketing strategy will look different than your domestic one.

4 Internal Processes

Can your website handle global buyers? You need to consider language, pricing, currency, and shipping information for international customers.

5 Logistics and Operations

Can your shipping partner support seamless international express delivery for your customers? Get off on the right foot with international customers by providing the best shipping and delivery services possible.

6 Currency, Taxes, and Duties

Transparency and accuracy are critical when it comes to taxes and duties. Using software like Avalara AvaTax Cross-Border, businesses can calculate customs duties and import taxes at the point of sale, creating a transparent and frictionless online shopping experience for international customers.

7 Customs

There are many differences between shipping throughout the U.S. and shipping internationally.

> " Growth knows no borders. With billions of potential customers worldwide eager to discover your products, it's time to seize new opportunities. Doing business with UPS is easy, and of course, simplicity is key. "
>
> — UPS

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"Before shipping to any country, due diligence is needed to be aware of any rules, prohibited goods, and what's expected at time of import. Once you know where you're shipping and any specific rules, your brand will need to understand customs basics, including classification, Harmonized System Codes, product values, and more."

—

Optimize your shipping budget: Save up to 78% on shipping rates with ShipStation and GlobalPost.

Customs and duties can be a challenge, to say the least. ShipStation and GlobalPost help you sell worldwide, without the headache.

LEARN MORE

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Do shipping and delivery impact sales and retention?

Shipping and delivery are *the most* critical factors for customers when making a purchase during the holiday rush. What might be a minor inconvenience during regular shopping periods becomes a brand-damaging mistake during the holidays.

54% of U.S. shoppers said they wouldn't shop with a brand again if the product was poorly packaged or damaged. Of those shoppers, 42% wouldn't purchase again if a brand has an inconvenient returns policy.

> " Pricing and shipping speeds are the most critical factors to win the sale and retain customers. "
>
> — **>> feedonomics**

According to ShipStation's 2025 Ecommerce Delivery Benchmark Report, nearly 75% of customers under 35 won't hesitate to switch brands if their expectations aren't met.

Popular marketplaces have drastically changed expectations, where customers are now demanding fast, reliable, convenient, and in most cases, free shipping. Customers also want options when it comes to delivery, but only **67% of retailers offer multiple delivery options**—including out-of-home delivery, locker pickup, and in-store pickup (2025 ShipStation Benchmark Report).

How ShipStation can help:

ShipStation gives retailers the tools they need to elevate the delivery experience with customizable shipping and delivery confirmation email templates and configurable tracking pages. Customers can also save up to 90%* off shipping rates from carriers like UPS,** USPS, FedEx, and DHL Express—depending on the carrier.

One tried and true customer satisfaction tip still rings true: **Over deliver. Every time.**

GET A FREE TRIAL

> " Late or missing shipments can lead to unhappy customers, hidden costs can eat away at profits, and a lack of support can result in compliance issues. That's why partnering with the right shipping provider is critical. "
>
> — **feedonomics**

Discounts are subject to minimum charges set forth in the FedEx Service Guide which can be found at fedex.com.

*FedEx shipping discounts are off standard list rates and cannot be combined with other offers or discounts. Discounts are exclusive of any FedEx surcharges, premiums, minimums, accessorial charges or special handling fees. Eligible services and discounts subject to change. For eligible FedEx® services and rates, please call 1.800.GoFedEx 1.800.463.3339. See the applicable FedEx Service Guide for terms and conditions of service offers and money-back guarantee programs.

Peak season conversion optimization

Peak season conversion optimization requires a different approach than regular periods. Holiday shoppers have higher intent but also higher expectations, more options, and less patience.

" Building an unforgettable shopping experience is the driving force behind turning site visitors into customers. Businesses can do this by building intuitive site navigation, creating an aesthetically pleasing layout, and strategically merchandising products. "

— BIGCOMMERCE

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How to reduce cart abandonment

70% of shopping carts are abandoned. Why? There could be several reasons, including unexpected costs, complex checkout processes, limited payment options, poor-performing websites, or mandatory account creation. Once you understand why customers are abandoning their carts, you can take the necessary steps to remove those roadblocks.

Here are six tried and true best practices to reduce cart abandonment from our partner Justuno:

1   Send an email to customers who abandon their cart

2   Implement live chat to help customers with orders

3   Use exit intent pop-ups to grab a customer's attention

4   Run retargeting ads to entice customers to come back

5   Offer multiple payment options, including Buy Now, Pay Later

6   Reduce checkout time to less than two minutes

> "Cart abandonment messaging is usually only seen in emails and texts. But businesses can further reduce cart abandonment by having multiple cart abandonment messages for specific segments on-site."
>
> — **Justuno**

Five ways to hyper-personalize the post-purchase experience

1 **Educational product content:**

Share cool use cases from previous customers or how-tos specifically tailored to the new purchase.

2 **Customer appreciation:**

Saying "thank you" never goes out of style. Customizing your customer appreciation email to a specific product, brand, or type of product can help make it that much more genuine.

3 **Loyalty and referral program emails:**

Take customer satisfaction to the next level by inviting customers to a loyalty program or offering an incentive for referring a friend.

4 **Feedback and review requests:**

Let your customers know you hear and value their voices with post-purchase feedback surveys and review requests.

5 **Product recommendations:**

Show your customers you're getting to know them with product recommendations informed by their recent purchase history.

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Constant Contact

Transform returns into a revenue opportunity

Returns and revenue in the same sentence used to be an oxymoron, but not anymore. When the returns process is convenient and efficient, businesses can maximize revenue and increase customer loyalty. Start by integrating an automated returns management system equipped with features like full catalog exchanges, printerless returns, and a personalized return portal to improve your customers' experience.

3 peak season return considerations for long-term retention:

1   Extended return windows for holiday purchases

2   Gift receipt options for worry-free gifting

**3**   Easy exchanges for different sizes or colors

> Generic carrier tracking pages don't generate ROI. ShipStation's returns management solution offers a branded returns portal that helps you save time and streamlines your customers' experience.

> "Once you've brought a customer on board, you want to make sure that their experience from the point of purchase and beyond turns them into advocates and repeat customers. Shipping costs and reliability are at the forefront of what could lead to customer dissatisfaction."
> — UPS

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Is It Time to Expand Your Tech Arsenal?
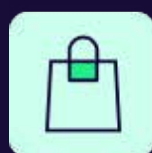
Your tech stack can make or break your peak season success. Systems that work fine during regular periods can crumble under holiday traffic spikes.

In this section, you'll learn about the key indicators that signal it's time to expand your tech stack and learn how to choose the right tools to streamline your operations. Discover tools can optimize your logistics and operations, including warehouse management systems, inventory management systems, and enterprise resource planning systems.

Warehouse Management Systems vs. Inventory Management Systems

Warehouse management systems (WMS) and inventory management systems (IMS) are both supply chain solutions software, but they focus on different operational efficiencies. While a warehouse management system focuses on the movement of goods within a warehouse, an inventory management system takes a broader view of managing inventory across the entire business function.

The core functions of an IMS include:

1. Inventory tracking across locations

2. Reorder point management

3. Stock valuation and costing (First In, First Out (FIFO), Last In, First Out (LIFO), etc.)

4. Demand forecasting

5. Purchase order management

6. Inventory reporting and analytics

An IMS focuses on all the steps involved in inventory management, including purchasing, storing, and tracking inventory so the right products are at the right locations. Both solutions are best used together to control inventory and streamline operations.

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> " Imagine a warehouse as a bookstore. A WMS is like the store's filing system, keeping track of where each book is shelved and ensuring efficient retrieval. Conversely, an IMS is the store's overall inventory management system, monitoring stock levels, anticipating demand for different books, and placing orders with publishers when needed. "
>
> — **finale.** by makemusic

Top six signs you need a WMS and IMS for peak season:

1 **Order volume increases:**

If last year's BFCM order volume overwhelmed your fulfillment process and caused errors and delays, it's time for a WMS and IMS.

2 **Frequent stock discrepancies:**

Frequent stock discrepancies and challenges in tracking inventory across multiple locations signal the need for better control and real-time visibility, which a WMS provides.

3 **Operational inefficiencies:**

Excessive time spent on picking, packing, and shipping can be streamlined with a WMS and IMS, both optimizing these processes and improving warehouse productivity.

4 **Scalability challenges:**

If your current system struggles to scale with your business expansion, especially in ecommerce, a WMS can provide flexibility and support.

5 **Rising customer complaints:**

Rising customer complaints about shipping errors, delays, and out-of-stock items highlight the need for a more efficient warehouse management solution.

6 **Supply chain complexity increases:**

When managing multiple suppliers with different lead times and minimum order quantities, an IMS and WMS can help simplify supply chain logistics.

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Do you need an Enterprise Resource Planning system?

An Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system integrates and centralizes data across all core business functions. Serving as the operational nerve center, ERPs unify and optimize critical business processes such as finance, supply chain, customer interactions, human resources, manufacturing, and product returns.

If your team frequently encounters inefficiencies in managing inventory, accounting, and reporting, it's a sign that your business has outgrown the functionality of your current technology. That means it's time to upgrade to an ERP.

" If your current systems are failing to deliver expected business results or customer outcomes, it might be time to consider an ERP. Additionally, if key business functions are siloed, causing reduced productivity and inefficiencies, an ERP system could integrate these functions, enhancing overall performance. "

— Intuit.

Six ERP features for peak season scaling

There are a lot of ERPs on the market, so when you're selecting a system, pay attention to these six features:

1 **Financial management**: Your ERP needs to have a strong financial component, including accounts payable and receivable, general ledger, asset management, budgeting, forecasting, and cash management.

2 **Inventory tracking**: Ditch chaotic spreadsheets. Your ERP optimizes inventory by managing levels, lead times, and reorder points for maximum profitability.

3 **Quality control**: Solve quality issues as soon as possible. An ERP system can help you quickly and easily identify quality issues with your inventory to avoid shipping substandard quality products.

4 **Process automation**: Leave repetitive tasks to computers. ERPs automate your processes, leaving your business with more accurate and reliable data.

5 **Security**: ERP systems should feature a permit-driven architecture, which allows users to only view, modify, and delete data they have permission to handle.

6 **Shipping**: Shipping is a supply chain cornerstone. Your ERP should streamline order fulfillment by integrating with carriers, enabling real-time tracking, and providing in-depth shipping analytics.

Ship tip:

Integrating ShipStation with your ERP eliminates manual tasks and errors, speeding up operations and boosting customer satisfaction.

Data: The Lifeblood of Ecommerce

During peak season, data becomes the difference between thriving and merely surviving.

Analyzing customer data, trends, shipping, and marketing efforts can help retailers unlock major growth opportunities. However, success depends on the type of data used and how it's collected.

In this final section, you'll learn how to overcome common challenges when synchronizing data, why analyzing the right data is important, and what shipping data can tell you about business performance.

Why is data so important?

Data is the key to future-proofing your business. Without it, your business will always be one step behind. By leveraging data, ecommerce businesses can make more informed decisions that lead to improved customer experiences, increased efficiency, and higher profitability.

Data helps answer critical questions during peak season:

- Which products drive the most profit during high-volume periods?

- What customer segments generate the highest lifetime value when acquired during peak season?

- How do shipping options impact conversion rates during time-sensitive periods?

- Which marketing channels deliver the best ROI during peak season?

- What operational bottlenecks limit peak season performance?

Without the answers to these questions, your business will always be reactive instead of proactive, missing opportunities and repeating mistakes.

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How to overcome challenges in connecting and synchronizing data

Data synchronization is an essential part of a well-functioning tech stack, but it's easy for data to get lost across multiple applications. Along with an efficient ERP system, Integration Platform as a Service (iPaaS) solutions help solve data access and synchronization problems by offering a unified platform to manage integrations and automate workflows.

> "Businesses face a common challenge: accessing and synchronizing data across applications. iPaaS solutions provide powerful data mapping and transformation tools to harmonize data formats across systems."
>
> — ✦ Jitterbit

Is there a 'source of truth' for data connection?

ShipStation connects your online stores, marketplaces, and shipping carriers to confirm that shipping data is always up-to-date. By integrating your ERP system through iPaaS, you can automate order and shipping information, reducing errors and boosting efficiency. This scalable solution handles growing data volumes without disrupting operations.

Integrate ShipStation with your accounting software, like QuickBooks, to gain clear visibility into shipping costs. This data empowers your finance team to make accurate predictions, create effective budgets, and optimize overall financial performance. Connecting these systems simplifies your ecommerce operations.

Small to enterprise businesses now have access to ShipStation Intelligence. By leveraging Looker and Google AI, ShipStation offers merchants valuable data points, fully automated and customizable reporting, and flexibility to see the data they need when they need it.

> "An ERP system is an effective single source of truth because it houses critical business data. Integrating it with other enterprise applications via an iPaaS confirms that all departments have access to consistent information for better decision-making."
>
> — ✦ **Jitterbit**

What shipping data can tell you about your business

Shipping data is a goldmine of insights that you can use to improve your business operations. It offers numerous opportunities to enhance efficiency, reduce costs, and improve customer satisfaction. A few major shipping metrics you should be measuring include:

1. Inventory turnover
2. Picking accuracy
3. Number of shipments
4. Lead time
5. Warehousing and shipping costs
6. Transit times
7. On-time pickup and delivery
8. Cost per delivery

This isn't an exhaustive list, but a good starting point. Analyzing these data points can help your ecommerce business:

1   **Uncover manufacturing defects:**

Returns data can indicate whether or not particular products are being returned at high rates. High return rates signal that the product has a problem, and by addressing it sooner rather than later, you can understand why customers are returning a specific product.

2   **Optimize inventory placement and improve delivery times:**

Are customers in specific locations or regions purchasing more of a given product? If you have multiple warehouse locations, you can place those products closer to those customers to improve shipping times and lower costs.

3   **Refine packing strategies:**

Leverage package data to streamline and optimize packaging, lower shipping costs, and enhance sustainability.

4   **Improve inventory management:**

Shipping data provides valuable insights into sales trends and allows businesses to accurately predict future demand. This helps prevent stockouts and customer disappointment. Additionally, by analyzing which products are frequently shipped together or have high shipping volumes, businesses can optimize their marketing and inventory strategies.

ShipStation: Your Peak Season Success Partner

Being an ecommerce business during the holidays isn't for the faint of heart, but with the right tools and a little bit of grit, you can build a scalable, lasting tech foundation.

Now that your business knows which selling channels to focus on, how to improve the customer experience, when to expand your tech stack, and how to integrate data-driven insights into your expansion strategy, you're ready to take on the busiest season of the year.

But peak season success starts with shipping and fulfillment excellence.

- Handle peak season volume with automated workflows that scale with demand

- Optimize shipping costs with discounted rates that improve profitability during promotional periods

- Deliver exceptional customer experiences with branded tracking and communication

- Maintain operational efficiency with integrations that keep data flowing smoothly

- Scale internationally with GlobalPost for worldwide peak season opportunities

- Unlock valuable data and analytics to reduce manual processes, automate workflows, and select carriers that offer the best rates and desired shipping windows

- Take charge of your inventory with end-to-end inventory management tools, including inventory sync, reordering, and forecasting

Peak season waits for no one.

GET STARTED WITH SHIPSTATION

Disclaimers

Discounts are subject to minimum charges set forth in the FedEx Service Guide which can be found at <u>fedex.com</u>.

*FedEx shipping discounts are off standard list rates and cannot be combined with other offers or discounts. Discounts are exclusive of any FedEx surcharges, premiums, minimums, accessorial charges or special handling fees. Eligible services and discounts subject to change. For eligible FedEx® services and rates, please call 1.800.GoFedEx 1.800.463.3339. See the applicable FedEx Service Guide for terms and conditions of service offers and money-back guarantee programs.

**Discounts off UPS daily rates. Rates are limited to shipping from the U.S. only. Rates and any applicable discounts are subject to change at any time without notice.