



Ship It Off:

A Holiday Shipping Guide for Furniture Retailers on How to Navigate the Surge



Although the holiday shopping season is a period of increased sales for most retailers, some businesses enjoy more massive sales during this period than at any other time of the year.

Furniture retailers are among the beneficiaries of the seasonal surge in sales occurring during the holiday and need to prepare adequately to seize the opportunity.

The Holiday Season and Furniture Retailers

According to Reuters, online sales are expected to rise by 4.8% this holiday season as compared to last year, with a faster growth rate occurring between Nov 1 and Dec 31.

According to eMarketer, retail eCommerce sales for furniture and home furnishings are expected to grow by 5.1% in 2023, 6.3% in 2024, 6.9% in 2025 and 7.3% in 2026.

Early holiday season preparation is crucial for furniture retailers to meet the influx in demand.

Why a **Holiday Shipping Guide** Is Essential

Shipping your furniture stock during the holiday season can be an overwhelming process characterized by unpredictable timelines that may cause severe inconveniences and stress. Thus, a holiday shipping guide is essential to help you overcome shipping challenges and get the best experience for you and your customers.

Common Shipping Challenges: What Are They?

The most common shipping challenges include the following:

Increased Order Volume

Consumers are making huge orders due to the convenience of online shopping, and the volumes are expected to peak during the holiday season. As a furniture retailer, you might not manage to satisfy the increased order volume or fill the demand if you don't ship your furniture early enough.

As people flood retail platforms with orders, shipping the furniture becomes challenging and may be subject to delays and unpredictable schedules.





Fragile Items and Damage Risk

Fragile items are susceptible to damage risk during shipping causing a serious challenge to furniture retailers. Some of the impacts of product damage include elevated operation costs, a disruption in inventory management, and double shipping to replace damaged items.

To secure your fragile items against damage risk, choose a trusted carrier that upholds packaging safety to prevent shipping damage.

Customer Expectations and Satisfaction

As you strive to manage the seasonal surge, you may have a long list of customers waiting for the arrival of their furniture. If shipping delays or damage risks occur, it will likely negatively affect customer expectations and satisfaction.

Customers like faster deliveries and a

good experience. However, fulfilling their expectations can be tricky when they place last-minute orders.

Customer expectations and satisfaction may also be eroded by unpredictable shipping schedules that lower the level of transparency in the whole process.

Supply Chain Disruptions

Supply chain disruptions can have a heavy toll on furniture retailers. There could be unexplainable congestion in various parts of the world causing unpredictable delays. Logistics companies are facing various issues such as high fuel prices, rising prices of materials, and elevated ocean container rates. These challenges lead to high freight costs. Each new challenge in the supply chain translates into delays which can be frustrating for both retailers and their customers.

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Staffing and Labor Shortages

Global supply chains are experiencing staffing shortages in key sectors such as production, logistics, and product delivery. Recruiting and retaining skilled labor has been a leading challenge in the supply chain industry.

Technology and automation of routine tasks can help solve staffing shortages. However, the industry lacks adequate talent to help them implement such technologies.

Labor shortages in your premises can also lead to pile-ups and slow deliveries.

Holiday Delays and Cut-Off Dates

Holiday delays refer to the waiting time when shipments are late or postponed during the holiday. Cut-off dates are the specific deadlines by which your furniture is picked up at your premises to deliver to your customers in time for the holidays.

Understanding Shipping Carriers

Carriers may cause delays due to mechanical breakdowns, outdated/inadequate technology to handle the seasonal surge, and staffing shortages. The carriers may also experience long security checks and border closures resulting in delays.

You should choose reliable carriers and maintain constant communication to ensure timely delivery. You can also contract multiple carriers instead of relying on a single service provider.



Shipping Deadlines for Major Holidays

Shipping deadlines for major holidays depend on the carrier and the mode of delivery you've agreed on. Some will deliver small items in 3-5 days and big items in 21 days. For example, to get your order delivered on Halloween, 31st October, the shipping deadline could be 25th October.

The last three months of the year are the busiest time of the year having the highest number of holidays including Halloween, Thanksgiving, Black Friday, Small Business Saturday, Cyber Monday, and Christmas.

Communicating Cut-Off Dates to Customers

The holiday season can be a strenuous period as retailers strike a balance between order fulfillment, acquisition of new customers, and managing existing customer expectations.

Poor delivery experience can cost you about 85% of customers. So, it is essential to communicate cut-off dates persistently to avoid frustrating your customers.

To ensure your customers place early orders, make your cut-off dates visible across your website, communicate deadlines via social media, and equip your customer service team with information regarding cut-off dates.



Strategies for Last-Minute Shoppers

Last-minute shopping can give you a hard time. You can incentivize your customers to make orders early, such as giving discounts or freebies for the first 20 buyers, for example. For late shoppers, you can order extra items for the most popular products.

Choose a carrier with flexible shipping options such as express deliveries to handle last-minute shoppers. Remember, you can also use multiple carriers.

Managing Inventory

Proper inventory management is an essential process to help you handle the increased order volume during holidays.

Forecasting Holiday Demand

Underestimating demand can make you lose customers to your competitors and ultimately lose income. Early planning can enable you to collect historical data and analyze market trends to help you forecast holiday demand. This will give you an idea of the amount of inventory you need.



Streamlining Warehouse Operations

Organize and audit your warehouse, ensuring that items are easier to move in and out of the space. Enforce safety measures and automate tasks such as packaging, picking, digital proof of delivery, storage, and dispatch.

Implementing Inventory Management Software

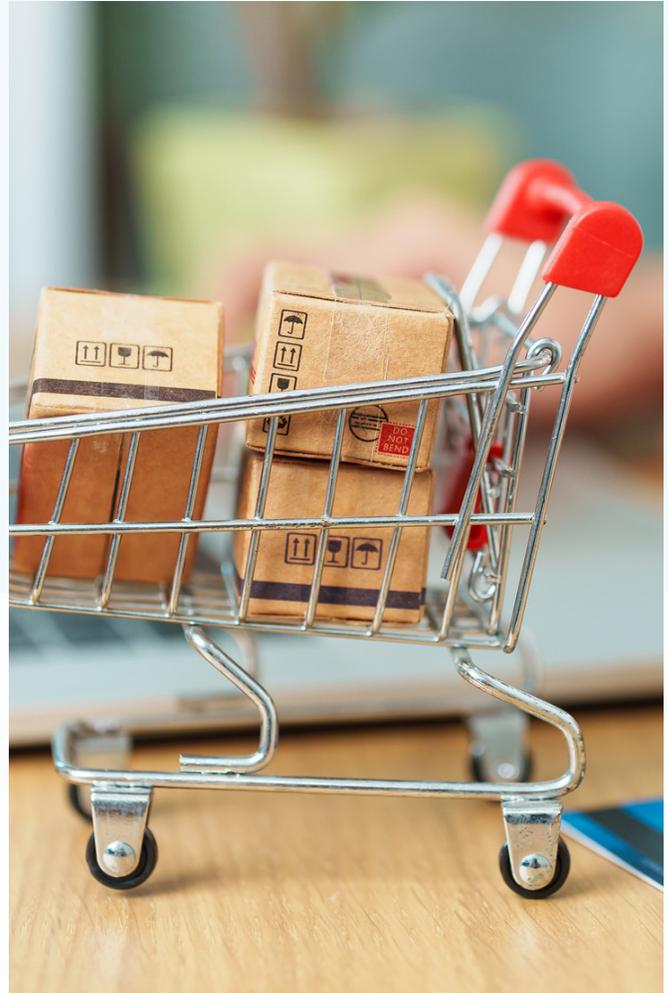
Using inventory management software can give you real-time tracking and location of inventory. This saves you time and heightens accuracy. The software is also responsible for automating other warehouse operations.

Leveraging Dropshipping and 3PL Services

You can also manage your inventory through 3PL or dropshipping services. Dropshipping is a type of partnership between you and a manufacturer or supplier where you market products that you don't stock. A customer orders through you but the supplier delivers the items to them.

3PL services is a type of order fulfillment where third-party logistics (3PL) companies store your inventory, package, and ship products to customers. A customer orders through you then you relay the info to the 3PL to deliver it.

Dropshipping and 3PL services relieve you of the responsibilities of warehouse and inventory management so you can focus on marketing, sales, and growth. It can also help you satisfy an increased order volume and uphold your reputation as a reliable retailer.



Safety Stock and Overstock Considerations

It is essential to retain some extra stock to prevent stockouts as you navigate the seasonal surge in demand. It is also wise to keep your data accurate to help you maintain the correct amount of inventory. Overstocking can cause you cashflow problems.



Important Tips for the Holiday Season

The following tips will help you handle holiday shipping efficiently and get the best out of it:

Offer Flexible Shipping Options

You can offer various shipping options to your customers rather than sticking to one option which may cause frustrations in case of delays. This will help build trust with your customers while satisfying their expectations. You can opt to use different shipping carriers and provide local pick-up options.

It is essential to indicate the costs for each option and the expected time deliveries for each of them.

Offering free shipping to your customers can also help you retain your reputation during shipping delays.

Enhance Packaging for Safety

Shipping damages can cause rejection of products by customers, losses to your business, and time wastage as you reorder to compensate them. To avoid such problems, enhance proper packaging for fragile items to keep them safe in transit.

You can put fragile items into boxes insulated with cushioning material. Styrofoam inserts, protective plastic wrap, cardboard corner protectors, and reinforcing straps can help. You should also ensure that large pieces of furniture don't fall on one another or get scuffed.

You can also disassemble some furniture such as beds, chairs, and cabinets including their screws and knobs, and ship them in smaller boxes.

Consider using signatory confirmation for safe delivery to avoid items being left unattended and causing unwarranted claims.



Efficient Order Fulfillment

Your business will thrive on efficient order fulfillment. It is essential to deliver your customers' orders as fast as possible. Follow up on your suppliers to ship your requirements in time and plan for alternative supply when necessary.

Keep your packaging and shipment area clean and organized to avoid order pile-ups and stock damage.

You can also consider 3PL or dropshipping services to help mitigate your inventory adequacies or fulfill the orders much faster.

Customer Communication

Make your order deadlines and shipping times clear to your customers to avoid assumptions that may result in returns.

It's essential to avoid surprising your customers. Be clear on pricing, high shipping rates, and additional fees for abandoned carts.

Constant customer communication can ensure that shipping disruptions don't damage your customer relationships. Sending follow-up messages or emails and providing attentive customer support during unexpected shipping challenges can keep your customers happy and patient.

You can also provide shipment trackers for your customers to track their orders and get peace of mind especially when delays occur.

Utilizing Technology and Automation

Manual warehouse processes can take too long, causing delays. Utilizing technology and automation of repetitive tasks can quicken your operations and save costs on labor.

Technology will also help you collect and analyze data to make accurate forecasts on demand and inventory requirements. This will help you plan your finances and other resources in advance.

Technology will also give you insights into current consumer trends to avoid getting stuck with outdated inventory that customers no longer want. It can also help you gain visibility on your shipments from the supplier and send instant notifications to customers.



Employee Training and Support

Provide adequate employee training and support during the seasonal surge to help them persevere and work hard to satisfy high demands. Well-trained employees can pass on the knowledge to seasonal workers that you hired to manage the influx.

Training and support can also help employees have a great attitude towards customers and build your brand's reputation.

Monitoring and Adaptation

To mitigate shipping delays, it is essential to monitor every activity within your supply chain, from procurement to distribution, and adopt alternative measures when signs of delay are imminent.

For example, you could find backup suppliers when you suspect that your main suppliers won't deliver on time. You can also increase your safe stock for forecasted weather disruptions.



Conclusion: Skip the Stress and Get Ready Now!

Holiday shipping delays can cause untold pressure on furniture retailers and affect customer expectations. Holidays are busy with activities across the globe which impact both local and international shipments. No matter the efforts you invest, holiday shipping can be a challenge as you handle immense demand.

Recap of Key Takeaways

Holidays are the best time for furniture retailers to make revenue. Despite being a great earning opportunity, the season may experience severe delays that wreak havoc upon your business.

Holiday shipping delays may be caused by supply chain disruptions, severe weather conditions, customs issues, inaccurate data, influx in demand, and late order placement.

Early planning is a key step to counter delays. You should maintain safe stock, order early, follow up on your shipments, use multiple shipping carriers, maintain frequent communication with your customers, and seek alternative supply when delay is inevitable.



Preparing for Future Holiday Seasons

It is essential to foster a good relationship with your suppliers or manufacturers to have priority consideration during holiday surges. Choose companies that fall within your budget, have quality products, and are reliable.

You can enjoy a profitable holiday season without the stress of the surge if you get ready now!



The Freight Club Advantage

Freight Club is an all in one shipping platform that helps retailers effortlessly manage everything from booking and tracking to complete claims management and shipping protection with zero subscription fees.

As part of Cymax Group Technologies, a leading eCommerce technology and services provider in the furniture industry since 2004, we offer retailers enterprise rates with no volume restrictions with up to 7 levels of LTL drop shipping services, from back of truck to white glove light assembly, across the U.S.

Our team of logistics experts provide personalized support to our retailers, helping them optimize their shipping strategy, manage their claims process and ensuring that our customers have a smooth shipping experience at Freight Club.

Trusted by thousands of retailers, Freight Club has been proudly planting trees across the United States, promoting clean air, clean water, and the prosperity of biodiversity - at no cost to our customers or carriers.



Freight Club is a proud product of Cymax Group Technologies.

