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## Deliver Your Brand

### Using Order Fulfillment to Further Brand Awareness

The more retailing has changed, the more things stay the same. Today's omnichannel environment is always changing. Consumers can make purchases in almost an infinite variety of ways – buy it at the store, buy it online, see it at the store and buy it online, buy it online and pick it up at the store, buy it from a catalog, from an infomercial, from a flash sale, from a kiosk....sales channels are always evolving. However, some things stay the same. Branding and the consumer's experience are critical components to building customer loyalty across each and every one of these retailing channels. No matter how your customer buys your product, never pass up an opportunity to deliver a positive and consistent brand message. The order fulfillment process is the last step in getting product to your customers and a valuable opportunity to **deliver your brand**.

Branding in the e-commerce order fulfillment process should be considered from the time an order is placed in the shopping cart, to when the customer opens the box. There are four areas to concentrate on to enhance the customer's experience; 1. communication; 2. shipping method; 3. appearance of the outside of the box; 4. packaging and presentation of the product inside the box.



### It All Starts with Communication

After the consumer places the order, managing your brand experience is not coming to an end but simply entering a new phase. It is possible to **extend branding beyond the point-of-purchase** first through effective communication. The order confirmation e-mail, at the time of purchase and the shipping confirmation e-mail, at the time of shipping are both customer-touches, which give you the opportunity to drive brand awareness. These communications can convey a variety of messaging, including; (i) a thank you or level of appreciation; (ii) information about the order; (iii) information about the product; and (iv) other relevant products, promotions or events the consumer might be interested in. These communications can be customized to the individual consumer and their buying habits. Think of 'if you ordered this, you might also like this...' type of messaging that can be conveyed with precision to an engaged and captive audience. The modern fulfillment process

also offers additional communication opportunities through update e-mails. Fulfillment companies now have the technology to generate e-mails when a package arrives at the local post office, or when a package is out for delivery to a consumers' home, or even when a package is left at the doorstep and will be waiting for a customer when they return home. All of these messages can be automated and ensure that the customer is fully engaged with the fulfillment process every step of the way.

## **Shipping Methodology**

It seems there are as many shipping methods as there are sales channels. eRetailers must choose between USPS, FedEx, UPS and a variety of other options, including a mix of carriers, to achieve faster service, cheaper service or a combination of both. For example, one of the most popular e-commerce package delivery systems is a hybrid approach in which FedEx or UPS picks up the package and delivers it to the local, destination post office. Then USPS delivers it the final mile to the consumer's home. When considering shipping methodology, retailers not only need to address the pricing and transit time expectations of customers, but they should also **consider the brand implications of the delivery decision**. For example, if your branding includes an exclusive, high-end impression, then delivery using private carrier to the doorstep might be more consistent with product positioning than first class mail left in a mailbox. Likewise, if your product emphasizes value, a less expensive, cost-conscious delivery methodology might be more appropriate. Consider matching the customer's impression of delivery and the price of the product with the cost of shipping and brand positioning.

## **Think *Outside* the Box**

The ***first impression of the product occurs even before the box is opened*** – it's how the box looks at the doorstep. Every inch of your packaging is an opportunity to deliver your brand. What does your customer see when they receive their order? Is it a generic box with plain packing tape? Retailers can create a distinctly branded package by using pre-printed boxes and customized packing tape. In addition, preprinted stickers and tear-off placards can also be applied to the box. Logos, QR codes and simple messaging can be placed on the outside of the box to generate a branded first impression. Further, the shipping label is changing drastically. Fulfillment companies now have the capability to brand the shipping label itself, including customized graphics tailored to the package or its contents.

## Think *Inside* the Box

It's time to open the package! Often considered the most crucial point of a successful order fulfillment process, the customer's impression of the packaging and the presentation of the order will have a lasting impact on the overall shopping experience. A correct, well-packaged and undamaged order is expected. Anything less can hurt the brand. In addition, there are a variety of steps that retailers are taking to enhance the inside of the box. Branded void fill, such as packing tissue with logo or corporate colors can be used. Hand written thank you notes and personalized packing lists on custom paper are common on high-end items. Sustainable packaging material for eco-friendly retailers helps deliver a consistent, green message. Even creative solutions, such as simple spritz of perfume for a beauty retailer, can ***add that extra touch that delivers your brand as well as your product.***



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From the time an order is placed, to when the customer opens the package, the order fulfillment process presents a variety of options to enhance branding of the e-commerce shopping experience. Thoughtful, informative communication of the order and shipping, the appropriate shipping methodology, the appearance of the package upon delivery and the presentation of the product when opened by the customer all impact the consumers' impression of the brand. Take advantage of this opportunity to make a great impression, and deliver your brand.