

Plan ahead for the festive retail surge

The holiday gifting season offers hope for retailers emerging from lockdown. With confidence in e-commerce higher than it's ever been, it's critical that stores stock up, staff up, and that their shipping systems are ready for the rush.



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The October-December period is usually the peak period for many businesses, but with stores now emerging from Covid-19 lockdown, it's more important than ever that they focus on seasonal planning to ensure smooth and profitable operations as they look to rebuild following the recent restrictions on trade and movement.

Ahead of the festive season, a time when many people are looking forward to seeing family and friends – some for the first time since the beginning of the lockdown – both physical and online retailers are preparing for a significant peak in sales.

An opportunity for retailers to bounce back

With this in mind, the holiday season provides a great opportunity for retailers. Now is the time to rebuild and put measures in place to keep up with the expected growth in orders. From cash flow to continuous customer engagement, effective planning and preparation is critical to meet the sales demand in the run-up to what is likely to be a celebratory holiday season.



Smart m-commerce opportunities for Black Friday and beyond

James Bayhack 20 Oct 2020



FedEx Express offers the following insights for businesses wanting to prepare for the festivities and to successfully manage this upcoming peak period:

1. Consider hiring seasonal staff to support the rise in customer demand

From October to December, FedEx Express employs additional temporary seasonal staff to accommodate the increased demand.

“Like FedEx, retailers should consider employing additional temporary seasonal staff to manage the increased demand at this time. Having seasonal staff to focus on important tasks, such as sales and customer service, will ensure your core team can continue to manage business operations without service levels falling,” says Taarek Hinedi, vice president Middle East and Africa operations at FedEx Express.

2. Pre-planning is critical to manage supply and demand, and cash flow

While the festive season brings increased sales, it also results in additional costs for items like additional staff and resources to ensure deliveries reach customers on time. Retailers also need to purchase stock in advance to ensure they have enough product on hand to fulfil orders, which requires upfront payment.

“Having a forecast based on previous year’s sales will help you to manage cash flow more efficiently to identify new or growing revenue streams,” says Hinedi. “It’s important to have provisions in place to cover and manage costs all year round, and to re-invest the profit made during the festive season to improve your business operations as you develop and grow.”

3. Maximise sales by collaborating with customers and service providers

“During peak periods, it’s essential your business is fully equipped with the resources so that every opportunity for a sale is picked up and processed – from the initial order, through to final delivery,” Hinedi explains.

Preparation is the key for businesses to effectively handle even more volume than they may already be seeing for online orders. FedEx has reported already seeing higher volumes across its global operations during the Covid lockdowns and over past months, thanks, in part, to the reliance on e-commerce shipments to deliver goods to shoppers who either can’t or don’t want to visit stores or shopping malls.

“If you have international customers, being able to provide service to them on time will strengthen your position in the global marketplace. Get advice from your logistics provider on a seasonal strategy, and make them aware of your customer profiles and expected delivery areas, so they can flex to meet increased demand, and offer extra support as needed leading up to December.”