

SHIPPER'S GUIDE TO PEAK SEASON 2021

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INTRODUCTION

For more than a year now, COVID-related factory shutdowns, container and labor shortages, headline-grabbing ocean catastrophes, and an explosion of ecommerce orders have created a global supply chain in turmoil.

In the wake of frequent disruptions and high load volumes, experts agree that we are already well into a "perpetual Peak Season."

As we approach the holidays, capacity is low, rates are high, and shippers are facing intense competition across all transportation modes.

To help you sort out this year's complicated dynamics and chart a course through the chaos, our Inxeption transportation experts have compiled the most important trends, market insights, and actionable business strategies in this comprehensive guide.

In the following pages of The Shipper's Guide to Peak Season 2021, you'll learn:

- Why October 31st is an important date for parcel shippers who want to keep their budget under control.
- > Why air freight has become a more viable option for many international shippers.
- ▶ How inventory restocks are impacting transportation costs.
- ▶ How to position yourself as a "shipper of choice" in a carrier's market.
- Why lead times are so long (and what to do about it).
- Why tender rejection rates are elevated for contracted freight.
- How to take care of your customers amidst delivery delays.
- And so much more!

If you have any questions about this publication or its contents, email sarah.kessler@inxeption.com.



When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, nearly 50% of U.S. enterprises increased their parcel volume.¹

To keep up with volume surges, top parcel carriers—like UPS and FedEx—added thousands of new employees and deployed innovative shipping technologies like warehouse robotics and drone delivery.

Despite these efforts, record-breaking parcel volume continues to overwhelm carriers of all sizes and test the limits of the global supply chain.



The U.S. parcel market is dominated by three major players: UPS, FedEx, and USPS. Together, these parcel providers account for roughly 78% of the U.S. market share.²







This Peak Season, delivery demand will exceed carrier capacity by roughly 5 million parcels a day.³

Parcel capacity will be rationed—prepare for allocation.

The rise of ecommerce sales fueled the global parcel market. Today, U.S. parcel volume exceeds carrier capacity.

KEY DATA POINTS

- ➤ Parcel volume never dipped between "peak" seasons, so capacity is already stretched thin ahead of the holiday season.
- Global parcel volume is up 22% year-over-year and climbing.⁴
- Some regional parcel carriers are expanding their networks to accommodate more deliveries.⁵
- ➤ All major U.S. carriers are relying on innovative technologies and digital automation to increase capacity.⁶

INNOVATION IN TECH

FedEx operates more than 140 automated facilities, 16 of which were recently added to increase capacity ahead of Peak Season.⁷









TIP TIP

In preparation for shipping disruptions, make sure your customer service department is equipped to handle an influx of shipping-related inquiries. Additionally, consider investing in load-tracking software, which will provide you and your customers with real-time shipment visibility and automated delivery notifications.

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Peak surcharges, unfortunately, haven't been reserved just for traditional retail Peak Season. They have been in place from FedEx and UPS, in some form, since June of 2020.

[Both carriers] have gone through periods of increasing the amounts of particular surcharges and changing the criteria. This makes it incredibly difficult, from a shipper's standpoint, to manage the volume to try and limit their exposure to surcharges.8

NATE SKIVER Founder, LPF Spend Management

BOTTOM



Parcel surcharges are at all-time highs.

Overwhelmed with more volume than they can handle, major parcel carriers are imposing significant rate hikes ahead of Peak Season.

KEY DATA POINTS

- Rate increases for parcel are up roughly 5-6%.9
- ➤ UPS holiday surcharges go into effect on October 31, 2021. These additional fees will apply to customers who shipped more than 25,000 packages during any single week, beginning in February 2020 (U.S. domestic shipments only).¹⁰
- ▶ In June, FedEx doubled its Residential Delivery Surcharge from \$0.30 to \$0.60 per package. This will significantly impact B2C ecommerce shippers.¹¹



If you have a high volume of ecommerce orders, expect to increase your transportation budget significantly.

To control costs and gain flexibility, leverage regional parcel carriers throughout your network and consider utilizing less than truckload for oversized packages that exceed your carrier's standard parcel limits.

LESS THAN TRUCKLOAD

As retail sales continue to climb and imports flood U.S. coastal cities, over-the-road (OTR) carriers are absorbing record freight volumes.

Less than truckload (LTL) carriers are stretched thin due to a substantial increase in ecommerce shipments and middle-mile deliveries. On top of that, LTL networks are overrun with excess parcel and truckload shipments.

This year, shipping LTL freight will require flexibility and a diversified carrier network.



INXEPTION | 7



Surging ecommerce sales are squeezing LTL capacity.

The LTL sector is absorbing the full impact of rising ecommerce orders, especially as capacity across other modes runs out.

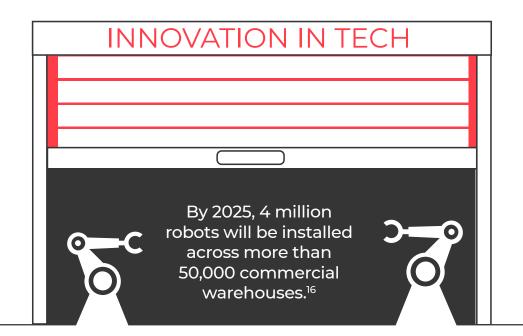


[LTL] conditions are unlike anything the market has experienced. Many major carriers are not accepting new business. Fuel surcharge averages are trending upward to 22%. Expect some carriers to pursue out-of-cycle annual business reviews and implement rate increases.¹⁴

CHRIS MENDENHALL VP of Pricing Services, Transportation Insight

KEY DATA POINTS

- Amazon and other large ecommerce distributors are competing with the industrial sector for LTL capacity—and winning.
- As online orders increase, LTL carriers are handling more middle-mile hauls to ecommerce distribution and fulfillment centers. This is a departure from their usual last-mile deliveries.
- Many LTL carriers are not accepting new business, making it harder for new shippers seeking LTL capacity to secure transportation for their freight.





This year, it may not be possible to ship with your carrier of choice.



Try to establish a relationship with your local freight forwarder—since they are better suited for final-mile deliveries—or work with a multi-modal provider, like Inxeption, to secure reliable capacity that fits your shipping needs.

Guaranteed service is suspended across the LTL sector.

Transit times are extended and on-time pickups and deliveries aren't reliable due to an influx of LTL shipments.

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It's very rare that LTL is ever a more cost-effective or faster way to deliver freight when you have the volume to fill a truck. But, as we're seeing, LTL can become a reasonable option when you can't find truck capacity.

For example, if getting 2–3 pallets out of a full truckload delivered a little sooner can keep a customer's production lines going until the rest of the truckload can get there, the extra cost is an easy choice.¹⁷

JAMIE VOGEL EVP of Sales & Marketing, TransImpact

KEY DATA POINTS

- Due to rising lumber costs, pallets are in short supply-making it hard to fulfill rising customer demand in a timely manner.¹⁸
- Overflow volume from both the parcel and truckload markets is spilling over into LTL, constraining capacity and making it difficult for LTL carriers to maintain high service levels.¹⁹
- To help mitigate service disruptions, FedEx (the largest LTL carrier in the U.S.) has enacted volume restrictions on large shippers to prioritize capacity for small and medium businesses.²⁰
- Although the LTL driver shortage isn't as severe as the truckload driver shortage, LTL carriers are still trying to add drivers and dock workers to better manage high volumes.



You may have to sacrifice quality or speed to secure LTL capacity.



Because LTL operates on a hub-and-spoke model, your freight is handled frequently throughout transit. To mitigate the risk of loss or damage to your products, consider insuring your shipments.

When you work with Inxeption, it's easy to add <u>all-risk shipping protection</u> to your shipments so you're fully covered in the event of loss or damage.

FULL TRUCKLOAD

Across the U.S., nearly 85% of retailers are facing inventory shortages.²¹ As companies across the country rush to restock their dwindling supplies ahead of the holidays, carriers are bracing for impact.

Capacity across the truckload market is already constrained, due to the driver shortage. Record shipment volumes are merely amplifying the imbalance of supply and demand.

As international shipments hit U.S. ports, truckload shippers will have to navigate the impact of extended lead times and



The DAT Truckload Volume Index (TVI), which measures the number of loads moved by carriers each month, reached an all-time high of 237 in June—an 11% increase from May.²²



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The combination of changed consumer buying patterns, low inventory levels due to the changed consumer buying patterns, and a debilitating driver shortage made worse by pandemic fears has created one of the tightest supply dynamics we have witnessed since deregulation in 1980.²³



The dry van load-to-truck ratio is at a six-year high.24

Due to labor and equipment shortages, carriers are struggling to efficiently manage record freight volumes.



It may be another couple of months before we can figure out what part of [Class 8] sales is replacement or growth and what is catch-up from earlier restricted supply.²⁵

BOB DIELI Chief Economist, MacKay & Company

KEY DATA POINTS

- The DAT dry van load-to-truck ratio (LTR) has increased by nearly 60% since last year while the flatbed LTR ratio is up nearly 170% year-over-year.²⁶
- > The truck driver shortage continues to present challenges for long-haul trucking. In 2020, the for-hire driver turnover rate was 90% for over-the-road operations.²⁷
- Although Class 8 truck sales trended up in June, this new capacity won't enter the market until 2022.²⁸ Even then, there may not be enough drivers available to power them.

WHAT IS THE LOAD-TO-TRUCK RATIO?

The load-to-truck ratio (LTR) indicates the real-time balance of demand (shipment volume) and supply (carrier capacity) in the truckload market. A high LTR means there are more loads than trucks available, whereas a low LTR means available carrier capacity exceeds available loads.

When the load-to-truck ratio rises (and demand exceeds supply), rates generally increase.



It's a carrier's market—load volumes are high and prices are increasing.



Since carriers have their pick of freight, it's important to distinguish yourself as a shipper that's easy to work with. Be an advocate for your drivers by accommodating them at your facilities: offer flexible pick-up and delivery windows, make sure it's easy for them to load and unload, and do your best to decrease dwell times so they can get back on the road quickly.



Spot load volumes have more than doubled since last year, driving up rates.²⁰

Usually, spot loads only comprise 10-15% of overall truckload volume. Currently, spot freight accounts for 25% of the entire truckload market.³¹



It is difficult to move more tonnage with less equipment, which is why we are seeing strong volumes in the spot market as shippers scramble to get loads moved.³⁰

BOB COSTELLO Chief Economist, American Trucking Associations (ATA)

KEY DATA POINTS

- Over the past 2 months, spot rates have averaged \$3.18/mile-up 7.4% from November-December 2020.32
- ▶ In the first two weeks of July, contract rates increased by 7%.³³ Experts expect contract pricing to continue climbing.
- > As container import volumes rise, truckload capacity will tighten. Lanes with a high volume of shipments bound for ecommerce warehouses will likely see drastic rate increases.³⁴
- > Over the last 8 months, the price of fuel has risen 40%.³⁵ Although the national diesel average recently dipped for the first time in 12 weeks, fuel prices are still up 91.5 cents/gallon year-over-year and 30.8 cents/gallon since July 2019.³⁶
- ➤ Since the spot market yields higher profits for carriers, tender rejection rates are elevated. On average, carriers are only accepting 75% of shippers' contracted freight.³⁷



I have never seen a freight environment like this in my 40 years in business. We are still at near historical service levels and it takes limiting the freight growth to achieve that. Adding additional capacity in today's market with the driver shortage is a very slow process.³⁸

CHUCK HAMMEL | CEO, PITT OHIO



Capacity shortages will continue to dominate the truckload market through the end of the year. As shippers fight to secure freight space, prices will continue to rise.



Keep an eye on intermodal capacity. Once it is maxed out, all freight will move to over-the-road (OTR) and spot rates for OTR will significantly increase, especially near port cities. To lock in the lowest possible OTR rates, book your truckload shipments in advance—before intermodal capacity runs out.





The challenge for carriers this Peak Season is going to be getting their on-time percentage up to a level where shippers can count on it to build up their supply chains.³⁹

TODD TRANAUSKY VP of Rail & Intermodal, FTR

Getting goods to market is taking longer than ever before.

Consumer goods spending is on the rise, but inventory levels are at record lows across the U.S. As retailers rush to restock, transit times are extending and service levels are trending down.

KEY DATA POINTS

- In June, the average lead time for raw materials was 88 days—the highest recorded figure in the history of ISM® data.⁴⁰
- > The inventory-to-sales ratio is at a historic low. On average, most companies only have a month's worth of inventory on hand.⁴¹
- ➤ Roughly 70% of retailers have added 2-3 weeks to their supply chains as a result of ongoing capacity constraints and delays, according to a recent National Retail Federation (NRF) survey.⁴²
- International shipping volatility has a direct impact on domestic over-the-road shipments. As U.S. container imports rise, truckload capacity will tighten-lengthening overall transit times.



The economy and consumers have proven to be much more resilient than expected. Retail sales have shown solid growth, both in year-over-year increases that have continued for a year now, and actual dollar amounts, which are at near-record levels.⁴³

JACK KLEINHENZ Chief Economist, National Retail Federation



Lead and transit times will be extended throughout Peak Season, which may lead to an uptick in delivery delays.



If you have lanes with consistent volume, consider (1) limiting the number of weekly pick-ups and (2) consolidating weekly deliveries to your regular customers so you can increase efficiency and provide more consistent service.

OCEAN

Factories around the world temporarily shuttered at the onset of COVID-19 lockdowns—halting production and the movement of shipping containers. When Asia resumed exports, containers piled up at U.S. ports as North America continued to navigate lockdown conditions.

As U.S. ports re-opened and shipment volumes continued to surge, container and labor shortages slowed the flow of freight—setting the stage for a whirlwind of unprecedented chaos throughout the global supply chain.

Isolated incidents like the Suez Canal blockage, Taiwan crane accident, and Yantian port closure constrained capacity even further. As a result, backlogged containers and blank (or canceled) sailings have become commonplace—severely impacting shippers around the globe.

Today, ocean shipping remains incredibly volatile. Demand exceeds capacity and the road to Peak Season is paved with disruptions and delays.



Four carrier groups control over half of all global shipping capacity (58%)—Maersk, MSC, CMA CGM, and COSCO.

The top 10 carriers control 85% of capacity.44

The past 12 months have been like a peak season on auto-repeat. Key economic indicators all suggest that U.S. consumer spending will remain strong through the remainder of 2021. Even as Americans return to airline travel, vacations and in-person events, retail sales and e-commerce remain robust.⁴⁵

GENE SEROKA Executive Director, Port of Los Angeles

Delivery times are extended due to congestion at international ports.

Record shipment volumes and headline-making disruptions continue to overwhelm ports worldwide.

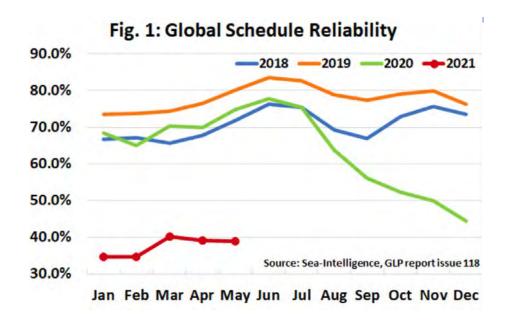
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Globally, schedule reliability has been pretty poor in all of 2021 as several ports and regions have been severely impacted by port congestion. Port congestion is far from over, that much is clear by our [June] analysis.46

ALAN MURPHY CEO, Sea-Intelligence

KEY DATA POINTS

- Transit times are 42% longer than they were a year ago.⁴⁷
- Late port arrivals are common. Across global trade lanes, ocean liner schedule reliability is down 36% year-over-year.⁴⁸
- ➤ Congestion at the ports is spilling over into U.S. rail yards. In July, Union Pacific suspended shipments from West Coast ports to its Chicago facility to alleviate "congestion related to high demand and constrained capacity." 49





As disruptions persist and blank sailings worsen, dwell times will increase—exacerbating port congestion and prolonging delivery delays throughout the holiday season.



To minimize disruptions to your supply chain, flexibility is key. Build extra time into your transit windows and consider additional routing options. Although it may be more expensive upfront, exploring alternative routes is a more reliable strategy than waiting for capacity to open up on your routine trade lanes.



The supply chain disruption issues, especially the congestion affecting our key maritime ports, are causing significant challenges for America's retailers. The congestion issues have not only added days and weeks to our supply chains but have led to inventory shortages impacting our ability to serve our customers.⁵⁰

MATTHEW R. SHAY President & CEO, National Retail Federation



The Port of Los
Angeles—the largest
port in the U.S. and
19th busiest port in
the world—has set
multiple records over
the last 12 months,
including the two
highest–performing
quarters and busiest
four individual months
in the port's 114-year
history.⁵¹

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As importers brace for impact this Christmas season, they're not just facing freight rates that are up but are fighting for capacity that doesn't exist.⁵²

TIMOTHY DOONER Supply Chain Analyst, FreightWaves

INNOVATION IN TECH

The Port of Los Angeles recently deployed a volume forecasting tool to help shippers and other stakeholders better anticipate the flow of cargo in and out of the Port.⁵³





Retailers need to build up their inventory levels by October to be prepared for peak holiday shopping.54

JASON MILLER Associate Professor of Supply Chain Management, Michigan State University

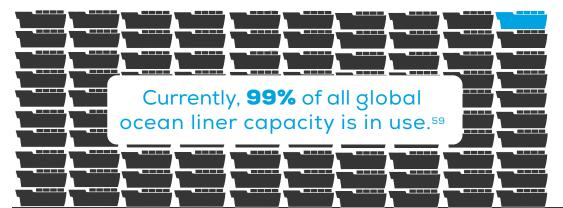
Capacity is scarce and rates are surging.

Shipper demand is high, but capacity is severely constrained. As a result, ocean shipping rates have been steadily trending up for the last several months and continue to rise.

KEY DATA POINTS

- The average cost of a 40ft container (FEU) is up 368% year-over-year.55
- Capacity crunches and rate hikes affect shippers of all sizes. Home Depot recently chartered its own ship to guarantee capacity.56
- Some shippers are negotiating premium prices well above their contracted rates in attempts to secure capacity. Many carriers simply do not have available space to give.57
- In China, a COVID outbreak among port workers halted operations at the port of Yantian for an entire month-which increased blank sailings by 300% and sent spot rates soaring.58

CAPACITY CRUNCH



Because of high demand, every available container will be in use this Peak Season. No matter what you're shipping, securing container capacity won't be cheap.

Advanced network forecasting is critical. If you need capacity, don't wait for shipping costs to go down. Book as soon as you know your pick-up dates.

Want additional support? Connect with one of Inxeption's international shipping experts for a free consultation.







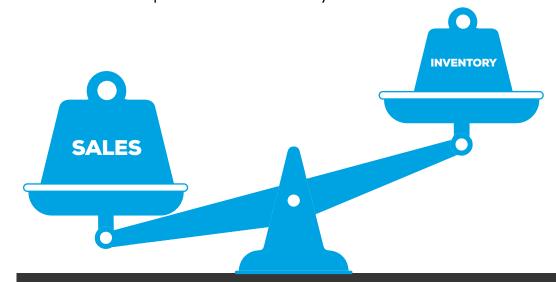
The inventory-to-sales ratio mesures how much inventory retailers have on hand compared to how many sales they are fulfilling. It is calculated by dividing the average inventory by net sales.

The inventory-to-sales ratio is at an all-time low.

Consumer spending has outpaced inventory restocking, leaving retailers scrambling to replenish warehouses ahead of the holidays.

KEY DATA POINTS

- During 11 of the past 12 months, consumer goods spending grew at a rate of more than 10% year-over-year. 60
- ➤ The U.S. Federal Reserve recently reported that supply chain disruptions—"including shortages of materials and labor, delivery delays, and low inventories of many consumer goods"—have become more widespread.⁶¹
- > Capacity constraints and widespread port congestion are slowing down raw material imports, making it challenging for manufacturers to produce new inventory.





Retailers need to focus on building up their inventories by the end of October if they hope to satisfy holiday demand.



Assess your sourcing pipeline and determine whether your product line is in jeopardy due to a raw material shortage. Additionally, invest in digital analytics tools so you can monitor buyer behavior, predict demand trends, and more adequately manage inventory levels.

AIR

When passenger flights slowed amidst COVID-19 outbreaks, air freight capacity reserved for manufacturers and retailers diminished. Simultaneously, demand for air cargo increased due to the urgent distribution of PPE gear and essential goods.

Although air freight rates rose in response to capacity crunches, demand for air cargo never decreased. In fact, prolonged ocean volatility and soaring container rates have accelerated sea-to-air conversions for international freight.



moves by ocean while only 1% moves by air.62

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Air cargo becomes attractive when businesses have low inventories and are faced with rising demand as the economy restarts. Currently, air cargo also benefits from exceptionally congested container supply chains. 63

To avoid ocean disruptions, shippers are turning to air freight.

As inventory pressures loom, manufacturers and retailers are utilizing air freight to ship products typically transported by ocean.

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Some retailers seem to be making the choice to move ocean imports to air despite the expense and possible financial loss, as a way to guarantee inventory and build customer loyalty while their competitors may be sold out due to logistics delays.⁶⁴

JUDAH LEVINE Head of Research, Freightos

KEY DATA POINTS

- ▶ Prior to the pandemic, air cargo was roughly 12 times more expensive than container shipping. In May 2021, that ratio was cut in half due to surging container rates.⁶⁵
- Air freight is no longer exclusively reserved for perishable goods and high-value items. Manufacturers are shipping all types of commodities by air—including leaf blowers, grills, sporting goods, clothing, and more.
- ➤ The gap between the cost of air transport and container shipping has decreased significantly—making air cargo a more viable and cost-competitive option for shippers previously deterred by air freight rates.



Air cargo is an effective way to expedite your shipments and alleviate the impact of extended production times on final delivery.



Don't assume air freight is too costly this season. If you are facing an inventory shortage, consider converting some of your ocean freight to air cargo.

If you need additional support, Inxeption's

dedicated team of logistics experts can help
you strategically navigate modal conversions.

Air capacity is strained—expect costs to rise throughout the end of 2021.

Although air freight is significantly faster and more flexible than ocean shipping, it comes with a price.

KEY DATA POINTS

- ➤ Today, it costs roughly twice as much to ship goods by air as it did before the pandemic.⁶⁶
- ➤ As of June 2021, global air cargo capacity was down 22% compared to pre-pandemic levels in June 2019.⁶⁷ Air cargo capacity will remain tight throughout the first half of 2022.⁶⁸
- ➤ To help combat capacity constraints, the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has extended the exemption that allows airlines to transport cargo in the cabin of passenger flights as long as passengers are not present.⁶⁹



INNOVATION IN TECH

DHL and Hellmann Logistics have each partnered with Dronamics to develop dedicated drone delivery services in an effort to achieve their respective sustainability goals and expedite time-critical shipments throughout Europe.⁷⁰





Although it comes at a higher up-front cost, shipping freight by air can help restore reliability and flexibility to your supply chain.



To protect your profit margins, (1) pay attention to demand forecasting and (2) consider whether it's more beneficial to run lean operations that yield just-in-time inventory OR increase your up-front operating costs/build up an inventory surplus to ensure you meet holiday demand.

PEAK SEASON AND BEYOND

As you adjust your budget (and your expectations) this Peak Season, we want you to know that Inxeption is here to support you during this challenging time. You can count on our expertise, innovative technology, and integrated commerce solutions to power your business through the challenges of Peak Season and beyond.

We're here to help.

Inxeption is a cloud-based digital commerce platform that combines online selling, shipping, and financial services. Our mission is to help companies Do Business Better.

When you work with Inxeption, you get access to our full suite of integrated business solutions and industry knowledge. This Peak Season, we can help you:

- ➤ Secure multi-modal capacity from a private network of trusted international and domestic carriers.
- ▶ Identify bottlenecks in your supply chain and implement innovative, time-saving solutions—like re-routing and modal conversions.
- ➤ Gain real-time visibility into your shipments with digital load management software.
- ➤ Protect your products against loss or damage in transit with all-risk shipping insurance.
- ➤ Expedite the order process and reduce errors through digital order entry.
- ➤ Monitor inventory levels and assess purchase patterns from your password-protected digital sales portal.

Want additional support this Peak Season?

If you want to schedule a free consultation with one of our logistics specialists, simply fill out a <u>contact form on our website</u> or give us a call at 888.852.4783 Ext. 1.



APPENDIX

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- 2. <u>Market share of the leading couriers and local delivery providers in the United States in 2019</u>, Statista
- 3. <u>UPS: Peak demand projected to exceed capacity by 5M packages daily</u>, Max Garland, Supply Chain Dive
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