

SMEs should encourage customers to shop and ship early this peak season

By [Taarek Hinedi](#)

30 Nov 2020

E-commerce has blurred physical borders for small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs), and many have recently moved their businesses online but are still navigating their way in the digital world. Given the volume already seen this year and the impact Covid-19 has had on supply chains, SMEs should encourage their customers to **shop and ship early** this year before the peak season kicks off to help ensure smooth and profitable operations.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

FedEx Express, for example, has been handling higher-than-normal volumes during the Covid-19 pandemic which, combined with the reduced availability of commercial flights around the world, has created capacity constraints across the cargo market.

As we enter what is expected to be an unprecedented peak holiday shipping season, we, much like other service providers such as ourselves are working alongside our customers to prepare and deliver the best possible service, and strongly encouraging anyone who plans to do their holiday shopping online to shop and ship early.

If you're an SME, helping customers to shop and ship early is simple if you follow two steps.

The first step is to ensure your website is capable of providing a good online shopping experience and managing customer traffic. Simply offering discounts and having sales before the peak shopping season doesn't mean customers will immediately buy gifts from your e-commerce website. Even a slight technical glitch can make customers leave your website and browse another, resulting in revenue loss.

Ensure all the digital payment options, discount codes, and drop-down menus work, especially when customer traffic is high. Make it easy for customers to shop and ship products as soon as they log into your online store as opposed to spending time navigating the website to checkout or browsing through multiple pages to find the shipping policy or the list of countries you ship products to. Once you're sure the website is able to meet customers' expectations and make a strong impression, roll out your discounts and flash sales.

The second step is to ensure efficient shipping and last mile deliveries. A smooth and timely delivery process will encourage positive word of mouth references and provide more exposure to your online store and early peak season sales, attracting more customers. With festivals like Christmas, and the New Year around the corner and travel restrictions likely to prevent people from visiting their family and friends overseas, it's expected that there will be more gifts shipped this year rather than delivered in person.

Family and friends of people living in sub-Sahara Africa countries might also choose to buy gifts for them directly from your e-commerce store to save time on delivery. Your logistics partners will also be able to advise you whether shipping to certain countries is possible or not, as restrictions due to Covid-19 continue in some locations, and whether express delivery is an option to meet your customers' delivery demands.

Shop early, ship early creates a win-win situation for both you and your customers. While it offers customers the possibility to start their holiday shopping early, it also helps SMEs to manage customer expectations and confidently meet their most important demand – working to ensure that family and friends receive their gifts on time to celebrate a festive holiday.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Taarek Hinedi is Vice President of FedEx Express Middle East and Africa Operations.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>