

# HOW TO BE A SHIPPER OF CHOICE

(AND WHY IT'S IMPORTANT)

Learn how to stay on your  
carriers' good side and  
keep your shipments moving!



## Did you know that having a good relationship with shipping carriers can help you save money, increase efficiency and meet deadlines?

It can and, as a shipper, you should take the extra steps to ensure you're doing what you can to create a positive rapport with the parcel and freight carriers that pick up and deliver your shipments.

After all, carriers will treat you as you treat them. They can also pick and choose who they do business with. When capacity is tight, that choice may come down to who are the friendliest and most accommodating shippers.

To remain on your carriers' good side and get your shipments moved, learn how to become a shipper of choice. It could have a tremendous impact on your bottom line and your ability to get products shipped. In this e-guide, we give you 10 tips!



## 1 Treat the Relationship Like It's a Partnership

### CHALLENGE

Shipping is a two-way street. Shippers rely on carriers and vice versa to do business and remain profitable. The more you invest in this relationship and make carriers feel like a partner, the more they may be willing to accommodate requests outside of the norm.

### SOLUTION

Carriers are more willing to work with you if you provide consistent business. They appreciate predictability and find it easier to work with shippers who give them a steady volume of shipments. If carriers view you as unreliable, unstable or unpredictable, they may be less likely to do business with you.

**PRO TIP:** Keep your core carriers busy moving your product and they will most likely go out of their way to ensure your success. Carrier loyalty goes a long way in the topsy-turvy world of shipping and building relationships should be a top priority.



## 2 Pay Fees and Bills On Time — Every Time

### CHALLENGE

Do you like delinquent payments? Carriers don't like them either. Like you, carriers are in the business of making a profit and it impacts their bottom line if you don't pay on time. Tardy payments may also damage your reputation with other carriers.

### SOLUTION

Pay all bills on time and try to pay early when possible. This will indicate to the carrier that you are conscious of your responsibilities and are committed to the shipper-carrier relationship. That doesn't mean you shouldn't review your invoices thoroughly! If you see or suspect a problem, be prompt and address the issue in a civil matter. Sometimes invoices are incorrect due to human error or other reasons. Carriers know this and should help you resolve the issue quickly. But whatever you do, don't sit on invoices without action of some kind.

**PRO TIP:** Set up solutions including auto-payment that will ensure you meet payment expectations. This is less taxing on your accounting team and makes paying bills simple!

## 3 Avoid Changes At the Last Minute

### CHALLENGE

You might be a very important customer to your parcel and freight carriers, but they have other customers, too! If all shippers were to make last minute changes to their shipping services, it would make a carrier's schedule very difficult to manage. Additionally, drivers are regulated on how much time they can spend on the road. For them, a couple of last-minute changes could create a compounding effect that could take days to recover from.

### SOLUTION

A late change here or there is totally acceptable. The goal, however, is to build a reputation as a reliable shipper who respects the carrier's time. A good rule is to only make changes out of necessity and not convenience. Another idea is to create recurring shipments with set days and times. Carriers like consistency and they will reward those shippers who provide it.

## 4 Communicate Often and Effectively

### CHALLENGE

No one, including your carrier, likes the silent treatment. In fact, lack of communication is a very common pain point that arises in the shipping industry. It creates inefficiency, loss of profit and extreme frustration for carriers. For that reason, shippers who don't communicate effectively jeopardize their own business since carriers can walk away from a relationship where they don't feel respected. Just remember, in shipping, there is no such thing as too much information!

### SOLUTION

The most important thing to remember is to be quick to communicate any changes to normal operating procedures. That might mean new locations, personnel, processes or services that may impact the way carriers conduct business with you. Additionally, be sure to let your carrier know if there is going to be a delay on your end that might affect their timelines. Lastly, be sure to discuss any concerns you have about the carrier themselves. For example, a driver might be showing up late on a routine basis, causing you to miss deadlines. That is something that should be communicated to the carrier and something they would most likely want to hear about.



## 5 Utilize Data To Make Carriers' Job Easier

### CHALLENGE

Some carriers use shipping data to grade a shipper's predictability and shipping consistency. That includes payment history, services utilized, dwell time and load profitability. If data suggests that a shipper is causing inefficiencies and loss of profit, the carrier may decide to break ties with the company. Worse yet is a shipper that makes it difficult to gather data so carriers can make informed decisions.

### SOLUTION

Shippers are advised to utilize a transportation management system (TMS) to administer their shipping operations. These technology platforms create an easy exchange of data between carrier and shipper. Modern carriers who utilize technology will appreciate your attempt to streamline relationships and meet them halfway on the data exchange. Shippers who don't do this may be seen as antiquated and not worth the time.

**PRO TIP:** Ensure you provide the most detailed and accurate information about your shipments. This includes the correct classification codes, weight and dimensions, and delivery dates. This will help your carrier with route planning and operational efficiency.



## 6 Don't Let Dwell Time Slow Carriers Down

### CHALLENGE

Carriers make money by moving products and meeting deadlines. When they have to unexpectedly sit and wait at your dock or office, their schedule is compromised and it can impact deadlines for the rest of their day, upsetting other shippers they do business with. In fact, both parcel and freight carriers point to dwell time as one of their major sources of frustration. To avoid it, shippers should have processes in place that help carriers get in and out as quickly as possible.

### SOLUTION

There are a number of things you can do to minimize dwell time, including:

- Complete your shipping documents accurately and have them ready for the driver.
- Make sure your shipments are packed and/or palletized and are ready to be loaded on trucks.
- Make sure employees are available to communicate with the driver and load shipments when applicable.
- When scheduling, try to avoid multiple deliveries at the same time, which can cause congestion.
- Have loading and unloading equipment ready when the carrier arrives.

**PRO TIP:** Be sure to communicate to the carrier any special equipment or services that your shipment requires. This may include liftgate or inside delivery. If you don't, the driver may not be equipped to make the pickup and will need to reschedule – causing wasted time for you, the carrier and possibly your customers.

## 7 Create Driver-friendly Spaces

### CHALLENGE

Drivers spend much of their day on the road and often don't have much time for breaks or stops. And just like you, they need time to check their phone, reply to emails and utilize restrooms. The environment you provide for drivers speaks volumes about what you think of them. The more welcoming you are to the driver, the more likely the carrier will want to work with you and accommodate special requests in the future.

### SOLUTION

Designate or provide areas where drivers can sit, complete paperwork, and recharge and relax for a bit. Allowing them access to your break rooms, vending machines and coffee/water is an additional bonus. Ensuring drivers are comfortable when they visit your location tells the carriers that you care about them and their services.

## 8 Properly Package and Palletize Shipments

### CHALLENGE

It's probably safe to say that you don't like your parcels and freight shipments delivered in boxes and on pallets that are falling apart. Think about how the driver feels about handling those kinds of pickups. Shipments that are not packaged properly are hard to handle and load and are more likely to move around in the back of the truck and become damaged — causing headaches for all parties involved. If you routinely use improper packaging techniques, carriers may grow tired and frustrated and deprioritize you as a shipper. In some cases, they have the right to assess additional shipping fees or refuse your parcel or freight.

### SOLUTION

There are many guides available that can help you properly package your shipments and ensure they are ready for pickup and delivery. If you follow best practices, it will show carriers that you care about their experience and are making the extra effort to make their job easier. Here are two resources to help you:

[Perfecting Your UPS Packaging](#)

[How To Package Your LTL Freight Shipments](#)



## 9 Show Patience With Carrier Delays

### CHALLENGE

Bad weather, traffic jams, dwell time at other businesses and a variety of other obstacles are usually out of the hands of most carriers. That simply means there will be times when your carriers don't show up on time. The key for you is to not overreact each time it happens and understand there are forces beyond a carrier's control that can make them late. We are all tardy now and then. Showing your carrier that you are somewhat flexible can go a long way in making them want to continue to work with you.

### SOLUTION

Carriers should alert you when they are going to be late — impress upon them that you sometimes have wiggle room in your schedule, but it's important to know in advance when the carrier is not going to make a pickup on time. However, if the lateness becomes frequent, then it might be time for a larger conversation about your relationship with the carrier. You have a business to run, too!

## 10 Partner With a 3PL for Help

### CHALLENGE

Often times, it can be difficult for small to mid-sized businesses (SMBs) to navigate carrier relationships alone. They have a business to run, and adding the responsibilities of being a shipper of choice can possibly slow down other parts of their operations. Most companies are not experts in shipping and anything above getting packages and freight delivered on time might seem out of reach or merely an inconvenience.

### SOLUTION

Shippers who partner with a third-party logistics (3PL) company have the resources to become and remain a shipper of choice. 3PLs can provide you with the technology to help with communication, data and shipment tracking which will ensure you and your carrier are working together efficiently. Additionally, 3PLs can lend their expertise on proper packaging, invoicing and other variables that can impact your status as shipper of choice. Think of them as the shipping and logistics arm of your business operation!

**PRO TIP:** Seek a 3PL with a large network of less-than-truckload (LTL) and full truckload (FTL) freight carriers, and a partnership with a leading parcel carrier. 3PLs can help you with carrier and service selection and give you additional tips on how to elevate carrier relationships.



## Unishippers Is an Industry-leading 3PL Company

For more than 30 years, Unishippers has helped shippers save money and create efficiency within their shipping operations. As a leading 3PL provider, we have the tools and resources necessary to help you become a shipper of choice. That includes:

- A full suite of shipping solutions for parcel and freight shipping.
- Expert guidance and consultation from a dedicated team.
- Access to negotiated rates from our [75+ less-than-truckload \(LTL\)](#) and [45,000+ freight carriers](#).
- [Top small package shipping options](#) through a UPS® partnership.

## Become a Shipper of Choice With Help From Unishippers

In a competitive marketplace, shippers like you need every advantage to stay efficient and profitable. Becoming a shipper of choice can help! Talk to our experts today to learn more.

**GET A FREE CONSULTATION**



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