

# The lifeline of commerce

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**Logistics goes far beyond warehousing and transportation – retailers are just as much a part of the supply chain ecosystem as manufacturers, suppliers, and customers. In today's environment (with shortages of goods on the one hand and increasingly demanding customers on the other) every part of the supply chain has a crucial role to play when it comes to driving efficiencies, optimisation and customer experience.**

Every retailer will be familiar with the following scenario: whether in a physical store or online, if a product is shown as 'currently unavailable' this puts the sale at risk in the short-term and brand loyalty in the longer-term. If however, a reasonable, alternative delivery option and time can be given, this significantly increases the chance of 'saving the sale' and the likelihood of a positive overall customer experience.

Today's consumers are also putting increasing importance on the so-called operational experience as part of the customer experience, meaning there is a greater emphasis on regular updates and communications about shipping routes, delivery windows and the overall environmental impact of their purchases too.

## **The value of experience**

With IT systems that can unify a company's supply chain systems, as well as integrate seamlessly with the systems and data of 3PLs and robotics partners, inventory and transport management can significantly optimise planning cycles, picking times and order processing from several hours to a matter of minutes. This more agile, flexible approach means that cut-off times can be extended right up to the moment an item leaves the warehouse or store on a truck or in a van.

This has the potential to significantly reduce split-shipments and returns too – a win for customers, brands and the environment. In addition, a modern IT system also provides a reliable overview of the inventory at all times, eliminating the need for manual stocktaking. It coordinates order processing and receipts, workflows and product storage locations for optimal picking runs on a smarter data-driven basis. At the same time, it can also be used to control the relationship and cooperation between man and machine – an increasingly important element in today's supply chain networks.

## **Customer service**

Data can also be used to take customer service to a new level, whether that's at the physical store or through an online platform (website, app or social media). In the physical store, apps on handheld devices allow each employee to provide individual support even if he or she has never seen the customer before. In addition, self-service use of the system on touchscreens or tablets can be offered as an alternative to staff.

If the sales associate can assure the customer that the product they want will be delivered to their front door (or any other desired location) the day after tomorrow, and that they will also receive the relevant updates and options for delivery, the customer experience comes full circle, making for happy, loyal customers.



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