

# 5 Ways to Improve Your Shipping Operations

To save on shipping supplies, you need a partner who lives, loves and knows the industry

Staples Business Advantage knows the shipping and packing industry, and we are committed to keeping you up-to-speed on trends and innovations and helping you drive efficiency in your operations. With usage assessments, quarterly reviews, and consulting on products and machines, we partner with you to find you the best solutions.

To start, here are five things you can do to improve your company's shipping operations in both the short and long term.

## 1. Be a Part of the Change

"The shipping industry has been pretty stagnant for a while with little innovation, but the market shift from brick and mortar to ecommerce distribution is now driving substantial changes that affect everyone," says Neel Madhvani, a senior director at Staples Business Advantage. "If you're not careful, unexpected costs can sneak up on you."

Ecommerce has affected the types of boxes, void fill, and tape that are used in the industry. Boxes are smaller with less void fill due to both a focus on customer experience (customers dislike lots of packing peanuts, paper, or even air pillows and hate having to get rid of a massive box) and changes UPS and FedEx have made to the way they charge for shipping (basically, big boxes cost much more money to ship).

## 2. Find a Supplier in the Sweet Spot

One impact of variable shipping prices is that finding a vendor with a variety of box sizes and a focus on cost-efficiency is more important than ever.

"If you choose a low-cost shipping supplies provider, you get a small selection with long lead times. Other shipping supplies distributors may have a wide variety, but you'll pay for it," Madhvani says. "There are few distributors in the middle (like Staples Business Advantage) that provide the right variety for the right price."

## 3. Get the Benefits of a Partner

"In the shipping industry, most vendors don't sit in front of you and say, 'this is the best way to get the quality you need with a service level that always keeps your business running,'" Madhvani says. "More often,



A Brief Breakdown:

## The 5 Ways to Improve Shipping Operations

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2. Find a Supplier in the Sweet Spot
3. Get the Benefits of a Partner
4. Seek New Opportunities. Always.
5. Keep the Big Picture in Mind

the buyer says, 'I need this,' and the vendor says, 'OK, here is the price.'" This way of strictly transactional purchasing misses the real opportunity.

"You need a partner that can help you evaluate the status quo and identify opportunities for savings specific to your organization," Madhvani says. "At Staples Business Advantage, our experts combine their knowledge of the shipping industry with a detailed analysis of the customer's needs, providing a plan and specific recommendations for savings. That's where the difference between a vendor and partner really comes to light."

#### **4. Seek New Opportunities. Always.**

"There is always an opportunity to save money, be more efficient and bring better quality to your customers," Madhvani says. "We consult with shipping managers and executives to understand their goals and help them purchase the right product in the right quantities: one bundle, one pallet, or one truckload at a time." Don't ever stop asking how you can be more efficient and don't ever accept a vendor that isn't asking the same question.

#### **5. Keep the Big Picture in Mind**

Shipping and packing is a small part of a big process, and the products you use should support and improve that process. It's best to have a shipping products supplier review your end-to-end warehouse operations and understand your approach before helping you build the right solution.

"Our shipping experts look at the products you're shipping, review the entire operation and make customized recommendations for better results," Madhvani says.

The first step is to look at what shipping supplies you're currently buying and to assess whether your prices are fair. The second step is a warehouse visit, during which Staples Business Advantage experts will see how your team is packaging products for shipment and suggest solutions to minimize breakage and increase efficiency. The third step is to look at your invoices and help you think through your purchasing patterns.

"We want to be able to inform customers on how they are buying today and how they should be buying in the future," he says. "The price on the invoice is important, but it's the customers' buying patterns, average order size, and other data points on an invoice that help us identify areas to reduce costs on a much larger scale."

**To learn more about Staples Business Advantage's Industrial Shipping Supplies, visit [StaplesAdvantage.com/StaplesShipping](https://StaplesAdvantage.com/StaplesShipping)**



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**Neel Madhvani,**  
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Business Advantage