Cyber Monday Tips for Your Small Business: Supply Chain, Packaging and Shipping

The big box stores aren't the only ones to profit from Cyber Monday. Your small business can reap the rewards of this day, too, but don't forget some key points about your supply chain, product packaging and shipping for the busy holiday season ahead.

The Supply Chain

- The holiday shopping season typically begins on Black Friday/Cyber Monday and may run up until December 24, depending on your business[1]
- Review your processes, resources and equipment that comprise your supply chain. Are there weak spots or any gaping holes? Check on your orders and make sure you know where they are and when you can expect them.
- If you advertise a deal or run a special promotion, make sure your suppliers know the quantities you need and when you need them, so you don't disappoint customers.
- Give your customers a realistic schedule for delivery of goods.
- Make sure you test your ordering and other computer systems to ensure they can handle the increase in volume during the busy times.
- Finally, review whether you have the space to store your goods. Look over your physical location now to ensure that there aren't space constraints and that you can attractively display your goods.

Packaging

- **Package Design:** Many businesses offer similar products, so a good package design can make your product stand out from the crowd. Packaging with colorful and eye-catching design also helps with brand recall, which helps your bottom line[2]. Make your package design reflect your brand's "personality". For example, with more delicate products, use subtle colors and designs, and if your brand is more "rugged", bold designs with strong colors typically work better.
- **The Size and Weight of Products:** The size and weight of your shipment can affect the packaging you need. You'll also need to factor in the room needed for materials to protect your product, such as foam, airfill or paper cushioning. Small or delicate items, such as jewelry or skincare, can be sent in shippers or mailers[3].

Shipping

- **Policies**: At this time of year, it's especially important to review your own shipping policies, as well as the policies and deadlines of your shipping company[4].
- **Timing**: Give your customers accurate shipping information so they know when they'll receive their orders. Make sure you follow up with the shipping provider if any customer issues are reported.

- **Volume:** How often you ship can greatly affect the price you pay to ship. Businesses that have hundreds of shipments per month can usually negotiate cheaper rates than businesses that have a lower shipping volume[5].
- **Weight:** Weigh your products with a postal scale so you know how much your shipment weighs, which will help determine shipping costs.
- **Type of Product:** The actual item you ship impacts the price you pay. You'll likely pay more to ship hazardous materials or food items, both of which need special attention.
- **Delivery Time:** The faster you need something to reach its destination, the more money you will pay. While many factors can figure into the timing of delivery, standard transit time is usually between one and five business days.
- **Distance of Shipment**: The destination of the product will also affect shipping costs. Most shipping services offer an estimation of costs to a specific destination based on your point of origin.
- **Insurance:** The value of your shipments will determine the amount of insurance offered by your shipper. The origin, destination, and shipping method will also come into play.
- **Claims:** Different shippers have different claims procedures, so review each company's claims process so you know what to do if problems arise.
- *Your* **Shipping Policies:** No matter how you ship, it's critical to make your shipping policies clear on your company website, especially your policy on shipping returns.

Sources:
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