

Top Five Challenges to Home Office Shipping

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For businesses that ship large volumes of parcels or documents, the mail center has been a vital hub for managing communication and cost. In the era of COVID-19, businesses are turning to enterprise-class multi-carrier management systems as a way to address these five ship-from-home challenges.



1 A Decentralized Workflow.

Corporate mail centers come with efficiencies that vanished overnight when employees began working from home. Automated systems residing in those mail centers enable a small staff to handle large volumes — easily comparison shopping among multiple carriers, and generating carrier-compliant tracking labels and documentation.

Large companies, and publicly listed firms in particular, need to carefully track and allocate expenditures to specific cost centers in their financial reporting for tax and regulatory compliance. In large organizations, employees need proper authentications and permissions to send certain types of mail or parcels. Time saved through volume handling and reduced complexity, error and duplication in a mail center environment all tend to get lost at home.

2 Cost Control.

Parcel carriers offer a complex maze of pricing options by size, weight, location and contents, and most large office mail centers use labeling software that rarely — if ever — exposes employees to the process.

An employee's permissions reside in the system, so that with a sin-

gle sign-on and ledger-code entry, an appropriate barcode is printed and transmitted with the parcel to the mail center. In seconds the system selects an optimal carrier and rate within a set of company-input policies, generating and logging the postage.

Without access to the right information working at home, the same level of cost discipline evaporates.

3 Worker Safety.

Businesses have a duty to provide employees with a safe and secure working environment. If the whole point of sending workers home is social distancing, then exposing them on a frequent basis to lines and counter transactions is an unnecessary, time-consuming risk.

Employees need a simplified process for weighing, packaging, posting and labeling frequent mail and parcels — under the appropriate company account and consistent with company rules and policies — that includes contact-free pickup or drop-off.

4 You need a smarter backup plan.

Employers are right to be concerned about keeping personal and company mail and shipping separate. Companies often have processes to account for personal shipping expenditures in the corporate environment, both as a convenience and to eliminate unau-

thorized use of company services. If it's easier or cheaper to ship personal mail through the company system, businesses risk losing control over costs and the clear separation of allocated expenses needed for their accounting. Conversely, a flexible system that can accommodate personal shipping under a separate payment method saves time and eliminates duplication of effort for both the employee and the company.

5 A Long-Term "New Normal."

A pair of surveys by research firm Gartner reveal that 88% of organizations had encouraged employees to work from home by the beginning of March. Seventy-five percent of chief financial officers said in a follow-up survey that they planned to permanently move at least 5% of positions in their organizations offsite in order to manage costs; one in four CFOs said they would make at least 20% of positions remote.

This suggests long-term structural change ahead — in business processes, in managing a fragmented workforce of remote employees working individually and in teams, and in the evolving role of technology. Organizations will have to navigate uncharted terrain to avoid workflow disruption, maintain productivity and control costs.

For more information, visit www.pierbridge.com



Pierbridge Delivers a Ship-From-Home Solution

Multi-carrier management software provider Pierbridge has launched a home-office add-on to its Transtream platform that enables employees to label, package and post parcels for contact-free pickup or drop off.

The cloud-based software offers solutions in two key user segments: those who ship small parcels — from retail merchandise to prescription drugs to electronic components — and those who “ship to communicate” in large volumes, whether it's documents, publications, marketing collateral or product samples. The former segment is focused on speed, while the latter is more concerned with cost control — and has been hit especially hard by the coronavirus pandemic.

“The office environment in larger companies relies on mail centers. Making the move from corporate office to home office isn't easy,” says Pierbridge managing director Bob Malley.

Transtream's home add-on has a simplified dashboard interface that “understands this user is not an expert,” Malley says, and includes a personal shipping capability with the employee's personal credit card.

Transtream office solutions are used in the financial service industry, governmental agencies, retailers, universities and other office campus organizations.