



Save without Sacrificing Service

The how-tos of adding an expeditor to your shipping program

By David Loonam

In this economic climate, companies of all sizes are seeking ways to cut costs without diminishing their customer service. If you're in this situation and you currently ship exclusively through a day-definite courier service, I have a suggestion. Perhaps it's time to consider diversifying your shipments by using a mail expeditor for materials that aren't quite so time-sensitive.

Clearly, couriers will always play an important role in our economy. Some shipments simply must get there overnight — or even the same day. But others aren't quite as urgent, and this is where a mail expeditor can help. Expeditors can offer extremely competitive delivery times, comparable to those of couriers in many cases, for a fraction of the cost. Many businesses are finding they can save substantially while still offering customers the same level of service they've come to expect.

In fact, most companies are amazed to learn how much they can cut costs by using an expeditor for shipments that don't require day-definite delivery. The potential savings can be even greater if you ship parcels weighing less than one pound, since the standard courier charges full one-pound rates for these items, while expeditors do not. If you decide to look into supplementing your mail program with an expeditor, I'd like to offer some helpful tips for choosing the right one. First, you should partner with a company that makes expedited mail its core business — not a side service or afterthought — to ensure you're getting the expertise you need. Other, more specific, criteria you should use in selecting an expeditor fall into three general categories. Each involves one of the major benefits I just mentioned: competitive transit times, savings and enhanced services.

Starting with the first category, when considering a mail expeditor, a few factors can tell you whether a company can provide optimal delivery times. Make sure its delivery network extends nationwide if you ship within the US, and for international mailing, your expeditor should have a global presence. The expeditor should have multiple distribution points for faster delivery and offer both air and

ground services to provide transit times comparable to those of USPS First-Class Mail.

Moving on to the second category, savings, your mail expeditor should have a large client base to draw upon. This is essential because volume is key in the expedited mail industry. The more mailpieces a company commingles, the better positioned it is to take advantage of postal discounts and provide the best possible rates.

The third category is service, and as I mentioned, you don't need to make major sacrifices in this area to save money with an expeditor. To get the mail solution that best fits your business, you should work with a company flexible enough to customize a program specifically for you. Another way to ensure you receive the right solution is by working with a company that offers a broad product portfolio with the transit-time options that fit your needs and a suite of enhanced services. For example, your mail expeditor should provide online tools for tracking shipments, viewing invoices and generating custom mail management reports. Finally, to make sure you get the reliability you need, your mail expeditor should have stringent security systems in place and partner with the dependable USPS for final delivery of domestic mail.

Whichever expeditor you may be considering, request a test of its services within your mail center. During this test period, you can find out how well the partnership works, how flexible the expeditor is in tailoring solutions to meet your specific needs and how much you can save.

In the end, no matter whom you choose, you'll find that partnering with a mail expeditor provides an excellent opportunity to save without making painful sacrifices. Once you experience the benefits of an expeditor, chances are, you'll want to continue the relationship even after the economy inevitably improves. ■

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