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Ecommerce Fulfillment 101

What sellers ought to know about their product's journey after clicking the "buy" button: how does it go from factory to warehouse to a customer's doorstep?



What is Ecommerce Fulfillment?

Ecommerce fulfillment is the process in which online orders are picked from warehouse shelves, packed for delivery, and shipped to a customer's doorstep.

Getting ecommerce fulfillment right – or failing to do it correctly – can make or break an online seller's reputation. Successful ecommerce fulfillment is necessary to keep today's online customers happy and coming back for more.

How many steps are there in the Ecommerce Fulfillment process?

The ecommerce fulfillment operation consists of five basic steps, from start to finish.



1. Receiving

This is the process of securing inventory from the manufacturer, and counting the items, or stock keeping units (SKUs), correctly. This also includes reporting any missing or damaged SKUs to the manufacturer.



2. Storing

Items are stored in a warehouse or fulfillment center before shipping to individual buyers. To optimize deliveries, warehouses/fulfillment centers should be located in close proximity to the targeted customers, or have a global network to serve customers around the world.



3. Picking and Packing

Once an online order is received, a warehouse/fulfillment center employee will pick the ordered items and pack them into a pouch or box for delivery.



4. Shipping

The packed item makes its way from the warehouse/fulfillment center to the customer; the transport method depends on the distance to be traveled and the selected fulfillment method.



5. Returns

If damaged or mis-shipped items reach the customer, it can be sent back to the warehouse/fulfillment center for processing and re-shipment. The returns procedure will depend on the type of product and the cost of returning the item.

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