A Guide To Using Shipping Labels For Your Online Store

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Shipping labels are small yet crucial elements of the ecommerce industry. They carry the most essential piece of information that propels operations post-purchase: shipping details. These packaging labels are used at each stage of order fulfillment along with grievance redressal and returns processing. Failing to use a proper one can prove to be a disaster for new online stores and invite the wrath of paying customers. Thus, we are bringing in a complete guide to shipping labels for our broad audience to answer all their questions in one place. If you are facing troubles with the packaging labels or going to launch your online store, you are in the right place.

What Are Shipping Labels

A shipping label is a printed document containing all the information necessary for the order fulfillment process. It is assigned during the packaging itself, and logistics people use this information for sending the parcel throughout their system. They also contain barcode labels for physical to digital conversion of data. Depending upon the courier service provider and the weight-dimensions of the package.

1. Name and address of the sender
2. The origin of the item
3. The 'return to' address
4. Details of the shipment contents
5. Instructions for handling the item like fragile, keep this side on top, like keep away from direct sunlight.
6. Destination address and customer's contact details
7. Package details: size, weight, and other dimensions
8. Type of the shipping service chosen.
9. Tracking id and barcode

How To Select The Right Material For Shipping Labels

Cost and appearance are the two main factors that affect decision making. However, we will discuss two main types of shipping label materials in terms of durability and use. They are also known as pressure-sensitive labels. There are two main types (paper and film) of facestocks, and the below section will help you select the right option:

Paper-Based Facestocks

Paper facestocks are widely used to serve numerous purposes. It provides a broad range of aesthetic/ physical characteristics at affordable pricing. This includes linen, gloss, semigloss, metalized, and other finish options. You can use it for inexpensive products as they give a premium feel without costing you much. However, they are comparatively less durable. Water-resistance quality lacks in them while they are susceptible to wearing faster. If you are not looking for very high durability, they are a perfect choice for most cases.

Film-Based Facestocks

The film-based variant is based on plastics and is highly durable. It resists moisture, high temperature, friction, UV lighting, and even contamination from chemical agents. They allow higher control over surface finish and are developed from Polypropylenes, Polyester, and Polyolefin. Film facestocks are more expensive, and the printers used to print them cannot be used interchangeably. They are mostly used for costly items requiring additional care during handling.

Based on your requirements, you can select an optimal mix of Facestock materials. You should also keep the design and printing compatibility in mind while making a choice.

Label Sizes And Printers Used For Printing Shipping Labels:

Selecting the label size is no brainer as the goods with larger sizes require more details for order processing and shipping while smaller ones don't. This is a general case, while there are exceptions like jewelry and watches where the value of items can be significantly high for smaller products. You should use the label sizing according to your daily consumption and printer to keep costs at optimal levels. For instance, many printers are compatible with letter-size but do not support A4 size.

The optimization of the shipping process relies heavily on the data collected at each stage of delivery. Having standardized labels and barcodes allows businesses in tracking discrepancies, stock movement, bottlenecks, and logistics agility.

Label Sizes And Their Common Applications

Based on your daily consumption and product dimensions, you can choose among these five sizing options:

- Letter Size Label Sheets (8.5×11″): It is the standard size in the United States, printable by most printers.
- Legal Size Label Sheets (8.5×14″): Slightly bigger than legal size, used when additional labels are required.
- Tabloid Size Label Sheets (11×17″): Used when vast numbers of identical labels are printed, standard printers aren't compatible with it.
- A4 Size Label Sheets (11.7×8.3″): This is the international size used by most global trade participants.

- A3 Size Label Sheets (16.5×11.7″): This another large size variant used for bulk printing work.

Custom Shipping Labels: An Overview

It is common for online retailers to receive requests for splitting order in multiple shipments and even deliver them at separate destinations. When the items are distributed in odd quantities and different locations, using normal levels becomes tough. In such cases, using custom shipping labels would make operations easier for both sender and the logistics company. For example, duplex shipping labels are used to cover both shipping information and packaging list at once. Custom shipping labels can help ease operations and make all the necessary information available at once.

Different Printers Used In The Industry

1. Inkjet Printers: They print low-quality labels and aren't useful for printing small QR codes and barcodes in most cases. They are among the cheapest ones and shouldn't be preferred if daily shipment volume is at considerable levels since they are the slowest of all.
2. Laser Printers: They are used in most offices and fall in the medium budget range. They don't support peel and stick features. However, if your daily turnover is low, you should go for laser printers.
3. Thermal Printers: Thermal printers are the most preferred type due to their high printing rate and support for peel and stick function. They are expensive as compared to the other options available but provide excellent usability for stores with bulk printing requirements. They are further divided into Direct Thermal (more affordable, require more maintenance, label life is lower), and Thermal Transfer (Long label life, more expensive, supports a wide variety of materials) printers.

However, the size of the shipping label supported by thermal printers is 4" x 6" and all couriers do not support it. On the other hand, all courier service providers support the letter size and A4 label sizes. While selecting a printer, you should also consider the required resolution, connectivity options, cost of ownership, and maintenance costs.

Benefits Of Shipping Labels

Shipping labels are not an option in today's e-commerce, but using the right ones can bring in tonnes of benefits for online stores. They play a vital role in refining the shipping and handling process. They are used in combination with the [order management software](#) and the inventory control system. The benefits of using shipping labels are as listed below:

Improved Tracking

In the case of time-sensitive products like vegetables, tracking the shipments becomes extremely necessary for quality issues. On the other hand, you can also print expirable shipping labels that can be used by both courier companies and as return labels.

Statista finds e-commerce will drive up to [22%](#) of the total retail sales by 2023.

Ease Of Inventory Management

The first step towards automating inventory control is using shipping barcodes. They enable automatic SKU tracking, stock counting, and cross-checking inventory levels. This replaces the need for manual data entries and spreadsheet work.

Reduce Errors And Discrepancies

They help your staff and 3PL warehouses/shippers in quickly sorting the goods and in sending them for the transportation process. As they facilitate computerized counting

and management, the room for errors and discrepancies is reduced to negligible levels. They also smoothen the cross-company correspondence and stock transfers virtually error-free.

Help In Generating Reports

The shipping labels provide extensive data for generating reports utilized in order management systems and ERP solutions. This information is used for multiple purposes like stock level measurement, reordering, and outbound stock calculation.

They Are Cost Effective And Save Time

Integrating the packaging labels with your fulfillment software extends both strategic and functional benefits at marginal costs. They ensure timely delivery of your shipments in a safe manner. When compared to their price, they serve a variety of purposes and improve deliverability by leaps and bounds.

Common Shipping Label Mistakes

Once printed, shipping labels are no brainers. Still, a lot of online retailers make some common and easily avoidable mistakes. In this section, we are going to cover the widespread errors and how you can prevent them:

Using Weak Adhesives/Removable Labels

Weak adhesives are extremely risky since losing the label mid-journey can turn a paying customer into a furious, complaining one. This can create endless errors while shipping and handling to derail the delivery process. Removable labels are also gullible to such errors. Both of these mistakes should be avoided under any circumstances.

Sticking Labels On Worn-Out Portions

Using worn-out portions for sticking the labels causes the same effects as using weak adhesives. However, it is not recommended to use worn-out boxes at all, and even if they are damaged in a small portion, covering that area by labeling over it isn't a good idea.

Not Using Proper Materials And Methods

Using any paper to print shipping details is done by all small businesses due to either running out of labeling materials or simply keeping using anything in reach. Cutting down paper sheets with scissors and putting them up will lower your brand value. Customers feel that such businesses are less trustworthy, and thus you should abstain from it.

Summing Up

Using the right shipping label improves your products' movement throughout the supply chain and eliminates any error. They help machines and employees promptly send the parcels to your customers, and thus, you should always use them appropriately. We hope that you find this article on shipping labels useful for your online store.

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