



PRODUCT FULFILLMENT SERVICES: SO YOU CAN GIVE YOUR CUSTOMERS WHAT THEY WANT

We in the retail sector engage in discussions of fulfillment product services almost too often. But, in these discussions, we often forget some of the key issues which make fulfillment services so important to our sector. This is to be understood and is a common byproduct of any intra-industry discussion. For this reason, it is important to occasionally step back, and view the subject of fulfillment services in the most basic manner. By doing this, we believe that managers can assess the specifics of fulfillment product services through a simple and down-to-earth prism.

So let us begin with the most basic question:
Why are product fulfillment services so important?

It is such a basic question; you may find yourself initially at a loss to answer it. Or the initial answer which comes may seem too simple. Do not let all this worry you. The answer is simple: Product fulfillment services are important, because when they work they insure that your customers get their products in a timely manner, and when they are not working your customers will not. Or too simplify this even farther: Your customer wants his or her product, product fulfillment services gives it to them.

Studies have shown that speed of delivery can be the chief determining factor in whether or not a customer returns. More than quality, more than reliability, more even than customer service. So whether you function as part of in-house product fulfillment services team, or you work for a dedicated product fulfillment services firm; you must remember the importance of your role.

When a package arrives at a customer's home, or on the loading dock of a company, you are sending an important message about the company you represent. If the product is late or the contents incomplete or damaged; you have sent a very negative message. It will be read in a distinct, emotional and unambiguous way by your customer. They will think you do not care about them.

You may see product fulfillment services as yet another emotionless cog in the vast machine of business. But you would be wrong. This is one of the most emotional parts of the business world. If a customer orders a product he wants or needs. Both "wanting" and "needing" are emotional states. In fact, they are often described as "unfulfilled" emotional states. So product fulfillment services do not merely fulfill product needs but emotional needs as well.

Product fulfillment services suddenly sound much more interesting, right?

Of course, simply understanding that fulfillment services operate in an emotional sphere, does not divorce you from the more commonplace problems you face on a daily basis as a product fulfillment manager. But it does give you a greater understanding of the layers of meaning in the activity, and why customers often express seemingly undue anger when product fulfillment services fail them.

Product fulfillment services provide a valuable link in the marketing chain; and stepping back and viewing some of its most basic components provides us a new and unique perspective. And, in life, we all need that.

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