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August 07, 2009 12:48 PM

Slice Online Order-Fulfillment Hassles and Spending

By Zack Stern, PC World

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Physical stores only need to hand customers a product in one place, but online companies have to send goods to buyers, creating a new hassle. [Shipwire](#) slays this problem by managing your physical products and fulfilling orders.

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Since the company runs warehouses in the U.S., Canada, and England, you'll save money and customers will get products faster; instead of having to ship everything from your location, Shipwire can send from the closest warehouse.

You'll also save time and labor, since Shipwire handles order fulfillment. Shipwire's tools integrate with many e-commerce setups, one of which you likely already use: Amazon, PayPal, Google Checkout, and dozens more. When customers place orders, Shipwire automatically gets the details and sends out the product.

You'll just need to send your goods over to Shipwire, ideally in bulk, since this initial cost could be the biggest extra fee for your business. You'll also pay a [monthly cost](#) that varies with the number of different products you carry, number of shipments each month, and required storage space. These rates start at about \$30 a month to ship any of 5 products to 8 customers, but they can be customized any way you

need, up to thousands of products and customers.

You have to determine if this monthly fee saves money over your storage and handling costs. But Shipwire compares shipping costs--which you'll also pay--with and without the service. In most cases, the rates and delivery times will improve. For example, Shipwire says I'd save \$1.42 per order sent to New York, versus physically sending from San Francisco. But I'd also save two days in the delivery time.

Maybe it's time for your small business to ditch eBay and Etsy. Or medium-sized businesses can cut infrastructure costs and hassles, offloading order fulfillment. For either scenario, Shipwire could fill a niche.

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