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Holiday Shopping:: Get Your Butt In Gear Importers



Written by [John](#) 1 Comment and 0 Reactions
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[Shipwire](#) presents:: The Procrastinators Guide to Holiday Importing

Written by their executive and marketing team...

If you are thinking about importing inventory, whether it be toys, electronics or apparel for Holiday sales in 2010 it is time to review your product sources, put in orders and start figuring out the most cost effective method of getting your inventory to the right warehouse.

You're probably saying, wait...its April...You have to be kidding me. Sorry to burst your bubble. One of the dirty little secrets of logistics is that there is a glut of space available during the first 6 months of the year and more merchandise than space the second six months of the year. It doesn't matter if your shipping by boat, train, plane, truck or your having Tom Tuttle from Tacoma Washington hand deliver it for you. The closer you get to September and October the more expensive rates get and the harder it is to meet your delivery time lines.

Clearly, you have to balance the need of getting started early with the business reality that you want to forecast your holiday sales accurately! . As a rule of thumb, if you are importing merchandise into the U.S. you should have your "ducks-in-a-row" by end-of-June.

Today through the end of April:

Line up suppliers and solidify product costs. Your suppliers will appreciate getting their orders a bit early. It helps with their own product development, procurement and projections, and might also enable you to get a little discount for your timeliness.

Where ever possible, provide purchase orders and payment information (L.C, ACH, Credit Card, Wire transfer) to confirm your commitment.

Start lining up freight and logistics quotes and delivery time lines.

May through June:

Confirm your manufacturer or distributor has you scheduled and is processing your supplies. At the very least, your agreements should be completed and you should have your/their expectations set! Agree on samples.

If you have had a significant product change or are importing something entirely new, make sure you get what you were expecting. Don't be penny wise and pound foolish with samples, use a very reliable small package carrier with tracking capabilities! Your season might depend on it!

Get final freight quotes and schedule your shipments

July-August:

Delivery/ship-dates are approaching. Reconfirm your suppliers' commitments. TOPs (Top of Production) should already have been available and sent to you; get the tracking numbers. Marketing would tell you to dust off your holiday marketing plan and start lining up your pay per click and advertising.

September:

Ocean containers should be getting filled and booked for sailing. Bills of Lading might already have been prepared. Have copies emailed (or faxed) to you to check for accuracy.

Make sure that no surprises crop up; Freight forwarders and customs house brokers should be the ones you are familiar with, and no new parties should be introduced at this stage.

Reconfirm to the suppliers that you have accepted the samples if there were samples sent. Start marketing and hopefully taking back-orders if possible.

October – December 15:

Market, Market, Market & Sell, Sell, Sell

If you are not using Shipwire order fulfillment, prepare to pack and ship your orders late into the even later night.

We hope this helps you plan out your year. Remember that [Shipwire](#) can help you organize and answer your freight questions to ensure a smooth holiday selling season in 2010.

Posted Permission of:

Nate Gilmore



Nate oversees channel development and developer network, as well as marketing and public relations. Previously, Nate was at Concentric, acquired by XO Communications, where he ran product management, sales and marketing. Over his career he developed dozens of new business channels, by initiating new products for small- and mid- size businesses, developing partner programs for those products, and working with web developers and systems integrators to provide ongoing support of those products. Nate has also held various legal positions in intellectual property and business law. He holds a B.A. in History, and a J.D., from Santa Clara University.

