

There is nothing "small" about shipping during the Holiday season

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(NC)—Being a small business in Canada during the peak holiday shopping season can be challenging, especially for those that offer great gift ideas. Helping customers find the perfect gift and offering the best possible customer service is key, however, good customer service goes beyond assisting purchase selection - especially if your customers are in the U.S.

For many small businesses, saving time is important during the hectic holiday season, but increasing efficiency and delivering on customer expectations can be a daunting task, especially when the majority of your customers are south of the border. UPS is helping many Canadian businesses expand and attract more U.S. customers with its unique Cross Border Services offering.

Launched in 2002, UPS Cross Border Services helps small and mid-sized Canadian companies build their businesses in the United States. The service combines consolidated shipping, customs clearance, States-side warehousing, and returns services into a simple customized solution.

For instance, Vancouver-based, Lush Canada who is well-known for its fresh handmade cosmetics and soaps, is starting to clean up in the U.S. market/and with only two American-based retail outlets. Their exotic bath bombs, bubble bars and body soaps have had Canadians soaking across the country and are now making waves south of the border as more than 100,000 U.S. residents now request their quarterly catalogue.

Lush has always handled its own fulfillment, but it was looking for a solution to reduce costs and increase customer satisfaction rates, particularly for its U.S. orders. "After we began receiving orders from U.S. customers, we quickly realized that our current distribution systems were not going to be able to handle a sudden surge in volume, and UPS offered a much more viable solution," said Sam Azad, Lush Canada's Mail Order Shipping & Logistics Manager.

"Our past courier suppliers could not provide us with the kind of integrated, automated solution we needed to handle additional volume from the U.S. while providing our customers with the service they were accustomed to," added Azad.

For small businesses in Canada that have a large customer base in the United States, sending customer purchases across the border must be hassle free - especially before the holidays. More so, when the product that a company offers its customers is large and expensive to ship, finding cost-effective methods of shipping products is a must.

For the past decade, Board Zone has been offering an extensive array of snowboards, boots, bindings, outerwear and accessories for everyone from adults to kids, to seasoned pros and those just starting out. When the popularity of snowboarding began to boom in the late 1990s, so did the demand for Board Zone products - especially from south of the border.

To take advantage of this growth opportunity, the company began searching for ways to service orders to the United States cost-effectively, without having customers concerned about border delays and unexpected duties, taxes, and customs brokerage fees. Because Board Zone offers a seasonal product that many customers will purchase to enjoy during the holidays, these factors have to be reduced as much as possible.

"We had a few misadventures," says Don Moscoe, President of Board Zone, who explored several options, and tried out two other service providers. "But nothing really worked the way we wanted it to. Then we started with the UPS Cross Border Services program and everything changed...for the better."

Before the UPS solution, Board Zone was faced with the expensive option of preparing individual orders in Canada, dealing with customs, and paying international rates to ship these orders to the United States. Moscoe adds, "It's now a lot easier for U.S. customers to buy from us. The border isn't even an issue."

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