



# THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO AVOIDING HOLIDAY LOGISTICS PITFALLS

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The holiday season is the busiest and most critical time of year for many businesses, but it can also be the most stressful. As demand surges, logistical issues can arise, causing delays, unhappy customers, and lost revenue. However, by planning ahead and addressing the most common pitfalls, you can ensure your operations run smoothly and meet customer expectations.

In this guide, we'll explore the four most common logistics challenges businesses face during the holiday season—and more importantly, how to avoid them.



## PITFALL 1:

# INVENTORY INACCURACIES

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## THE PROBLEM:

Inventory errors, especially during peak season, can cripple your operations. Picture this: your system shows that you have 500 units in stock, but when your 3PL team goes to pack the order, there are only 200. Now you're scrambling to locate the missing stock—causing delays, customer dissatisfaction, and inefficiencies in your warehouse.

This happens because businesses often fail to conduct proper inventory checks before the holiday rush. With traditional 3PL strategies, items can be misplaced, data may not be updated in real-time, and mismanagement of stock levels can lead to a breakdown in your supply chain process.

## THE SOLUTION:

To avoid these issues, start by conducting a full physical inventory or cycle counts before the holiday season. Verify that all items are in the correct locations and that your warehouse management system (WMS) reflects accurate, real-time data. This will give you a strong foundation at the beginning of the season, ensuring you have a solid start.

During the holiday rush, be sure to frequently take stock of your inventory through cycle counts. These should become a regular part of your operations processes to help catch any potential errors before they escalate into major problems.

Properly managing your inventory now will save you time and stress later, ensuring smoother fulfillment and higher customer satisfaction.



## PITFALL 2:

# STAFFING SHORTAGES & TRAINING ISSUES

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### THE PROBLEM:

The holiday season typically brings a surge in demand, and your 3PL might not have enough trained staff to keep up. Relying on seasonal workers who are unfamiliar with the operation processes can lead to costly mistakes—like incorrect packing—causing delays and errors that ultimately hurt your bottom line.

Why does this happen? Many businesses and 3PLs leave hiring and training until the last minute, giving their new employees little time to get up to speed.

### THE SOLUTION:

3PLs should start the seasonal hiring process early—ideally, two to three months before the holidays. This gives them plenty of time to onboard and train new employees before the rush of the holidays. During this period, they should also create flexibility in their workforce by cross-training their employees so they can quickly reassign staff as needed throughout the holidays.

To further reduce the chance of mistakes, assign simpler tasks, like packing, to new hires while reserving more complex roles for your experienced team members. Implement quality control checks throughout the process to catch mistakes before they cause problems.

By being proactive with staffing and training, you and your 3PL can reduce errors and ensure your team is ready to handle the holiday rush.



**PITFALL 3:**

# CARRIER CAPACITY & SHIPPING DELAYS

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## THE PROBLEM:

Carriers often experience problems with capacity during the holidays, meaning unprepared 3PLs and businesses can find themselves paying more for shipping or, worse, unable to ship products on time.

Imagine promising two-day shipping, only for your carrier to be overloaded. This will result in missed deadlines, frustrated customers, and a damaged reputation for your brand.

This happens because many businesses don't test or adjust their shipping strategies in advance. They rely on the same carrier agreements and fail to book extra capacity for the peak season.

## THE SOLUTION:

You can prevent these delays and subsequent issues by planning your shipping strategy well in advance. Work with your carriers and 3PLs early to book extra capacity and ensure that you have backup options if needed. Test different shipping methods to find the most cost-effective and reliable carriers based on your customers' locations.

Likewise, be sure to set specific shipping deadlines for customers and create an open and clear line of communication so their expectations are managed and aligned with your processes.

By optimizing your shipping process now, you'll avoid last-minute surprises and ensure that your products reach customers on time.



## PITFALL 4:

# MISALIGNMENT BETWEEN SALES & OPERATIONS

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## THE PROBLEM:

Sales teams often run aggressive promotions during the holiday season, which is great for revenue but can overwhelm your operations team if they're not prepared. Without proper coordination, you might find yourself with more orders than your warehouse can handle, leading to delays, errors, and unhappy customers.

This happens because sales and operations teams aren't always on the same page. If operations aren't prepared for a sudden spike in demand, it can create logistical chaos.

## THE SOLUTION:

The key to avoiding this issue is communication and alignment between your sales, operations, and supply chain teams. Sales should inform operations about upcoming promotions well in advance, so they can adjust staffing, inventory, and processes accordingly. Your 3PL can then pre-pack popular items or bundle products before promotions go live to speed up order fulfillment.

By making these adjustments early, you'll maintain high levels of customer service and ensure that your business is ready to handle the holiday season efficiently, without sacrificing quality.

# HOLIDAY LOGISTICS PREPARATION CHECKLIST

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The holiday season doesn't have to be a logistical nightmare. By addressing these four common pitfalls and preparing your operations, you can turn the busiest time of year into the most profitable.

Take control of your inventory, staffing, shipping, and internal alignment now to avoid unnecessary headaches and to keep your customers happy with this checklist that outlines all the steps you need to follow to ensure your business is ready for the holiday season.

## INVENTORY ACCURACY

- Conduct full physical inventory and frequent cycle counts.
  - Verify all stock is in the correct locations.
  - Ensure real-time data updates in your WMS.
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## STAFFING AND TRAINING

- Start hiring seasonal staff 2-3 months before peak season.
  - Train new hires for specific roles well in advance.
  - Cross-train experienced employees for flexibility throughout the season.
  - Implement quality control checks for error prevention.
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## CARRIER COORDINATION AND SHIPPING

- Coordinate with carriers and 3PLs to book additional capacity early.
  - Test and optimize carrier and 3PL mix for cost and reliability.
  - Set clear shipping deadlines and communicate them to customers.
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## SALES AND OPERATIONS ALIGNMENT

- Ensure sales promotions are communicated early to operations and 3PL.
- Have 3PL pre-pack popular items and bundles before promotions launch.
- Align operational capacity with expected sales volume.



# LOGISTICS CAN MAKE OR BREAK YOUR BUSINESS.

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For businesses managing logistics, staying ahead of demand, controlling costs, and ensuring timely deliveries are ongoing challenges. And, generic, one-size-fits-all solutions simply won't cut it in today's competitive market.

At IDS, we understand that your logistics must go beyond simply pulling items, putting them in boxes, and slapping labels on them.

Which is why you can count on our experience of accurately shipping over 50,000 packages a day with 99.9% accuracy to provide customized, scalable solutions that optimize your operations, protect your brand, and help drive customer loyalty.

And, unlike generic 3PL providers—who expect you to fit into their service levels—our consultative approach tailors your logistics strategy to your specific needs and business goals. This means, you no longer have to worry about your 3PL being ready for the holidays, flash sales, or your exponential growth.

We can help you not only overcome any logistics challenges but turn them into a competitive advantage that drives success. Schedule a discovery call today and start transforming your logistics for long-term success.

For more resources and support on how IDS can help your business optimize logistics, visit [our website](#), contact us directly at (866) 232-6533, or email at [sales@idsfulfillment.com](mailto:sales@idsfulfillment.com).