Delivery in a class by itself

When it comes to motivating school students to achieve excellence, few things have the power of personalized awards, including custom letter jackets. A reward for hard work, sacrifice and success, it’s a symbol of recognition while in school and a lasting reminder when those days are over.

Since 1949, Neff has been a leading supplier of varsity letter jackets, as well as other custom apparel and awards. Based in Greenville, Ohio, Neff today partners with more than half of U.S. high schools, touching millions of students.

Speed is critical when delivering awards and jackets for ceremonies, especially in the spring and fall. “Our customers want our high-quality products delivered in the shortest possible time frame,” says Jeff Loos, Director of Offshore Manufacturing. “All of our products reward student achievement, which means so much to the kids, so we have to deliver on time.”

Neff turned to UPS to improve the shipping process for greater efficiency and a better customer experience. UPS provided a delivery solution in a class by itself.

With a global supply chain and raw materials flowing from multiple countries into a factory in the Dominican Republic, Neff now can manufacture and customize their products under one roof. As a key partner, UPS addressed Neff’s issues of fulfillment direct to their customers and at the same time gained visibility while in the various stages of transit, including customs clearance.

Challenge:
Deliver time-sensitive shipments of awards and customized varsity letter jackets daily from one offshore factory to schools across the U.S.

Solution:
UPS streamlined the supply chain from sourcing to sales:
• Shipment consolidation combines freight pricing with expedited package delivery
• Multiple packages move as one shipment through customs
• Increased visibility improves end-to-end tracking

Results:
A shorter order-to-delivery cycle and reduced costs offer a competitive advantage and an even better customer experience.
Faster fulfillment
Neff already knew UPS’s domestic capabilities, working with the company for more than 60 years. But now Neff needed global logistics expertise it had not gotten from other carriers.

“They came to us for a more optimized, world-class supply chain,” says Patrick Casalbore, UPS Director of Enterprise Accounts. “Order fulfillment sped up as we eliminated a lot of their duplicate operations.”

First, UPS streamlined the raw-material supply chain, consolidating these LCL shipments to twice-a-month departure via ocean freight.

Next, UPS Trade Direct® Air was introduced, offering the best of both worlds — the economy of a freight carrier and the expedited delivery of a package carrier. “Trade Direct has been a strategic solution for us. It helps us provide the most consistent, dependable and cost-effective delivery option from plant to customer,” says Loos.

With daily UPS Trade Direct flights, packages are consolidated and move as one air freight shipment — at freight rates — into Miami in one day. Once there, staff at a UPS airport facility deconsolidates shipments and labels individual packages for final delivery to schools nationwide. Packages are in the UPS network by the second day and to the schools within a week.

This allowed Neff to remove multiple handling steps, driving more efficiency into their entire factory outflows, including some orders that were previously shipped to the U.S. by sea and then again to schools. It also allowed Neff to increase its web orders by taking single-unit orders online and shipping finished jacket orders direct to students or parents — a great service advantage.

“Neff has managed to compress its entire order-to-delivery cycle,” said Loos. “By providing faster, more cost-effective turn times, it has created a stronger competitive position for us with the added benefit of greater customer satisfaction. That’s a true win-win.”

Simplifying customs, increasing visibility
Shipment consolidation offers another advantage that improves Neff’s on-time delivery — simplified customs clearance. With individual packages grouped into one shipment, they clear customs as one shipment leaving the Dominican Republic and entering the U.S.

Working with customs in the Dominican Republic to further expedite the process, UPS supplied an x-ray machine that cuts down on the number of boxes that have to be opened for inspection. This visibility minimizes disruption in the clearance process and helps maintain the integrity of Neff’s shipments.

Neff has greater visibility now, too, with the ability to track shipments from dock to door, an asset for them and their customers.

Flex® Global View allows the company to better plan production and delivery with visibility of offshore freight shipments, whether raw materials coming into the Dominican Republic, or finished jackets going out. And once in the U.S., Quantum View® tracks individual packages all the way to delivery, with email notifications to alert customers of shipment status.

A letter-perfect supply chain solution
UPS came through for Neff, delivering a more efficient supply chain, end to end from sourcing to sales. “We’re now a one-stop shop in the Dominican Republic,” Loos said. “And the day after product ships from there, it’s on a brown truck headed to a customer in the U.S.”

Per-unit transportation costs have been reduced through consolidated export shipments from the Dominican Republic, which also have helped accounting with one bill for faster reconciliation. In addition, the simplified customs clearance process reduces transit time and the chance for costly delays, improving on-time delivery, which is critical for school customers that need product for a specific event.

And with added visibility, letting schools know what’s coming and when, the customer experience has gotten even better, leading to more repeat business and a stronger selling proposition.

Together, Neff and UPS make an unbeatable team.

“Trade Direct has been a strategic solution for us. It helps us provide the most consistent, dependable and cost-effective delivery option from plant to customer.”

— Jeff Loos
Director of Offshore Manufacturing Neff

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