



Five Ways to Turn Your Retail-Returns Frown Upside Down

A UPS Returns® Expert Shares Insights and Tips that Can Eliminate Hassles — and Even Boost Sales

Take a “straw poll” of small- to mid-size business owners and you’re likely to find a lot of negative feelings coming to the surface on the topic of returns. After all, returned products translate to lost revenue, unhappy customers and increased expenses.

The silver lining: Improving the customer experience can make a huge difference, according to James Brill, Reverse Logistics Marketing Manager at UPS in Atlanta. He shared key factors that will help to mitigate return problems, and tips that help get more leverage from UPS Returns solutions you are already using:

- 1. Implement a clear returns policy.** “Your client base needs to know where you stand on returns, in terms of what you will do and not do,” Brill says. Any murkiness or lack of clarity is likely to result in customers not buying. “A clearly worded, easily accessible policy, with no legalese, is a positive for consumers on their path to purchase,” Brill says.
 - **Tip:** Now is the time to take a close look at your returns policy to ensure that it is easy to understand, and differentiates between returns and exchanges. Best practice retailers place links on the home page and the shopping cart area to reduce cart abandonment. Consider adding an 800-number or click/chat for personal contact.
- 2. Have an easy returns process.** “Your returns process needs to be as consumer-centric as possible,” Brill says. Using the UPS Returns portfolio, for example, you can send a return label with the product, or provide a link so they can download a prepaid label from the seller site. You might also provide a link to the UPS® location finder so they can easily find the nearest drop box or UPS Access Point®.
 - **Tip:** To make returns as “hassle-free” as possible, track the most common questions and create a “returns”

FAQ that answers the most common ones, such as your requirements regarding product condition and packaging.

- 3. Streamline your refund process.** “First and foremost on the consumer’s mind is how soon they’ll get their money back,” Brill says. Some shippers make this difficult by dragging their feet, he says, but a better strategy is more consumer friendly. “Several large retailers take this approach: The sooner we make a customer happy, the sooner they will go back to our website and buy something different.”
 - **Tip:** “Use UPS technology and visibility to see the progress of a return package once it is scanned into UPS’s system — or trigger the refund upon delivery back to the seller,” says Brill. “Make the refunds process and timeline easy for shoppers to understand.”
- 4. View returns as an opportunity.** A customer will call, email, text or otherwise say they are unhappy with what they received from you. “A merchant can use this point of contact to save the sale, prevent the return and improve customer satisfaction,” he says. Some companies even train customer service staff to probe for the real reason for the return. Maybe the customer just needs help with assembly, or to better understand specific product features. “You may be able to up-sell them — or at least convince them to reconsider the item wanting to make a return.”
 - **Tip:** Customer feedback is golden, Brill says. “Use it to understand the ‘why’ behind returns, so you can take action to correct problems. Best-practice retailers track both positive and negative comments, especially on social media, and develop metrics or KPIs to improve their scores year over year.”

To learn more about turning returns and reverse logistics into a competitive advantage, visit [UPS Returns](#). For more on the UPS Returns Manager, click [here](#).