PBD Goes Paperless on International Shipments

PBD Worldwide Fulfillment Services provides a full range of product fulfillment services to associations, publishers and corporations. The company has more than 480,000 square feet of warehouse space in distribution centers in Alpharetta, Ga.; Duluth, Ga.; Chicago; Mechanicsburg, Penn.; Exton, Penn.; and Hong Kong.

The Challenge

PBD processes more than 115,000 packages a month. As the company’s international business continued to grow, PBD had asked UPS for a service like UPS Paperless Invoice for the last several years as part of its “blue sky list.”

Paperless Invoice allows shipments to clear customs in 110 countries using electronic data instead of error-prone paper forms. Because information is prompted and stored electronically by standard UPS shipping systems like WorldShip®, ConnectShip™, CampusShip™ and Internet Shipping, shippers greatly reduce their chance of making manual errors when filling out customs documentation or losing the documentation all together.

According to Steve Hochradel, assistant vice president of distribution for PBD, lost paperwork was the company’s biggest international shipping challenge. Because of the different time zones involved, a lost-paperwork shipment could result in a 72-hour delay before the problem was resolved. With international volume growing at about 250 percent over the last couple of years, PBD found these delays unacceptable.

The Solution

Prior to Paperless Invoice, PBD had to key in a plethora of information, including address fields and information on what was being shipped, then print three copies of the commercial invoice, stuff them in a clear plastic pouch and attach the pouch to the shipment. Copies would have to be removed at points along the package’s journey. It was a “manual and tedious” process, according to Hochradel.

“Now when a package comes in, we just scan the barcode and it automatically populates ConnectShip. What was taking 20 seconds is now down to less than five. In addition to eliminating the company’s lost paperwork problem, Paperless Invoice has reduced some of the “headaches” associated with international shipping. “Some countries require a signature in blue ink. UPS now has a copy of my signature and our letterhead, and they can print it out as needed.”

Steve Hochradel
assistant vice president of distribution, PBD
“Now when a package comes in, we just scan the barcode and it automatically populates ConnectShip,” he said. “What was taking 20 seconds is now down to less than five. With a peak volume of over 3,000 pieces (per day), saving 15 seconds on each — that’s a lot of time and money.”

Paperless Invoice also saves PBD about two pallets of copy paper a year, and about 150 toner cartridges. “That adds up to several thousand dollars, and I’m not sure how many trees,” Hochradel said.

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**International UPS Returns**

Approximately 35 percent of PBD’s international shipping volume is delivered to residential customers. Getting product returned across borders can be particularly difficult – so much so that PBD, like many companies, would simply abandon some packages.

“Depending on the value of the package, sometimes the transportation, time and labor needed to process the return just weren’t worth it,” Hochadrel said.

To simplify this process, PBD now uses CampusShip to process international returns. “To be able to just shoot the customer a return shipping label (by e-mail) is a really nice feature to have,” Hochadrel said.

In addition to providing a return shipping label by e-mail, UPS Returns provides the international shipper with the option to send a return shipping label and commercial invoice to the consignee via local post. UPS can also bring the label and commercial invoice to the consignee’s location and pick up the package.

UPS Returns and UPS Paperless Invoice are based upon UPS’s unmatched technology. UPS can help move goods and get them returned with UPS technology providing tracking, visibility and billing solutions every step of the way.