

For nearly 25 years, this section has engaged and enlightened with expertise and insight from industry insiders and leading contributors. Tackling the challenges confronting shippers today, from leveraging data to rooting out inefficiencies, Logistics Knowledge Base provides impactful advice and actionable takeaways. Get the information you need from today's logistics leaders to drive transformative change at your enterprise today.

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5 Ways to Keep Your Supply Chain on Track in 2021's Unprecedented Peak Season

Peak season 2021 is gearing up to be one of the most active in recent history. If your business is often unprepared for shipping surges, this peak season won't be any easier.



The good thing is, right now is the optimal time to start planning for peak season. You should have a good idea for your forecast, so putting a strategy in motion now can be the difference between letting 2021's demand environment get the best of your budget or staying ahead of the curve. While you plan your strategy, here are five key things to keep in mind:

1. Quality of Forecasting

More than ever, quality of forecasting is critical to preplan capacity for your network, but that's just half the battle these days. Having an open, continuous channel of communication to your supply chain stakeholders to revise and change forecasting can help avoid last-minute changes and costly spot market coverage.

2. Scheduling Flexibility

Everybody is focused on getting product on the shelf, but when you're laser focused on a rigid transit schedule, you might be leaving some savings on the table. There are cost-effective ways to still drive supply chain performance, including flexible pickup windows and delivery days, which can oftentimes open up the carrier network to a broader array of providers and create competition for your freight.

3. Alternative Modes of Transportation

If the goal is to get your product off your shipping dock, paying a carrier a premium to pick up freight today when the delivery time doesn't matter won't help keep the budget in check. Be open to alternative modes of transportation where you can sacrifice speed to market

for significant savings with steady pickup performance. Modes like intermodal or LTL consolidation can help find savings while keeping your network moving.

4. Avoid the Spot Market—Or Better Yet, Single Source It

The tables often turn during peak season, where shippers are sometimes forced to compete for available capacity on the spot market just to get their goods moving. Working with a provider that has a fully outsourced transactional freight product, like Hub Group's Complete Spot solution, can help you gain access to greater buying power through a bundled carrier spend with better coverage for all shipments.

5. Align with a Proven Provider

Collaboration is always rewarded in logistics. If you're already struggling to get ahead in today's demand climate, working with a 3PL that can put your network on their shoulders is a wise decision. They can use proven processes, dedicated teams, expert leadership, and a 100% focus on customer success to gracefully lead your supply chain through 2021's peak season.

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—By Chris Hoffmeister



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For more than 50 years, Hub Group has helped customers meet their needs during retail peak season with a focus on service, integrity, and innovation. For more information, visit www.hubgroup.com or contact your Hub Group representative today.

3PLs in Agriculture: Know the Roots of the Industry to Make Your Impact

From LTL and dedicated route service to seasonal and year-round storage, 3PLs need to be well versed in the space to meet the specialized needs of agriculture companies.



For third-party logistics companies, serving the agriculture industry requires more than moving commodities from point A to point B. Whether it is transportation, seasonal and year-round storage, or another operation entirely, there is specific knowledge to be learned in order to effectively manage these types of businesses.

Agriculture companies have a unique set of needs that require a 3PL partner to be well versed in the space. Here is what you should know to successfully serve the industry:

Embrace seasonality. Like growers that plant in the spring and harvest in the fall, 3PLs have to work around the industry's seasonality. When something needs to be done, it's not possible to push it off. After all, tomorrow could be a "rain day." From spring input to summer maintenance and fall take-down of crops, 3PLs have to react within a specific time frame.

Be flexible. Agriculture clients must be able to trust their 3PL partners to get the job done, day after day, year after year. This can include on-time LTL and dedicated route service performance,

as well as any services the agriculture business may need: warehouse space, people, forklifts, trucks, drivers, trailers, customer pickups, and expertise in warehousing and transportation. As a 3PL serving the industry, we help our client Growmark with next-day LTL and dedicated route delivery services to all of their Southern Illinois co-op member locations during the peak farming season running from March through June.

Invest in equipment. Agriculture is thought to be old-fashioned, but the truth is, it's one of the most technologically advanced industries in the world. From farming equipment run solely by GPS to forecasting weather, the industry is advancing rapidly. As a 3PL, you may have to invest in agriculture-specific equipment like hopper-bottom trailers to ensure you have what it takes to meet your clients' needs.

Leverage location. Pursue partnerships that make sense from a geographic standpoint. NOTS Logistics' location near the center of the Midwest's farming universe in Southern Illinois has proven to be a perfect fit for many agriculture companies to easily reach their customers throughout the region.

Grow together. Be prepared to grow alongside your clients. The industry is rapidly consolidating, with big firms getting bigger and smaller players getting squeezed. You must change, evolve, and adapt to customer supply chain requirements. The bigger companies are looking for strategic alliances to grow and need a reliable 3PL to be there to flex up and down. Growmark just recently expanded their service area into several other states and asked NOTS Logistics to help with this expansion. We not only built these new warehouses but also manage all phases of logistics for the company. We are working together to find new opportunities around inventories, warehouse space, transportation, equipment, and potential future locations.

Like many other industries, agriculture is experiencing supply chain challenges, with prices going through the roof. As a 3PL, you must be fully committed to the industry and knowledgeable of the local market—and it certainly doesn't hurt to have a personal interest in agriculture. Not every 3PL is equipped to serve the industry, but for those who are, it's nice to have a niche.

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Combating Labor Shortages: New Warehouse Tech Offers a Competitive Edge

Innovative technology combats unpredictability and streamlines processes. An augmented, connected worker is more efficient and more valuable than ever before.



As we've learned over the past year and a half, unanticipated changes to the supply chain can have a massive ripple effect on warehouses and entire industries. The COVID-19 pandemic created logistical obstacles and made getting goods from point A to point Z a lot more difficult.

Moreover, U.S. labor shortages have posed a challenge: There are major worker shortages in the United States and e-commerce, a surging industry, feels that. According to Indeed, there are more than 7 million open jobs across the country.

One of our premium partners is Procensis. Their clients seek network, device, and convergence technologies to achieve effective workflows, and ultimately, gain a competitive edge. Jobs are available, which means people have an increasing number of choices when looking for jobs, and they often look for those with improved technology that allows them to receive incentives.

Innovative technology is indeed paving the way for countering the unexpected and helping companies increase productivity, while combating unpredictability and streamlining processes. Mastering micro efficiencies helps companies see the bigger picture and prepare for whatever may come. New technology is also

empowering workers—an augmented, connected worker is more efficient and more valuable than ever before.

The Challenges of the New Warehouse

With the global shift toward e-commerce, focus on speed and accuracy of distribution has never been more important. Tightening labor markets paired with increased demand are forcing companies to quickly expand their warehouse data entry operations to increase productivity. Retailers and their warehousing and fulfillment operations are caught in the crosshairs of this dramatic shift, as are the technologies, labor, and work site procedures for stocking goods, managing inventories, and fulfilling orders.

Online ordering has dramatically changed the layout of warehouse workflows, how pickers perform their tasks, and the devices and technologies which support them. The explosion in online ordering during the pandemic led to workers each day picking far more “eaches,” or much smaller, individual orders, often one or two items to a box.

That, coupled with a shortage of workers in some companies, creates a need for greater efficiency and connected devices that work together to maximize speed and efficiency.

A Bundled Solution to Maximize Efficiency

New warehouse solutions apply technologies and devices uniquely suited for today's high-velocity e-commerce environment—and support the heightened health and safety needs of essential warehouse workers. To us at ProGlove, it is extremely important to work with organizations that are investing in their workers to ensure they are as productive as possible. And

the more up-to-date technology the warehouse workers have, the easier the job. That can increase worker satisfaction.

Procensis uses two components to solve this problem for customers: a durable smartphone—the Samsung Galaxy XCover Pro—paired with a wearable scanner to collect the data—the ProGlove MARK Display. Such solutions are easily deployable: It can be in workers' hands—ready to use—in as little as five days.

Ivanti Velocity software integrates the units and provides a connecting interface through the wireless network to the warehouse management system (WMS) platform.

Popularity of Hands-Free in the Warehouse

Static workstations and legacy hardware impede productivity. As a consequence, processes can't match the rapid fluctuations in e-commerce transactions. It enables higher pick productivity and safety. Procensis works to overcome this challenge by applying its technology to the forefront. The worker is hands-free for tasks such as climbing a ladder or operating a forklift.

Upgrading to a mobile-first strategy and enabling workers with untethered wearable solutions addresses these issues. When access to materials handling systems is optimized for worker ergonomics with smart wearables, companies will see gains in accuracy and efficiency.

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—By Axel Schmidt

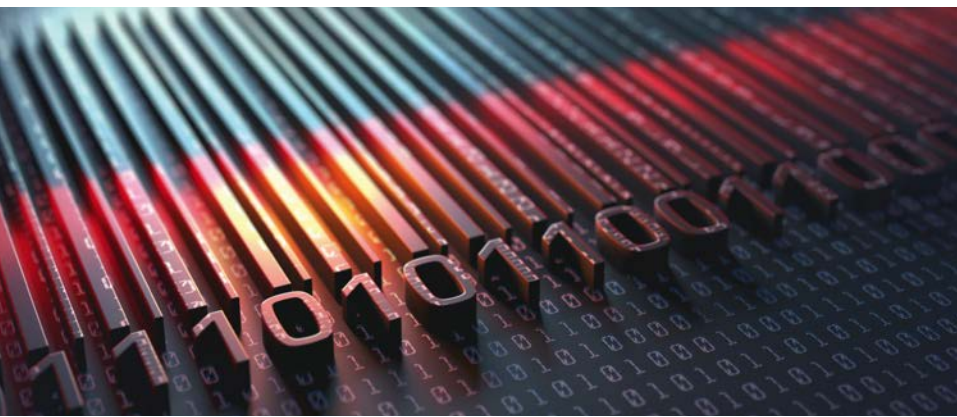
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ProGlove's leading industry solutions are available at Procensis. For more information visit: procensis.com

Need Speed Across the Supply Chain? It's All About the Barcode.

To streamline warehousing processes, one of the smartest places to start is also one of the simplest—barcode label printing.



The Amazon effect was already straining supply chains in early 2020, but the pandemic amplified the challenges even more. We learned speed and efficiency in warehouse and distribution center operations are critical to the success of the supply chain.

Managers in these industries are following the lead of their e-commerce peers and looking at ways to streamline their receiving and warehouse processes. One of the smartest places to start is also one of the simplest—barcode label printing.

SMB warehouses still running on 10-year-old labeling technology (and there are many) must first realize that getting the labeling process under control is the first step to efficiency. Newer barcode solutions that deliver immediate efficiency improvements, *plus* quick ROI, are proving to be well worth the investment.

Upgrading to newer barcode solutions that speak the language of today's supply chain saves time and helps ensure accurate information at every key warehouse station, including:

- **Receiving:** Applying barcode labels as soon as inbound items arrive ensures they can be accurately unloaded, checked-in, put away, or handled by automated applications.
- **Picking:** Generating labels for each item picked allows them to be scanned in a staging or packing area where they are easily sorted for shipment.
- **Packaging:** Creating new labels is vital for identifying finished goods that you have kitted, assembled, or packaged.
- **Shipping and returns:** Ship-to order applications can incorporate customer-specific labeling, scanning to fulfill orders, and generating return shipping labels and paperwork that include time-saving credit and put-away location data.
- **Cross-docking:** Ideal for time-sensitive or fast-moving goods, cross-docking sends inbound items out again without their spending time in your facility. Warehouse workers with mobile printers and scanners can hop inside inbound trucks at the dock and start relabeling cartons for store or customer delivery, increasing the efficiency of that important last-mile delivery.

Select the right barcode printer.

To print crisp, scannable labels at strikingly high speeds, all day or night, industrial tabletop models like the new Brother *Titan Industrial Printer Series* are optimal. And Brother takes it a step further by offering seamless integration to existing WMS systems, best-in-class warranties, and unparalleled life-time-of-product support.

For more compact 4-inch printing, a high-performance industrial desktop label printer is best. The Brother *TD-4* series delivers market-leading performance, connectivity, ease of use, and very competitive pricing. This format is ideally suited for the SMB warehouse.

For truly mobile printing from forklifts and pallet jacks, to carts, to wearable mobility—lightweight yet rugged printers like the *RuggedJet 4 Series* from Brother enable mobile printing on the go, anywhere inside or outside the four walls.

In today's competitive environment, there's no room for failure. To achieve 100% scannable labels, opt for reliable, quality label printers with the right technology for your application.

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How Short-Term Bids Can Produce Long-Term Benefits

Mini-bids act as a supplemental strategy, providing short-term revisions to rein in costs and shore up routing guides. You need accurate data to execute a mini-bid strategy.



What's the best way to repair a broken routing guide? In these days of continued upheaval, the question comes up often, with widespread market disruptions and network imbalances leaving many supply chain experts scrambling for solutions.

At a recent roundtable discussion, members of the Freight Market Intelligence Consortium—a group of leading shippers who rely on analytics from DAT iQ—discussed the rising adoption of mini-bids.

While not designed to eliminate the annual procurement process, mini-bids act as a supplemental strategy, providing short-term revisions to rein in costs and shore up failing routing guides. It's an approach that's been used for decades, but now with access to cutting-edge freight analytics, the strategy is becoming more and more common.

In general, there are four trigger events for a mini-bid.

1. Network Expansion

Whether you're introducing a new product that requires new inbound lanes or adding new regional markets that require new outbound lanes, expanding your network requires contract rates for

new lanes that weren't in scope at the time of your annual procurement cycle.

2. Distressed, Failing Carriers

When markets become volatile, some carriers may fail to meet expected service levels. And when volatility continues for an extended period, some carriers may be forced to close operations.

In either scenario, you need new options for the lanes those carriers serviced, and targeted mini-bid events are an approach to getting back on track and/or testing new service providers.

3. Tight Capacity

When capacity is tight and spot rates exceed contract rates, carriers may turn down shipments or ask for higher rates. In some cases, a carrier could be seeking these rates for a short period as a way to reposition equipment to a different region.

In these scenarios, the carrier's actions may indirectly initiate a mini-bid process that ultimately helps you strengthen your long-term relationship.

Tight market conditions that lead to routing guide failures and spot-market premiums can cause you to spend budget at an unsustainable pace. Mini-bids can help contain costs in these conditions. You

can even anticipate seasonal spikes and plan a mini-bid proactively.

4. Soft Markets

When capacity is plentiful, spot rates might drop well below your contract rates. A wide gap might initiate a mini-bid to lower your rates and align more closely to the market. However, you may want to honor these contract rates as a bargaining chip for future scenarios when the tables turn and the carrier is tempted to refuse contract rates.

Regardless of what triggers the event, you need the most accurate and reliable data to execute a successful mini-bid strategy. That includes up-to-date insights into daily changing truckload rates, plus the ability to benchmark your network's performance against the overall market.

With that 360°-view, your operations will have the agility and insights to respond to markets in real time, empowering your transportation teams to make clear and confident decisions.

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—By Ken Adamo



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