2021 Peak delivery trends

The future of ecommerce peak season is here

After last year's 'shipageddon', ecommerce peak volumes are set to soar to even greater heights. What trends will emerge this year, and how can retailers manage demand while remaining competitive?

In this report we share our own delivery data and insights from our top customers to help retailers plan for peak in the 'next normal'.
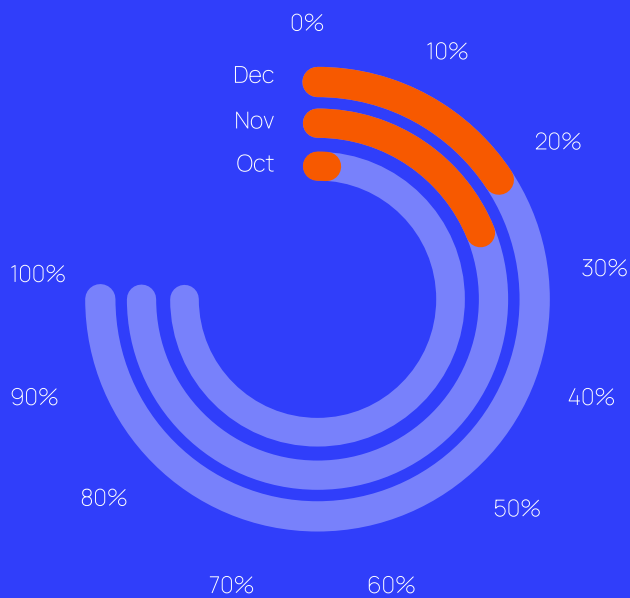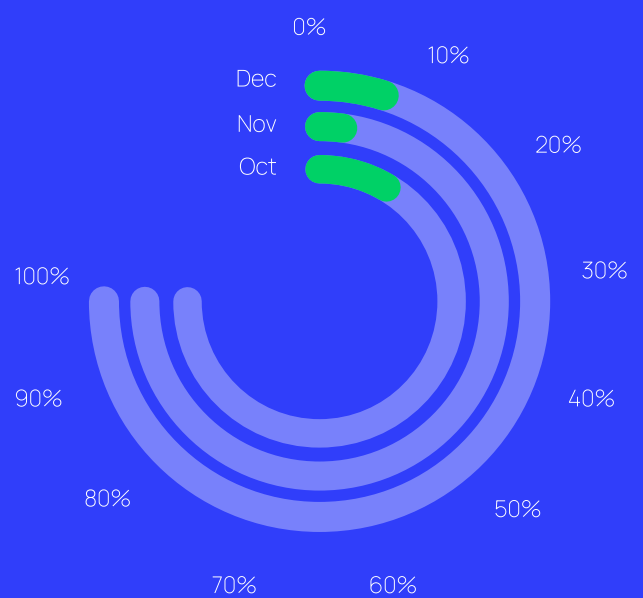
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Global peak delivery volumes YoY growth

Last year, peak delivery broke all records. While growth may be slowing down this year, we're still predicting global year-on-year growth throughout the entire peak period.
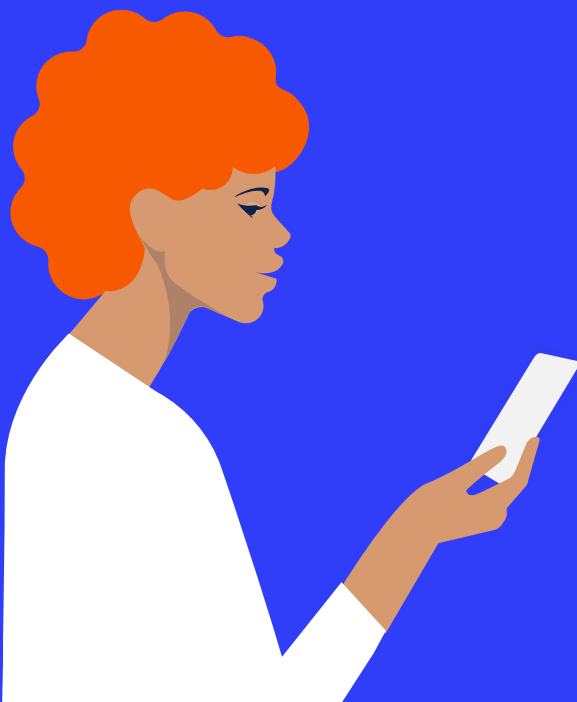
2020

0%
10%
Dec
Nov
20%
Oct
30%
100%
40%
90%
50%
80%
70%   60%

2021 (projected)

0%
10%
Dec
Nov
20%
Oct
30%
100%
40%
90%
50%
80%
70%   60%

10.7%

**predicted YoY growth
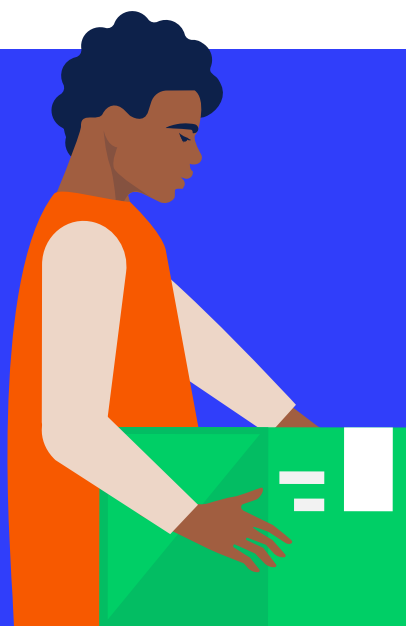for Ecommerce Peak 2021**

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Annual delivery index
(Global volumes indexed from September)

Ecommerce delivery volumes used to stay relatively steady in the leadup to traditional peak, but this year we've seen peaks and troughs due to the intermittent closure of non-essential physical retail.

View all countries

Chart legend: 2019, 2020, 2021, 2021 (projected)
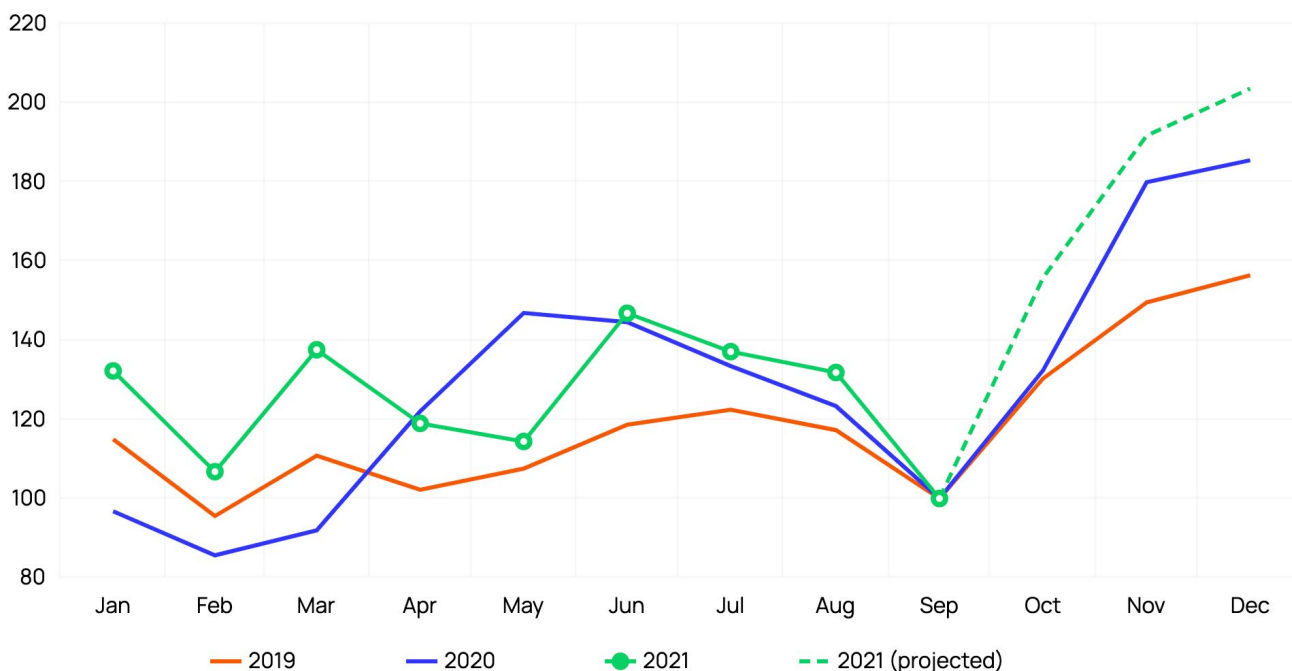
99% predicted growth in US delivery volumes between January and December 2021

Even if growth will decelerate somewhat, we're still predicting a rise on the astronomical ecommerce delivery volumes witnessed at the height of COVID-19.

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# The critical case for carrier contingency

Just when we thought ecommerce peak season couldn't get any bigger, 2021 is on track to break all the records set in 2020. Another record-breaking peak is good news for retailers, but it's not without risk. Volumes like these will place additional pressure on supply chains and carrier networks still under strain from the COVID-19 crisis, as well as new challenges like labor shortages, and flooding in Europe and China.

Consumers were understanding of shortages and delays at the beginning of the pandemic, but poor performance at this point will almost certainly translate into customer churn.

When pressure is combined with uncertainty, contingency planning becomes imperative. Retailers need access to a full suite of carriers to safeguard their delivery proposition in case their usual network becomes overloaded. Carrier diversity usually enables retailers to provide an equally diverse suite of delivery options. This will help retailers convert, especially as we get further into peak season and time pressure mounts. If a customer leaves their holiday shopping to the last minute, tactics like 'ship from the store' can help them get their order faster, while delivery options like 'click and collect' or PUDO collection can bring delivery timeframes forward.
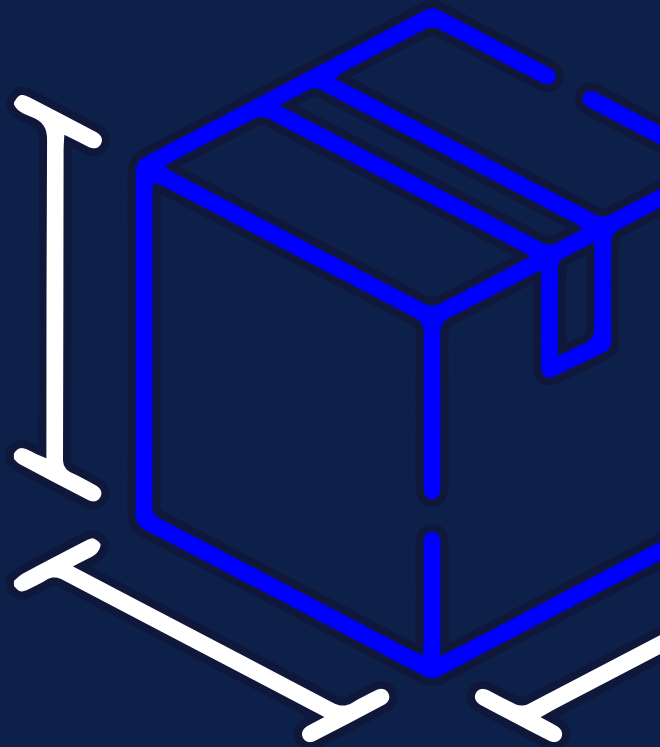
82%

was the highest YoY growth reached in 2020, which took place in May. However the largest absolute volumes were seen between October and December.

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Effortlessly manage unpredictable demands

Metapack's shipping software helps the most successful retailers integrate with the world's largest network of 400+ carriers and 4,900+ shipping services.
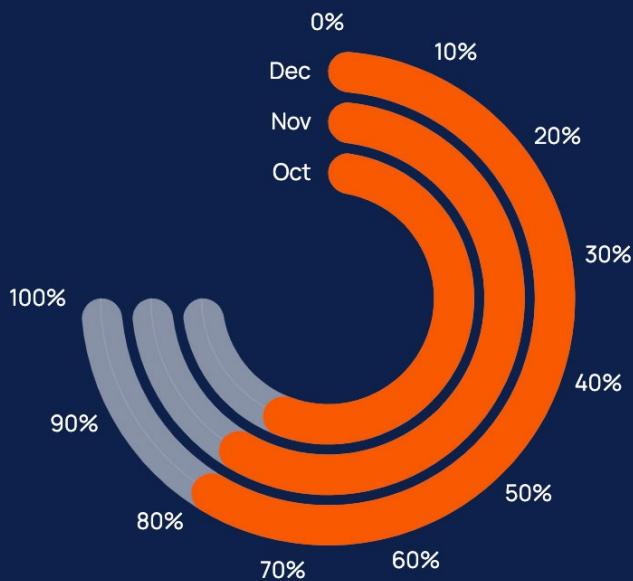
Generate fully compliant shipping labels and customs documents in lightning-fast speeds and add new services effortlessly via one integration. Shipping software helps you react quickly to unanticipated rises in demand and handle massive volmues with ease.

Learn more about Shipping Software

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Predicted share of Peak 2021 delivery volumes – international vs domestic

Domestic

0%
10%
Dec
Nov
20%
Oct
30%
100%
40%
90%
50%
80%
60%
70%

International

0%
10%
Dec
Nov
20%
Oct
30%
100%
40%
90%
50%
80%
60%
70%
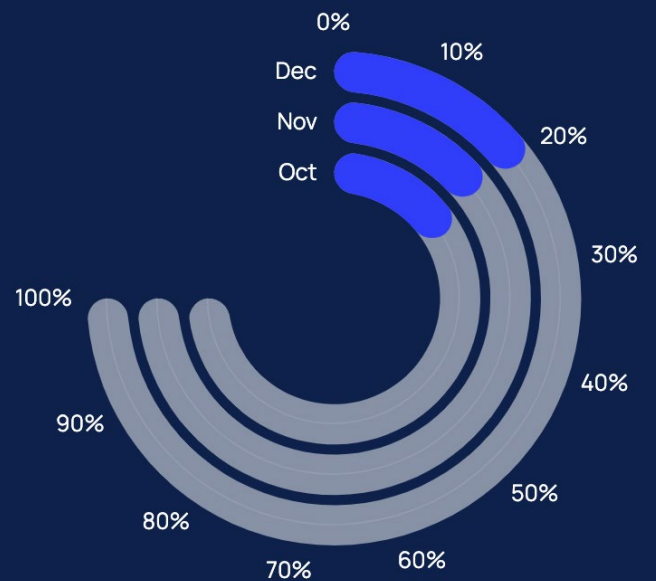
In Peak 2020, Health & Beauty delivery volumes grew by

70%

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Predicted share of Peak 2021 deliveries by service type

Standard

78%

Signature

12%

Next Day
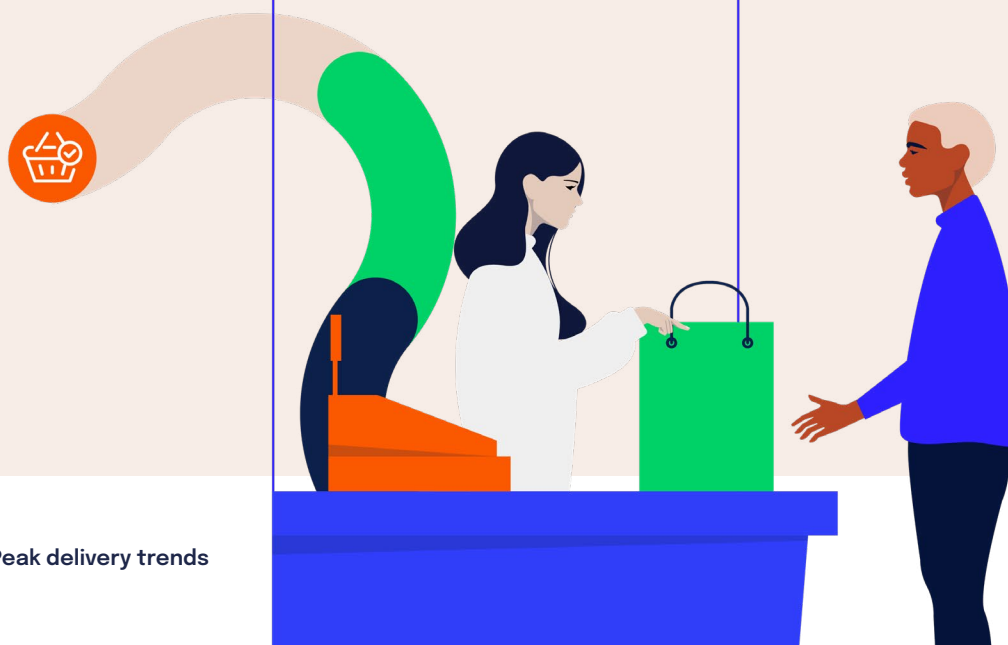
4%

PUDO

3%

Weekend

1%

Same Day

0.5%

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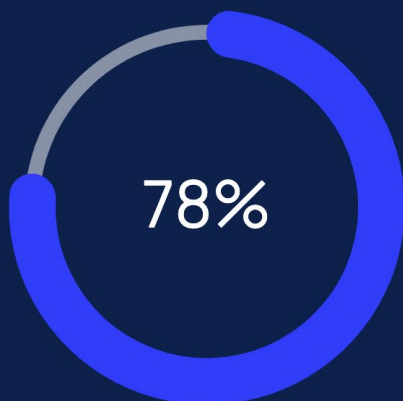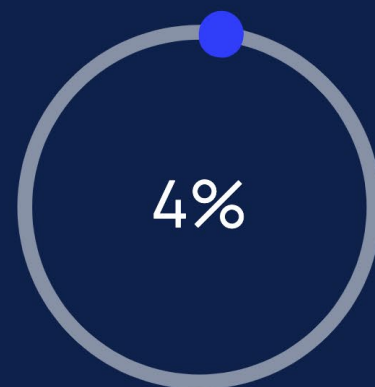
'Out of home' delivery: The one to watch in Peak 2021

Watch the video

If there's one delivery mode to watch this season, it's 'out of home'. While home delivery remained the unsurprising favorite during lockdown, methods like lockers, PUDOs and in-store pickup are growing in popularity.

They attribute this rise to the accessibility of their lockers, many of which are located at supermarkets or petrol stations that remained open and well-frequented during lockdowns.

This peak retail season, as the world gradually begins to reopen, we predict consumers will start favoring delivery methods that complement their

reclaimed lives outside the home. For example, customers who get their orders delivered to PUDOs or lockers won't need to worry about missing their delivery when they get called into the office - they can just stop by the locker box at the supermarket on their way home.

2%

growth in locker volumes from a carrier Metapack works with

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Delivery Options to convert this peak season

With Metapack Delivery Options API, you can offer customers the certainty that their order will arrive when they need it.

Your customer sees accurate delivery timeframes displayed on the product page, as well as delivery options that take into account your stock availability and location. So you never make a delivery promise you can't keep.

Learn more about Delivery Options

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Delivery experience as a retention tool

Ecommerce peak season is always a huge customer acquisition opportunity. But it is also a major customer retention risk.

Our research shows that more than one third of consumers would change retailers after a negative delivery experience. This peak season is clearly not one to compromise on delivery experience.

Great delivery requires something more than just delivering customers the products they want – it involves providing an overall experience they wish to repeat. By communicating better with customers, retailers can minimize the negative effect of delays while also providing the transparent and empowering experience customers want.

Metapack customers use our tracking portal to centralize the tracking experience under their own brand and provide consistent and standardized updates regardless of the carrier. This allows the retailer's site to serve as a one-stop shop and means it does not have to rely on carriers to uphold its customer experience.

Learn more about Delivery Tracker

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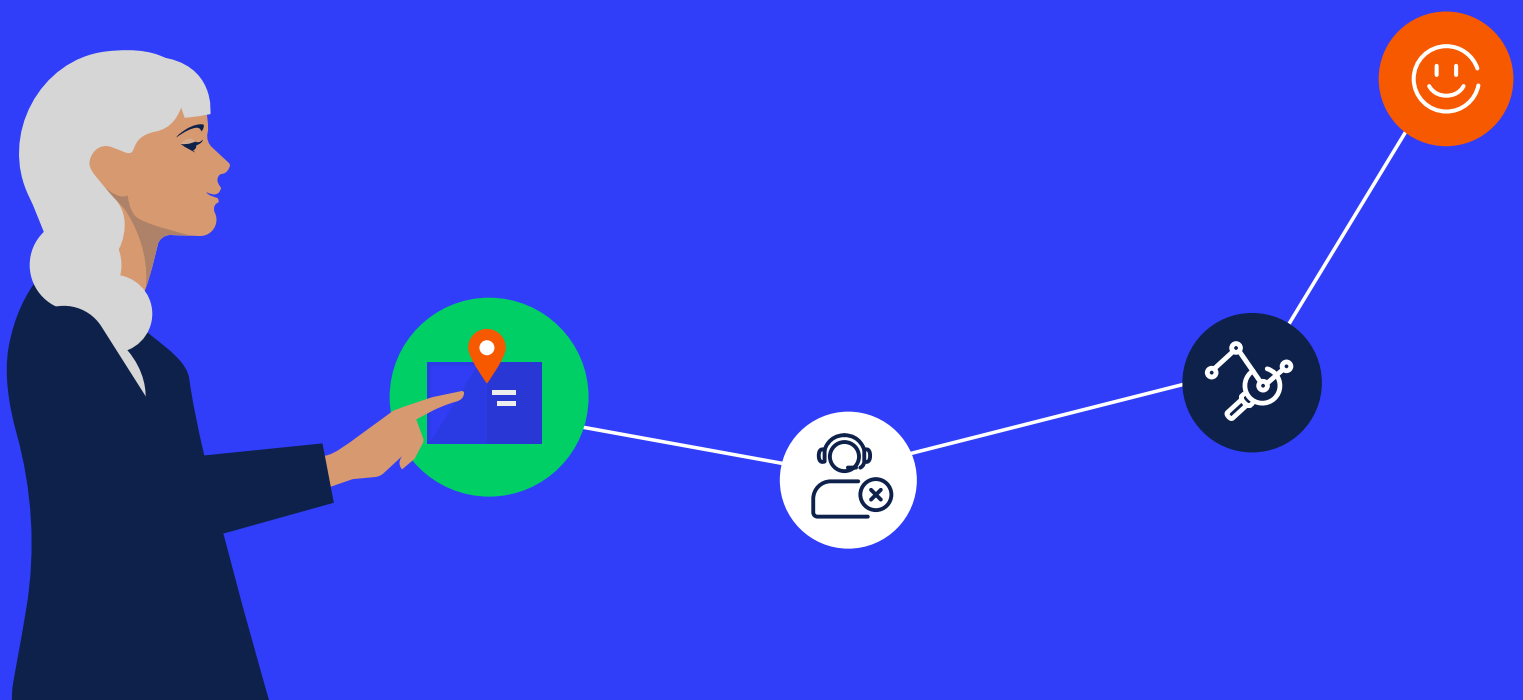
Get set for record returns

Like it or not, returns are an unavoidable part of ecommerce peak. And in 2021, returns are predicted to reach record heights. The trick is viewing them as part of a loyalty-building delivery experience, as opposed to a simple nuisance. And of course, using data, automation and forward-planning to limit their impact doesn't hurt either!

Metapack's own clients use our Returns Portal to provide their customers with a simple self-service experience that reduces the usual friction of returns. However, a solution like this also provides them with real-time returns data, which can help them plan for the items coming back into their inventory, as well as providing invaluable insights into the reasons why their customers are returning certain product lines.

Learn more about Returns Portal

81%

of consumers had a bad delivery experience in 2020, which was a five time increase on the previous year.

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Metapack: your partner for Ecommerce Peak

Metapack helps the world's most successful online retailers and brands provide simple yet powerful delivery experiences during peak and beyond.

Our delivery management solutions are underpinned by the largest global carrier network – 400 carriers and 4,900 delivery services – supported by the most responsive and highly available API on the market.

That means more ways to get your products where they need to go, no matter how high peak volumes rise.

Combined with solutions for dynamic delivery options at checkout, user-friendly tracking, and simple returns and exchanges, your customers get more choice, more convenience and more confidence. Meanwhile, you can ship orders more economically, and win back precious time for your operational team.

It's all part of our mission to make ecommerce effortless, everywhere.

How much could you save on shipping?

Discover our transparent pricing

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