

How Build-A-Bear Pivoted to Omnichannel Fulfillment in Just 4 Weeks

RESULTS

- ✓ 4-week Implementation timeline for Ship from Store
- ✓ Average of 2,400 orders/week shipped from stores, doubling initial goal
- ✓ 30% surge in ecommerce volumes during COVID

““ We realized that execution had to happen on the backend to create the ideal experience.



BACKGROUND

For the last 25 years, Build-A-Bear has been a place where loved ones can come together and unleash their creativity to create a one-of-a-kind plush animal. And they have shown us all that not even a global pandemic can threaten their commitment to spreading love, one stuffed animal at a time.

THE STORY

COVID-19 started spreading across the United States in early 2020, shuttering brick-and-mortar stores that rely on foot traffic for sales. Some of them never opened again.

A record 12,200 stores in the United States permanently closed in 2020, representing a 22% increase over closures in 2019. Retailers vacated about 159 million square feet (about half the area of Chicago O'Hare airport) of space in 2020 after struggling to keep businesses moving forward during the pandemic. Big-name shopping mall stalwarts like J.C. Penney, GameStop and GAP closed multiple locations. Well-known retailers like Pier 1 Imports went out of business altogether.

Build-A-Bear, another brand traditionally found in malls, found a silver lining in COVID-19's first year. How? One of the key factors was an omnichannel ecommerce strategy—including Ship from Store (SFS), curbside pickup, and Buy Online Pick Up in Store (BOPIS)—powered by a pair of technology providers. This strategy not only kept revenue flowing, but it also put associates back to work who had been sidelined by the pandemic.

LAUNCHING SHIP-FROM-STORE WITH DECK COMMERCE

Most retailers have seen an uptick in ecommerce volume over the last 18 months. However, for retailers with strong “in store” experiences, the need to implement a sustainable micro-fulfillment strategy became imperative virtually overnight.

With Deck Commerce OMS, Build-A-Bear was able to pivot their 400+ stores to additional fulfillment locations in just four weeks, both empowering store employees to pick/build, pack, and ship—and getting products closer to their customers.

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LAUNCHING SHIP-FROM-STORE CONT.

Advanced routing logic by Deck Commerce OMS automatically identifies and routes orders to the best store or distribution center for Build-A-Bear based on inventory availability, proximity to customers, and the capacity in the store to process. Additional parameters like preventing split shipments and SKU-based routing are also in place to ensure that the logic applied to routing orders selects the most efficient location to fulfill the order—reducing shipping time and costs.

SHIPENGINE POWERS BUILD-A-BEAR'S FAST, EFFICIENT SHIPPING

While ship-from-store proved a huge operational improvement, there was still one significant inefficiency. After picking and packing, store associates would have to leave the order management system to open FedEx's website in a new tab. There, the associates would enter shipping information and print a shipping label.

The process of printing a shipping label took Build-A-Bear team members 3 or 4 minutes to complete. And, because this process included manual entry of shipping details, it was prone to error.

In partnership with Deck Commerce, Build-A-Bear started exploring shipping solutions that could reduce the time spent printing labels. Build-A-Bear chose ShipEngine as its shipping API since they support the top carriers in the US, Canada, Australia, and the UK and have an easy-to-use self-service portal in Deck Commerce for printing shipping labels.

THE SOLUTION

Now, after Build-A-Bear associates pack boxes and print packing slips, they can simply click a "print a label" button within the order management system's user interface. With one click, Build-A-Bear employees generate the shipping label quickly and without worrying about transferring information manually (and double checking for errors).

The ShipEngine + Deck Commerce integration reduced the amount of time Build-A-Bear employees spent creating shipping labels from 3 or 4 minutes to just seconds. Just two months after launch, Build-A-Bear had already used the new integration to print 12,000 labels to ship orders from the store - with an impressive 2,400 orders shipping from stores each week. As ship from store allowed Build-A-Bear to get more orders to their customers, they were able to support a 30% increase in ecommerce volume each week and even shipped 70% of their 2021 holiday orders directly from their stores

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