



Primaseller

The Ultimate Guide For Managing Online Sales



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Introduction

There can be many reasons for why you chose to take your business online. Perhaps you have a thriving retail outlet but were looking for global reach. Maybe you've heard from fellow retailers how great it is to be able to sell online with absolutely no geographical restrictions. Maybe, you even started out not with a physical store but by selling online, and are now looking at multiple sales channels to expand further.

Whatever your reasons may be for going online, you may have noticed that online sales bring with them a whole host of issues - no longer does a customer walk out of a store and deem the transaction complete. You have to worry about everything, from inventory and shipping to returns and replacements. So in essence, your product isn't sold when a customer buys it; it is well and truly sold only when the product reaches the customer in perfect condition and you don't receive a return within a stipulated period of time.

Managing online sales doesn't have to be the daunting task it seems like. In this handy guide, you'll find answers to several questions you have in mind, as well as simple tips to troubleshoot problems along the way. Wherever relevant, we also show you how you can use Primaseller to help make the process easier.

Planning and Fulfillment

This is the very first step of selling online, or anywhere else. If you are a retailer of ready-made products that you sourced from a vendor, you will be keeping track of a few things in the planning phase:



- The number of products you have in stock.
- The sales trends for these products.
- A broad idea of seasonal variations and how to plan for them.
- Discounts, sales and when you should offer them.

In order to maintain optimal inventory levels, you'll also keep track of your reorder level and reorder quantity so you know how long it takes to replace inventory before you run out of stock.

If you are a small business that also manufactures the products it sells, you'll have to keep track of inventory in two separate segments - raw material inventory and finished product inventory. This is on top of everything else that we've mentioned above. Naturally, in this case, the raw material inventory depends on the vendor's fulfillment time.

For understanding your finished product's inventory parameters, you need to use the processing time and speed of the raw material.

Sounds confusing, doesn't it? If you want to know more about inventory management and get down to the very basics of calculating stock levels, reorder levels and how much you need to reorder each time, take a look at our [Complete Guide To Inventory Management For Retailers](#).

In online sales, fulfillment of orders you receive is just as important as the planning phase. Say you sell antique, refurbished wall clocks. Each of the clocks you have in stock will be identified by its unique 'name', called a **Stock Keeping Unit** or **SKU**. When you sell online, a customer is ordering a certain product based on the images they see. This order is then brought to your notice for fulfillment, where you identify it by its SKU. Then follows packing, shipping, and inventory adjustment.

In contrast, a Universal Product Code or UPC is common for a certain product across all retailers. For example, UPC 040000000327 always means Peanut M&Ms. As a retailer, you always need to match a product's UPC to the SKU you've chosen for it.

As though these two weren't enough to cause confusion, sellers such as Amazon also have another code called the Amazon Standard Identification Number (ASIN). This is Amazon's way of tagging each of your products as unique. If you're selling on Amazon and you don't have your SKU mapped to Amazon's ASIN, you'll have received an order, but you have no way of knowing what product that random bunch of ten characters stands for.

Here's a quick list of things you need to look for in this phase:

- Ensure you have your listed products in stock, else [raise purchase request from your vendor](#).
- If you're a manufacturer, ensure the finished product is ready within the promised delivery time.
- Once you receive an order, match the product SKU, UPC and ASIN (if sold on Amazon).

In [Primaseller](#), there's a much more sophisticated way of handling inventory and fulfillment. We addressed everything about inventory in the guide mentioned earlier, so let's talk about fulfillment. In the Primaseller Dashboard, you can see all of your sales channels in one place. Under the column named 'Unmapped', you will be able to see all of those orders for which the SKUs haven't been matched yet with the relevant products.

In the demo page below, there are no unmapped orders. If you find an unmapped order here, you can immediately update your SKU then and there. Once you map the product to its correct SKU, you won't ever have to worry about this issue cropping up again for that product.

The dashboard shows the following data for 'This Week':

- ORDER VALUE: \$43,200 (Last Week: \$45,800)
- ORDERS RECEIVED: 173 (Last Week: 183)
- ORDER ITEM QUANTITY: 290 (Last Week: 280)

Online Orders Summary

Channels	Orders Received	Returned	Cancelled	Unmapped	Out of stock	Ready To Process
Amazon	\$ 20,735 19 Orders	\$ 0 0 Orders	\$ 500 5 Orders	0	5 Add Stock	5 Process
eBay	\$ 9,000 15 Orders	\$ 800 2Orders	\$ 120 1 Order	0	3 Add Stock	0

Point Of Sale Summary

Store	Orders Created	Returned Orders
Jayanagra	\$ 20,000 107 Orders	\$ 536 5 Orders

Want to take a better look?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Name/ Sku	Amount(\$)	Date & Facility	Status	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Amazon Basics Speaker Seller SKU - Add SKU Channel SKU - abcd123 Order : ABC123456444 Unmapped	115 Unfulfilled	12 Dec 16 Jayanagar	Unpacked	Actions
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lava X8 White Seller SKU - <input type="text"/> Map Channel SKU - eb1276 Order : EBC123456 Unmapped	90 Unfulfilled	12 Dec 16 Jayanagar	Unpacked	Actions Cancel
<input type="checkbox"/>	Lava X8 Black Seller SKU - Add SKU Channel SKU - eb2234 Order : EBC123456 Unmapped	99 Unfulfilled	12 Dec 16 Jayanagar	Unpacked	Actions

Next to each unmapped product, you can see the **Add SKU** prompt. Click on it, manually look for the SKU and click on the 'Map' button. Your order can now be fulfilled.

Packaging



Once you have all your SKUs mapped and know which product a certain customer has bought, it is time to pack it so it is ready to ship. As in the earliest example, if you're a vintage clock retailer, or anyone dealing with delicate products, how you package the product will determine how many returns you get. No one wants a broken product, so it is up to you to ensure it arrives at the customer's doorstep in the best possible condition.

The very basic requirement of packaging is material. Depending on your product, you would want to use a combination of cushioning material, cardboard boxes, and custom packaging. Usually, the innermost box that contains your product could be customized whichever way you like, including all the frills and bows you want to put in. As you move outward with packaging, the focus should always be on functionality. Does this particular layer of packaging material serve the purpose of keeping the product safe? If yes, use it. If not, you know what to do.

Also, consider how the packages may sit on top of each other. You have no control over having a lighter item on top of a heavier one except for putting on a 'Fragile' sticker and getting insurance. This is where the 'This Way Up' signs come in handy - you can pack your product with extra cushioning around the area that will most probably receive the weight of other products.

Then there's the process of preparing an order or a group of orders for shipping. When you have multiple orders that are set to leave from the same facility through a single shipping partner, you'd want to hand over the entire shipment to them through a single manifest. This helps reduce paperwork and gives you an exact idea of what items have gone out of a facility on a particular day.

Here's a quick look at the various steps of packaging:

- Pack items based on their fragility and value.
- Consider the mode of transport - items traveling short distances may not need elaborate packaging, but those traveling by air may need wooden crates.
- When in doubt, add extra cushioning around the product.
- Add all products shipping from a single shipper to a single manifest.

Shipping



If you have the required amount of stock to fulfill all your orders and have assigned a facility from which each of the orders is to be fulfilled, you then move on to shipping. Shipping isn't just about taking a product and handing it to the shipping partner.

In most cases, especially if you deliver products over a wide geographical area, you'll have more than one shipper that you've partnered with. Once you decide which of these shippers will be carrying a certain consignment, you mark all the products in the consignment as ready to ship. You then make arrangements for the consignment to reach the shipper, along with information on what products it has and which locations they need to go to.

You need to make shipping a seamless process because once a customer places an order, there is a finite amount of time within which they

expect to receive their product. Seeing as how this is one step where external partners and a time limit both come into play, shipping can run into several problems.

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Shipping internationally, and through different modes of transport:

Before a package reaches the intended recipient, it most probably makes a long journey through a variety of transport methods. Your packaging needs to account for all the bumps it is going to suffer and be adequate to avoid damage.

Further, when shipping internationally, you may find that various carriers have different charges and even guidelines. A good way to decide which international shipper to use is to begin by a making note of the charges of several well-known carriers. Once you shortlist a few of them, take a look at what guidelines they have in place. For example, UPS has this very handy [tool](#) for checking what process you need to follow for every country, including import regulations and invoice requirements.

Reducing shipping costs:

Who wouldn't want to reduce shipping costs as much as they can without having to cut corners? In bulk orders, even the smallest of things such as outsourcing the printing of shipping labels can cost loads of money. We'll discuss the process of doing this in-house with Primaseller a bit later.

Beyond this, you can choose a carrier who you find apt for your budget. It also helps to source packaging material from them so all of their requirements are taken care of.

Related: [Get Discounted USPS Rates With Primaseller](#)

Broken goods:

Sometimes, bad things happen- you ship with the right packaging and the best intentions in mind but the product arrives broken, damaged or otherwise unusable. This is why it is extremely important to have shipping insurance. While it may be tempting not to insure products for shipping, doing so will ensure that if and when a product is damaged, you won't have to bear the expense and will be quickly able to replace the product for your waiting customer.

Here's a quick look at shipping, broken down into action components:

- Design your consignment. If multiple shippers are needed, break it down into several different consignments.
 - Print shipping labels and invoice.
 - If shipping internationally, account for the shipping guidelines for the destination country.
- Get insurance for your products. In Primaseller, the process of shipping is broken down into several components. In the Dashboard, select Online Orders, and proceed to the '**To Process**' tab. This tab essentially shows you all fulfillable orders that you now need to ship.

Shipment	Date & Facility	Amount	Status	Shipper
<input type="checkbox"/> 25413367 easyship Order ID : ABC123456444	12 Dec 16 Jayanagar	1,650 Prepaid	Packed	-- Discard
<input type="checkbox"/> 11658846 Order ID : ABC123456444	12 Dec 16 Jayanagar	900 Prepaid	Packed	-- Discard
<input type="checkbox"/> 11658965 Order ID : ABC123456444	12 Dec 16 Jayanagar	1,000 Prepaid	Packed	-- Discard
<input type="checkbox"/> 11658912 Order ID : ABC123456444	12 Dec 16 Jayanagar	1,000 COD	Packed	-- Discard
<input type="checkbox"/> 11658912	12 Dec 16	2,000	Packed	-- Discard

The first step is to choose which shipper will be fulfilling each of these orders. Once you know that a certain facility has enough stock to fulfill orders, you assign a shipper to that order, based on who usually serves that facility. You can select each shipment and assign a shipper separately, using the blue button at the top labeled, '**Assign Shipper**'.

Once you click on this button, you'll be shown the page shown below.

The screenshot shows the 'Assign Shipper' interface for an eBay order. The interface is divided into two main sections: a table on the left and a form on the right.

Table:

Order details	Dimensions	Shipper
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ebay 25413367 (Prepaid) ID : ABC123456444	--	--

Form:

Order Summary:

- Received Date - 12 Dec 16
- Shipment No - #25413367
- Total Amount - \$650
- To - Bangalore, KA
- Green Full sleeve Shirt (2), \$500
- Black Training Shorts (1), \$50
- Adidas Running Shoes (1), \$50

Enter Dimensions:

Length cms x Width cms x height cms

Weight gms Apply

Shipper Type and Rates:

Shipper Type Custom Integrated Channel

Shipper Rates Get Rates

Buttons: Cancel, Done

Here, you can choose your shipper from a list of our integrated options, or assign a custom shipper. You can also specify details such as the tracking number and the package dimensions. Once you assign shippers, you'll move to the next tab, where you can print invoices and labels. You can select all of your shipments and print in bulk too.

Once you've printed the labels and invoices, you can move to the 'Ready To Ship' tab right next to the 'packed' tab you are in right now.

At this point, all that is left for you to do is print the manifest you'll be handling to the shipper and make arrangements for your product to be picked up by them.

Tracking, Returns, and Replacements



Once the package is shipped, it is well and truly out of your control. However, this doesn't mean that you should have no clue about where it is or whether it has reached the intended person. The easiest way to track a package is to use the tracking ID provided to you by the shipping partner. Since you are a B2B customer from the shipper's perspective, they usually provide you with updates on your shipment status at each step of the way.

Once you receive a delivery confirmation from them, you still need to watch out for returns. Returns and replacements are those unpalatable things that take up time and money. While a return is a waste in every sense of the word, a replacement means you have to repeat the entire process of fulfillment, packaging, and shipping all over again.

This is why it is so important to have a returns and replacement policy in place. A good returns policy should account for all of these things:

- For what products returns can be entertained. For example, personal hygiene products, lingerie, and sleepwear are usually not accepted for returns due to hygiene reasons.
- The time duration within which you will accept returns, in which case you also need to specify a timeline. For example, if you sell apparel and have a return period of a month, you need to specify that at the end of 30 days, the product needs to have reached you to be a valid return. It isn't just enough for the customer to have shipped it within that time period.
- The state of packaging - all labels and original packaging intact.

For replacements, account for all of these aspects plus a few more:

- If the customer has received the wrong product, they will not wait around while you go looking for where the mistake happened. You need to immediately ship another replacement to them while simultaneously looking for the issue.
- Make a list of your products that cannot be replaced under any circumstances
- Decide whether the replacement's shipping will be free or charged to the customer, and put that in as well.

In [Primaseller](#), you can keep track of your orders, cancellations, and returns under the 'Cancelled' option in the 'Orders' section on the left. Orders which have been accepted for cancellation and a refund is in progress can be found under the 'Refunds' option under 'Payments' on the left. Products for which a return has been processed are either added back to the inventory or discarded based on your judgment.

Asking your customers for reviews is a great way of understanding their expectations from you. What's more, a good review is a great advertisement! You can ask your customers for reviews in one of the several ways:

- Include a small pamphlet in the product packaging asking them to rate you and your product on a marketplace.
- Give them a call a few days after the product is delivered.
- Send them a mail asking for feedback and reviews.
- If you send out regular newsletters, emphasize in them how you'd love to hear from them.

Any retailer who is confident of their product's quality and their service will not hesitate to ask for reviews and feedback. Negative feedback doesn't have to be taken personally. You can use it to improve the quality of your service.

For a very long time, even after they began taking orders over the phone and shipping them, businesses have used conventional methods to keep track of their orders. A lot of spreadsheets across workbooks was a common sight. Naturally, the issue with doing this is that you then need to have a master workbook of sorts, wherein you keep track of what information exists in each of these excel sheets. Perhaps not impossible, but daunting for sure.

Whether you choose to use a conventional approach or an integrated software, the basic principles of selling online remain the same - make a remote customer happy, and don't mess up.

Online Orders

<< BACK TO MENU

Shipments
To Process (24)
Manifest
In Transit
Reject In Progress

Filters
Channels
Created Date

Packed (14) Ready to ship (10)

Bulk Actions

Shipment	Date & Facility	Amount	Status	Shipper
<input type="checkbox"/> 25413367 easyship Order ID : ABC123456444	12 Dec 16 Jayanagar	1,650 Prepaid	Ready to ship	Easy Ship ESH646457863
<input type="checkbox"/> 11658846 Order ID : ABC123456444	12 Dec 16 Jayanagar	900 Prepaid	Ready to ship	FedEx AVGS112254664876
<input type="checkbox"/> 11658965 Order ID : ABC123456444	12 Dec 16 Jayanagar	1,000 Prepaid	Ready to ship	UPS ABCD12345678889
<input type="checkbox"/> 11658912 Order ID : ABC123456444	12 Dec 16 Jayanagar	1,000 COD	Ready to ship	USPS ABCD12345678889

The simplicity of using [Primaseller](#) for this process lies in the fact that on this platform, everything flows logically. Once you click on the '**To Process**' tab, all you have to do is follow the sub-tabs left to right, starting with 'Packed' and moving on to '**Ready To Ship**'.

Once you've created a manifest, it is visible in the '**Ship Manifests**' sub-tab under '**To Process**'. If you want to take a look at it or mark it as shipped, all you need to do is choose the '**View and Process**' option on the right-hand side. If your consignment has been picked up by the shipping partner, simply click on '**Mark as Shipped**' on the top right corner of this page.

Primaseller is an inventory management software that helps retailers manage inventory and process orders across different channels of sale. We help them in **integrating all their offline and online channels** of sale like Magento, Shopify, Amazon, eBay, Flipkart, etc. This helps sellers save a lot of time that they spend managing inventory at multiple places.

