Single vs. Multi-Carrier Shipping Software

Shipping managers are challenged with efficiently and cost-effectively managing, tracking and integrating information within their organizations. The best shipping software not only automates and integrates the shipping process, but can cut shipping costs 10% - 15% per year and improve customer service.

In these tough economic times, choosing shipping software is a challenge. On the surface, installing a free single-carrier system would seem the most economically feasible. However, investing in a single-source shipping system can actually save money over the long haul.

Evaluating the benefits and costs of a single-carrier system vs. an integrated, multi-carrier system is crucial to determining which approach is best for your company. Key areas to consider include:

- Flexible Choices
  Single-carrier systems limit your ability to compare rates and select another carrier's services. A multi-carrier system allows you to do a side-by-side comparison of all carrier rates and delivery options and select the one that is most advantageous for you.

- Knowledge
  While carrier rates may be similar, surcharges and special fees can have significant impact on your total shipping costs. A multi-carrier system is more likely to display all relevant fees up front, allowing you to make a more informed decision on the carrier and service you would like to use.

  Typical surcharges and fees you should be aware of include commercial delivery area, residential delivery area and fuel surcharges as well as address correction fees and dimensional rating charges. A multi-carrier system with automatic address correction will avoid duplicate delivery fees on a single shipment.

- Ease of Use
  While single-carrier solutions may be free, it will be necessary to install multiple one-carrier systems in order to have complete carrier shipping information. This is a cumbersome approach and often requires different applications and user interfaces. It will also complicate integration with order entry systems and often requires more training.

- Integration
  Single-carrier solutions generally need to be installed on individual computers while a robust multi-carrier system can be installed on a central server and accessed from multiple locations. Further, a multi-carrier system provides seamless integration with your warehouse, carrier vendors and your ERP systems thus improving cost efficiencies, data accuracy. Reps may view shipment status through a single interface, eliminating the need to access individual carrier sites, which improves your customer responsiveness.

To select a shipping system with the highest ROI, look for the following characteristics:

1. Retrieves your carriers up-to-the-minute routing and relevant shipping data
2. Side-by-side comparisons of services from multiple carriers, their rates and surcharges
3. Integrates seamlessly with your order entry and customer address databases
4. Eliminates manual re-entry of order info
5. Consolidates carrier billing

6. Easily automates internal business rules
7. Allows uniform address books
8. Customizes screen views, labels, forms and reports within minutes

CMS provides both PC and server-based, custom and semi-custom software solutions for multi-carrier shipping and receiving systems, serving shippers throughout the United States.

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Source: Mailing systems Technology

3001 S. Tejon Street, Englewood CO 80110 ▪ 217 12th Street SW, Loveland, CO 80537
www.comp-mail.com