



Dick's Sporting Goods Solves Shipment ID Issue with Help from Estes Express Lines

Timely and accurate data leads to timely and accurate deliveries, but inconsistent performance on the data side can affect logistics fulfillment. With a team effort, filling the gaps in information flows has provided significant benefits for Dick's Sporting Goods, its merchandise vendors and its carriers.

In recognition of Dick's philosophy of using teamwork and collaboration to overcome supply chain challenges, the retailer, along with partner Estes Express Lines were awarded a 2015 Alliance Award. The award recognizes shippers and carriers that effectively solve challenges through innovative, measurable means.

At its heart, Dick's problem was a communication issue. For each shipment, Dick's issues an ID code. The shipment identifier follows the order through the entire supply chain. When it picked up goods for delivery, Estes Express Lines was finding missing and incorrect shipment IDs in the supply chain, grinding the shipping process to a halt.

After forming a project team, Dick's and Estes representatives met regularly to address specific issues. These regular, high-level meetings are important to any collaborative relationship, according to Jill Lester, senior manager of logistics systems and administration for Dick's Sporting Goods.

Roots of the Relationship

The partnership with Estes Express started early, when Dick's had one distribution center (it now has four located throughout the country). At the same time that Dick's was growing, the transportation industry was also undergoing change, Lester recalled. Through these parallel transitions, Dick's found itself working with some new carriers. Those carriers who proved themselves were able to increase their business with Dick's. Estes, Lester said, was able to grow to the point where it now handles more than half of the inbound LTL for Dick's.





Examining the Process

When merchandise vendors are ready to ship an order they have received from Dick's, they go onto the TMS Dick's uses and book a carrier. The TMS is a hosted solution, Lester explained, and the vendors and carriers have access to the system to complete their tasks. With the shipment ID on the advance ship notice, the Dick's distribution center can connect the information on the shipment to the detail of the purchase order.

Merchandise vendors are directed to include the shipment ID on the bill of lading for the carrier. The TMS and warehouse management system interface in setting up an appointment for the carrier, and the shipment ID is linked to that appointment. The DC can then see what shipments are arriving, and it can tie them to the appropriate purchase orders and the line items that should be on that shipment.

All of this data flow is important for Dick's because many orders are cross docked and can move quickly to the stores. If the shipment ID is missing or contains an error, it stops that shipment from being received and moving through the system until the issue is resolved.

Filling the Gap

When the driver arrives at the Dick's distribution center and can't complete the transaction because the shipment ID has been overlooked, not only does this delay the receipt of the goods and the updates to order-management and inventory systems, it also affects the freight bill.

To address the problem, Estes built a query that reviews shipments from the prior day. Estes took on the role of auditing and checking the shipments for shipment-ID compliance. A key accounts specialist looks over the report to find shipments that are either missing the shipment ID or have clearly wrong information in the shipment ID field.

The key accounts specialist can access the EDI Pickup request system to match origin zip, destination zip and weight to find the correct shipment ID. If that doesn't resolve the problem, the key account specialist reaches out to Dick's to find the shipment. In addition to helping Estes find those shipment ID numbers, Dick's identifies merchandise vendors who have consistent problems with compliance and works with them to improve their performance.

Dick's Sporting Goods and Estes Express have used a collaborative process to solve a problem that affected the whole supply chain, but their message is that collaboration has played a larger role in preserving and growing their relationship.