



Consumer Depot

Computer wholesaler integrates shopping, inventory, and shipping using FedEx Ship Manager® API

As owner, Marty Fike keeps his finger on the pulse of Consumer Depot, one of the nation's largest computer liquidators. Consumer Depot acquires and sells discontinued, surplus, and demo computers; computer components; and electronics. Product availability shifts daily, and if the company's web site doesn't deliver as promised, Fike loses his competitive advantage.

FedEx Ship Manager API allows Fike to integrate reliable FedEx shipping functions with the customer-facing e-commerce capabilities of his company's Web site and its internal accounting and inventory systems. The result? Seamless automation from the time a customer logs on to the time the order is shipped.

FedEx Provides Seamless Integration, Streamlined Processing

Computers are Marty Fike's business, when he builds a system he expects it to perform. He began using FedEx as Consumer Depot's preferred carrier for two main reasons — collect-on-delivery and signature-proof-of-delivery options — but ultimately wanted shipping functions streamlined to fit an already lean operation. FedEx Ship Manager API allowed him to do just that.

"With FedEx, we've integrated three different ways," Fike says. "We custom built our shopping cart and Web site on top of our accounting function, so when a customer logs on to the site, we have access in real time to their account data. Once they've made a selection, the site communicates it to our accounting system, which automatically subtracts the purchase from our inventory and processes the order for payment, all in real time."

At the same time, Consumer Depot's system communicates directly with FedEx to process the customer's shipment and generate a tracking number and shipping label instantly. According to Fike, the ordering and shipping process has become so completely automated that "everything is done unattended until someone grabs the package and puts it on a skid." Automation equals efficiency of course, greater automation means greater efficiency and a healthier bottom line.

Consumer Depot recognizes additional efficiencies by relying on FedEx for all its shipping needs. "We've cut the time our employees spend processing orders by 75 percent ... it saves administrative costs, because there's nobody keying in data," he says. "We're trying to get completely streamlined. Currently we have two employees who invoice customers the day after they've placed their orders — we have a new function in development that will allow us to invoice and bill automatically as well."

Although the company's Web site is built to support the shipping functions of carriers other than FedEx, Fike has never activated those functions. "When we stay with one carrier, our operations are simplified all around," he says. "We don't have invoices from multiple carriers, and we don't need to segment our packages or picking lines. We get a flexible pickup schedule, a regular driver who knows our business, and no problems whatsoever. When we have fill-in drivers, they can't believe the number of packages we're moving."