

PRIORITY FREIGHT DELIVERS THE SUPPLY CHAIN CHRISTMAS WISH-LIST

By Andrew Austin, *Group Operations Director, Priority Freight*



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As the year draws to a close, most of us are, perhaps more than during any other period, looking forward. Of course, it's always good to anticipate such events as holidays, weddings, and so on in the summer months, but winter brings the added anticipation of Christmas, time with family, and then to spring and lighter days - particularly if the onset of winter brings a touch of the blues.

In business, too, there is a great deal of anticipation attached to the last phase of the year. This is usually a time when businesses look to get themselves in the best possible shape for the start of the new year, but many realise that they have a number of unfinished tasks to complete – those that were delayed or postponed through the current year. Thoughts and efforts are often focussed on year-end targets and the need to generate sufficient sales to provide security for the 12 months ahead, as well as fulfilling committed orders before December runs out. Even if the accounting periods for the business do not mirror the calendar year itself, there is usually a quarter-end imperative.

Added to this (even though it happens at the same time every year!), the shock realisation that the number of working days in December is significantly fewer than any other month, even without the extra impact of additional staff holidays or seasonal events.

All of this contributes to a sense of urgency, if not a mild sense of panic over the supply chain – and that's before thinking about the need to meet Christmas requirements of customers.

For many, Christmas is a make or break trading period. After all, it is the busiest shopping period of the year, and with consumers now demanding more choice and control over how they receive their goods, offering one standard delivery option is no longer enough.

Today's consumers want the most convenient option available to them – and the number of people making choices like next-day, select day, parcel collection and parcel lockers is rising. To keep meeting delivery expectations it is important to have a supply of goods on hand and, when this isn't possible, to be able to rely on a logistics partner to work round-the-clock to strict deadlines.

Traceability is particularly important as we approach the Christmas period, since one missed deadline can cause additional issues to the supply chain, pre and post production. Having this control and visibility from the start allows any possible downtime to be seen and rectified before it causes delays to the final destination. Using a logistics supplier with a high-tech system available to track and trace any consignment is vital, since it becomes possible to foresee any delays and make changes to the route to ensure that deadlines are met and unnecessary panic is avoided.

The Christmas logistics fulfilment wish-list

Here at Priority Freight, we find time and time again that, when it comes to meeting client logistics requirements for the festive period, the same factors top customers' wish lists.

- As the increased volume of commercial vehicle movements to fulfil the shopping demands of the period puts even more pressure on the road infrastructure, everyone usually starts to see longer delays. Coupled with the probable reduction in vehicle availability, the stress of getting vital orders shipped in time can test the resolve and patience of any shipper. Many customers look to their logistics provider to bolster their delivery network and keep on top of all their festive orders

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- The weather can be a real risk factor during the winter months, particularly with air freight. If the manufacturer's goods are to be carried by air for speed and distance considerations, then the same capacity restrictions and weather implications can also materially affect their ability to receive their product on time. When weather disrupts their supply chain, these customers may need to turn to a logistics provider who is flexible enough to provide other routes for getting their consignment from A to B
- Meeting delivery expectations means having a supply of goods on hand, and when this isn't possible it is vital to be able to rely on a logistics partner who works round-the-clock to strict deadlines
- With the need to offer consumers a growing number of choices for when, where and how they receive their goods, many businesses need to look to a logistics partner with sufficiently flexible offerings to deliver next-day, select day, parcel collection and parcel locker options
- Traceability is particularly critical in the approach to Christmas, as one missed deadline can cause additional issues to an already stressed supply chain, both pre- and post-production. Having control and visibility from the start to the finish allows any possible downtime to be identified and rectified before it causes delays to deliveries to the final destination. Using a logistics supplier with a high-tech system capable of tracking and tracing any consignment is vital, since it becomes possible to foresee any delays, and make changes to the route to ensure the deadline is met - preventing unnecessary stress or panic

At Priority Freight, we capitalise on over 20 years' experience of successfully dealing with these issues up to, over, and beyond the festive period. For many of the reasons above we experience a significant increase in the incidence of emergency shipment requests over this time. The fact that we provide 24-hour cover 7-days a week, across all continents and to and from all geographies provides a great deal of relief and practical support to our customer base.

Our highly experienced teams use latest generation planning and routing tools to track and trace consignments – with a high level of customer visibility. Combined with high levels of interaction and communication, this means that many rely on Priority Freight to resolve their challenging and time-sensitive requests at pace and with optimum value. With so much to do at this time, our customers value our ability to meet their delivery deadlines, and the confidence we inspire.

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Written by Andrew Austin

Andrew Austin, Group Operations Director at Priority Freight, has spent his entire career in the logistics industry. With over three decades of experience in senior management and board level positions across diverse international locations, he is responsible for leading and developing the operations mission within the company.

