



Optimizing the Return in Reverse Logistics Operations

Automation is Maximizing Efficiency, Productivity and Profitability of Merchandise Returns

With the rise of omnichannel shopping, manufacturers, retailers and third-party logistics providers are facing a mounting challenge: How to most efficiently process the growing number of returned goods while at the same time meeting customer demand for a hassle-free returns process. In fact, 68% of global retailers ranked returns of online orders as a key challenge in Zebra's recent *The Future of Fulfillment* study.¹

And it's no wonder, given that approximately 30% of online purchases are returned – a number that's more than three times higher than the 9% return rate experienced by traditional brick and mortar operations.² Globally, consumers return a shocking US\$642.6 billion worth of goods annually through retail channels, according to the retail analyst firm IHL Group.³

Even as the volume of returns skyrockets, today's consumers also expect those returns to be fast and easy. A recent Zebra Shopper Survey revealed that more than half of consumers are still dissatisfied with the returns process both in-store (53%) and online (51%).

Today's e-commerce businesses are looking for new ways to process these returns quickly and cost-effectively. Many businesses are turning to technologies such as mobile computing, barcoding, radio frequency identification (RFID), scanning, printing and analytics to streamline, measure and improve their reverse logistics operations – and thereby reduce the impact that returns have on their bottom line.



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¹Zebra Technologies, *The Future of Fulfillment Vision Study*, 2018. ²UPS, *Rethinking online returns*, 2015. ³IHL Group, *Retailers and the Ghost Economy: The Haunting of Returns*, 2015.

Boosting the Bottom Line with Faster, More Efficient Returns

Implementing an effective reverse logistics process can have a significantly positive impact on the bottom line. In fact, companies that measure the impact of their reverse logistics operations say they result in revenue savings of 16.5% annually.⁴

That's why savvy businesses are turning to mobile technologies to maximize customer satisfaction by making returns hassle-free while also minimizing the costs involved in reverse logistic operations. These technologies help companies optimize the profitability of returned inventory as they determine whether to resell it, refurbish it, return it to the manufacturer, recycle it, discount it or dispose of it, clearly a complicated process.



Making the Returns Process Transparent and Convenient

Seventy-five percent of shoppers say that they return items by shipping back to the retailer.⁵ Giving them easy and transparent ways to get this job done will only increase customer loyalty. One easy way businesses can make their returns more convenient is by including preprinted return labels when shipping goods to consumers. Not only does this make the returns process easier for the customer, it also allows workers to start processing returns with a simple scan as soon as the returned goods show up at the dock, allowing businesses to more easily track the chain of custody and communicate return status to the customer.



Automating and Streamlining the Merchandise Management Process

Technology plays a key role in minimizing return costs by allowing businesses to increase automation and quickly process returns in a manner that maximizes the value of returned merchandise. Tamper-proof labeling can help workers quickly identify goods for resale. Color-coded labels indicate what to do next with sorted goods. Mobile computers and tablets can be used to access images or other data to determine whether returned items are incomplete or damaged. With one simple barcode scan or emitted signal from a radio-frequency identification (RFID) tag, workers can identify specific items such as electronics that should be sent directly back to the manufacturer.



Preparing Returned Goods for Resale More Quickly

To maximize the profitability of returned goods, businesses must move swiftly to place merchandise back into circulation. However, before items can be returned to the shelf for resale, the goods must often be repackaged, refurbished or relabeled. Using barcodes, RFID technology, scanners and mobile computers, workers can access product details, photos or a bill of materials to ensure the item is ready for resale before it is restocked. Using mobile printers, items can be quickly relabeled for sale.



Keeping Returned Goods Out of the Dark Corner of the Warehouse

One of the biggest challenges of returns is making sure goods do not end up untouched for long periods of time. Every minute returned merchandise spends sitting instead of being reshelved, refurbished, recycled, discounted or disposed of can cost a business money – and can result in both financial and inventory inaccuracies. By using RFID and locationing solutions, each return can be tracked and measured as part of the warehouse workflow. Workers can even be automatically notified when pallets of returned merchandise have been sitting too long in a singular location.

⁴Peerless Research Group, *Reverse Logistics Practices*, 2018. ⁵UPS, *Pulse of the Online Shopper: A Customer Experience Study*, 2017.

Zebra Has Your Returns Management Solution

No matter what type of goods you sell, managing your supply chain in reverse can be a challenge. Zebra's advanced mobile computing, scanning, printing and locationing technologies work with your enterprise systems to give you total visibility across your operations, allowing you to efficiently manage and process returns for greater profitability.

The Foundations of Returns Management



Handheld and Wearable Mobile Computers

Zebra's easy-to-use mobile computers are purpose-built for the reverse logistics environment, providing businesses with the tools they need to effectively receive, inspect, sort, track and relabel returned merchandise. Available in a variety of form factors, including mobile handhelds with built-in scanners and cameras, wearable devices that allow for hands-free scanning and RFID readers that reduce the need for manual scanning, Zebra has the right device for the job.

- Rugged design built for warehouse use
- Intuitive user interface
- Long-lasting battery life designed to last an entire shift
- Fast and accurate built-in SimulScan Document Capture



Tablets

Featuring built-in cameras and integrated scanning, Zebra's ruggedized, enterprise-grade tablets offer large screens ideal for returns that require access to more detailed documentation and images.

- Large screen
- Integrated scanning
- Wi-Fi and cellular connectivity
- Extended battery life
- Windows® 10 or Android™ operating systems
- Optional advanced imaging engines to capture damaged, dirty or poorly printed barcodes



Mobile Printers

Zebra mobile printers work seamlessly with mobile computers and tablets to enable front-line workers to identify and label returned items in a single workflow.

- Rugged and reliable for maximum uptime
- Intuitive, easy to operate and manage
- Compact size and lightweight to carry
- Seamless connection with mobile computers and tablets
- RFID available on select models



Desktop and Industrial Printers

Zebra desktop and industrial printers help keep returns management operations running smoothly and efficiently – from return shipping labels to item and carton relabeling.

- Easy-to-use
- Advanced connectivity options
- High-quality printing at fast speeds
- RFID available on select models



Location Solutions

Track pallets of returned goods for resale, refurbishment, recycling, discounting, return to manufacturer or supplier and discard. Know when items move to the next stage and keep track of dwell and departure time.

- Active and passive RFID, BLE Bluetooth beacons or third-party location-sensing hardware captures data
- Savanna data intelligence platform aggregates and analyzes raw-edge data for actionable insights and real-time decision making

Software and Support

Zebra OneCare Support Services

OneCare Services ensure that Zebra devices achieve maximum uptime and peak performance. Multiple service levels are available to meet unique requirements and protect your operational investments.



Asset and Operational Visibility

Better visibility allows organizations to maximize the uptime, performance and ROI of critical assets and optimize business operations. Zebra's Asset Visibility Service (AVS) and Operational Visibility Service (OVS) give detailed insights into asset location, inventory and performance to help improve business outcomes.



Certified Supplies

Zebra's Certified Supplies improve efficiency and productivity of your reverse logistics operations with the highest-quality, pre-tested labeling and RFID tagging – from ensuring they withstand harsh environmental conditions and provide excellent print quality so customers' packages are routed to the correct location every time to offering IQ Color barcode labels to quickly identify inspected and sorted returned merchandise at the fulfillment center. Timely processing means cost savings and, most importantly, customer satisfaction.



Independent Software Vendors (ISVs)

Zebra's global ISV network offer innovative applications developed to work specifically with Zebra devices and systems. ISVs can help businesses identify the best applications to meet individual needs or provide customized solution development to address unique requirements.



Purpose Built Technology Solutions

Lifeguard™ for Android™

Software security solution extends the lifecycle of Zebra Android mobile computers.

Mobile Device Productivity Tools

Advanced productivity-maximizing applications such as Zebra's SimulScan Document Capture, which captures the contents of an entire form in a single scan and instantly populates it into a business application.

Transformative Printing Capabilities

Zebra's Print DNA allows you to design customized print solutions and use apps for driverless printing from Android devices to mobile printers so resheling returned goods is seamless.

Management and Visibility Tools

IT support tools that make it easy to stage, configure and manage the condition and security of thousands of printing and mobile devices.

To learn more about how Zebra can help you operationalize and streamline your returns processes, visit www.zebra.com/reverselogistics



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