Multi-Shipper Management Tools Help Retail Fulfillment Solution Providers Meet Their Clients' Complex Parcel Shipping Needs



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The eCommerce boom has led to the growth of logistics solution providers

In the face of rising B2C shipping volumes, capacity constraints, and higher shipping costs, shippers are having to re-engineer their retail fulfillment processes to accommodate last-mile parcel delivery. To support this, forward thinking retail solution providers are partnering with multi-carrier management solution providers to offer parcel processing as a core component within their offering. The latest generation of multi-carrier platforms feature configurable multi-shipper management tools that help WMS, TMS, 3PLs, ISVs, and other retail solution providers improve their clients' ability to compete by reducing shipping costs and expanding their B2C delivery capabilities. They offer clients extensive multi-carrier shipping capabilities at a low cost of ownership and a fast time to market.



Unprecedented eCommerce growth meets unprecedented parcel delivery challenges

This year has seen unprecedented B2C eCommerce growth, accelerating trends that had already been well underway for years. COVID-19 has transformed parcel delivery into a lifeline to the outside world, with more consumers now accustomed to buying more goods online. As a result, parcel volumes are exploding. As noted in the Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals' (CSCMP) 31st Annual State of Logistics Report, parcel revenue increased 8.5 percent in 2019 as compared to a less than 1.5 percent increase for either LTL or truckload. Additionally, in its Q2/2020 financial reports, UPS showed a 13.4 percent year on year increase from the same period in 2019.



These unprecedented parcel volumes have constricted carrier capacity and driven shipping costs even higher, squeezing merchant profit margins as they try to meet consumer demands for "free" and faster delivery options. Fourth quarter 2020 holiday buying behavior is likely to exacerbate these factors. To mitigate the risk of disruption, shippers who may have once relied on a single national carrier solution are expanding their partner portfolio to include regional, local, and crowd-sourced carriers.

These trends have prompted retail fulfillment operations to retool their B2B processes to accommodate more cost-effective, parcel-centric and efficient direct-to-consumer fulfillment. ERP, WMS, TMS, 3PLs, and other retail solution providers who may have once been content with leaving it up to their clients to buy directly from a multi-carrier parcel management solution provider are realizing that helping their customers navigate the complexities of B2C parcel delivery is now core to their solution offering. It is core because the last-mile consumer delivery experience is central to an eCommerce shipper's brand. One of the leading eCommerce company's enormous investment in building out its last-mile delivery network is proof of that.

Increasingly, multi-carrier shipping system capabilities are not simply complementary, they are core to retail fulfillment solutions

Modern multi-carrier shipping system capabilities have moved well beyond the carrier barcode labeling point solutions of old. According to Gartner, system functionality is key. They include features and functions that scale to span the enterprise upstream and downstream from the point of shipping:



Expanded carrier network: Brokers, global, regional, local, and crowd-sourced carriers



Purchasing: Carrier rate shopping and packing instructions



Order entry: Carrier rate shopping and ETA estimations in shopping carts and OMS



Fulfillment: Predict the most transportation cost-effective way to pack orders into cartons or palletize LTL based on SKU weights, shapes, dimensional weight factors, and other business rules



Shipping: Domestic, cross-border consolidation, hazmat, material handling integration



Customer service: Package tracking, POD signature capture, and returns processing



Finance: Shipment confirmation, carrier invoice matching, cost center management



Reporting and analytics: Carrier performance monitoring, productivity KPIs

But developing a full suite of multi-carrier shipping capabilities is a very costly undertaking and requires specialized knowledge that is typically outside of most retail solution providers' areas of expertise. The parcel industry is notable among transportation modes for its lack of technology and documentation standards. Even harder is productizing a solution that will meet the complex requirements of a diverse customer base of shippers who struggle to manage delivery in a dynamic and demanding eCommerce market. That is why the multi-carrier shipping system industry has seen significant M&A activity in the past few years.

For those retail solution providers who are unable to make or buy a multi-carrier shipping system capability, partnering with a trusted vendor who can help them get to market quickly, cost-effectively, and seamlessly across their client base is a key to their future success in the B2C solution space.

Multi-shipper MCPMS capabilities are now a must-have for logistics solution providers

Complete control

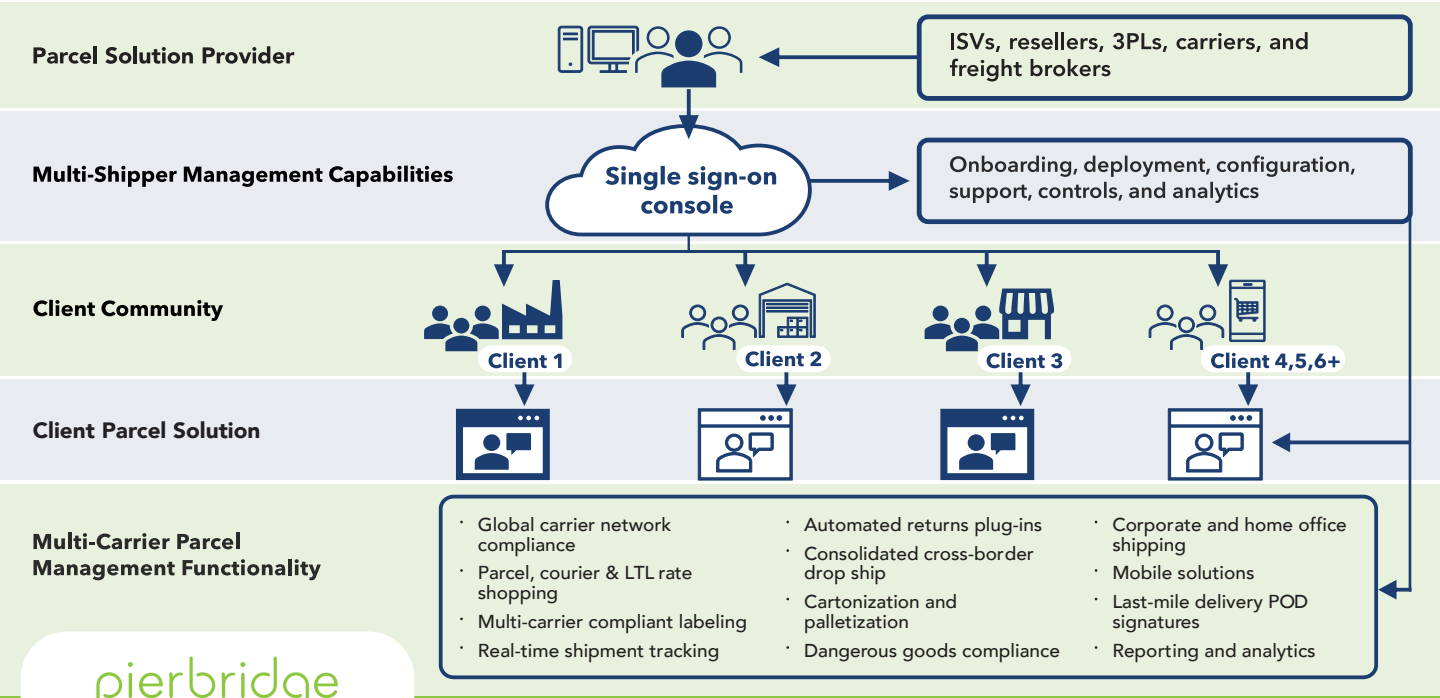
It is relatively straightforward for multi-carrier shipping software developers to meet complex multi-carrier parcel shipping requirements for their direct customers. They own the code. But a retail solution provider that wants to offer multi-carrier shipping capabilities as a core part of their own enterprise platform needs the same degree of control to respond to their retail client demands.

A multi-carrier shipping system platform with multi-shipper management capabilities offers retail solution providers more complete control over end-to-end multi-carrier shipping system deployment, configuration, and support. Built on a single, federated and cloud-based architecture, multi-shipper management tools enable retail solution providers to use one set of configuration tools and utilities to independently manage their entire tenant-shipper community.

Increased functionality

Just as a DOMS platform enables a supply chain partner to manage multiple inventory sources from a singular perspective, a multi-shipper multi-carrier shipping system enables retail solution providers to preside over their customer community in aggregate, just as they would with their enterprise solution. Multi-shipper administrative utilities are one level above what a single shipper would need to manage its own multi-carrier shipping system instance, such as user preferences and carrier routing.

Multi-shipper multi-carrier shipping system utilities offer more functionality than a multi-carrier API, which still requires significant development on the part of a logistics solution provider. Multi-shipper utilities offer up a broader portfolio of production shipping UIs, mobile apps, cloud integration with scales and thermal label printers, and cartonization, all branded and embeddable within the logistics solution provider's enterprise user experience.



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Multi-shipper capabilities enable retail solution providers to control multi-carrier shipping system rollout and support

Multi-carrier shipping system platforms with multi-shipper administrative tools enable the following key capabilities and benefits:



Faster time to revenue. The faster retail solution providers are able to roll out a multi-carrier shipping system solution, the faster they can satisfy their clients' requirements and recognize revenue for their core solution and services. To achieve this speed, they need multi-shipper tools to independently configure and control tenant creation, user permissions, carrier rating and routing rules, scale and printer integrations, and workflow processes for each shipper-customer. Multi-shipper capabilities offer retail solution providers a great deal of independence to control rollouts to their client base.



Reduced cost of ownership. As a SaaS deployment, there is nothing to install and no upfront capital expenditures associated with a multi-shipper multi-carrier shipping system. In addition to avoiding the costs associated with developing an extensive carrier network, retail solution providers can use multi-shipper ad-ministrative utilities to address individual client requirements while avoiding ex-pensive third-party software customizations and consulting services. To supple-ment API integrations, implementation personnel can use a "low-code" design studio to drag and drop UI elements (including branding) into out-of-the-box apps, enhanced with scripting and data mapping capabilities. And they can do this without impacting any other shipper tenant on the same platform.

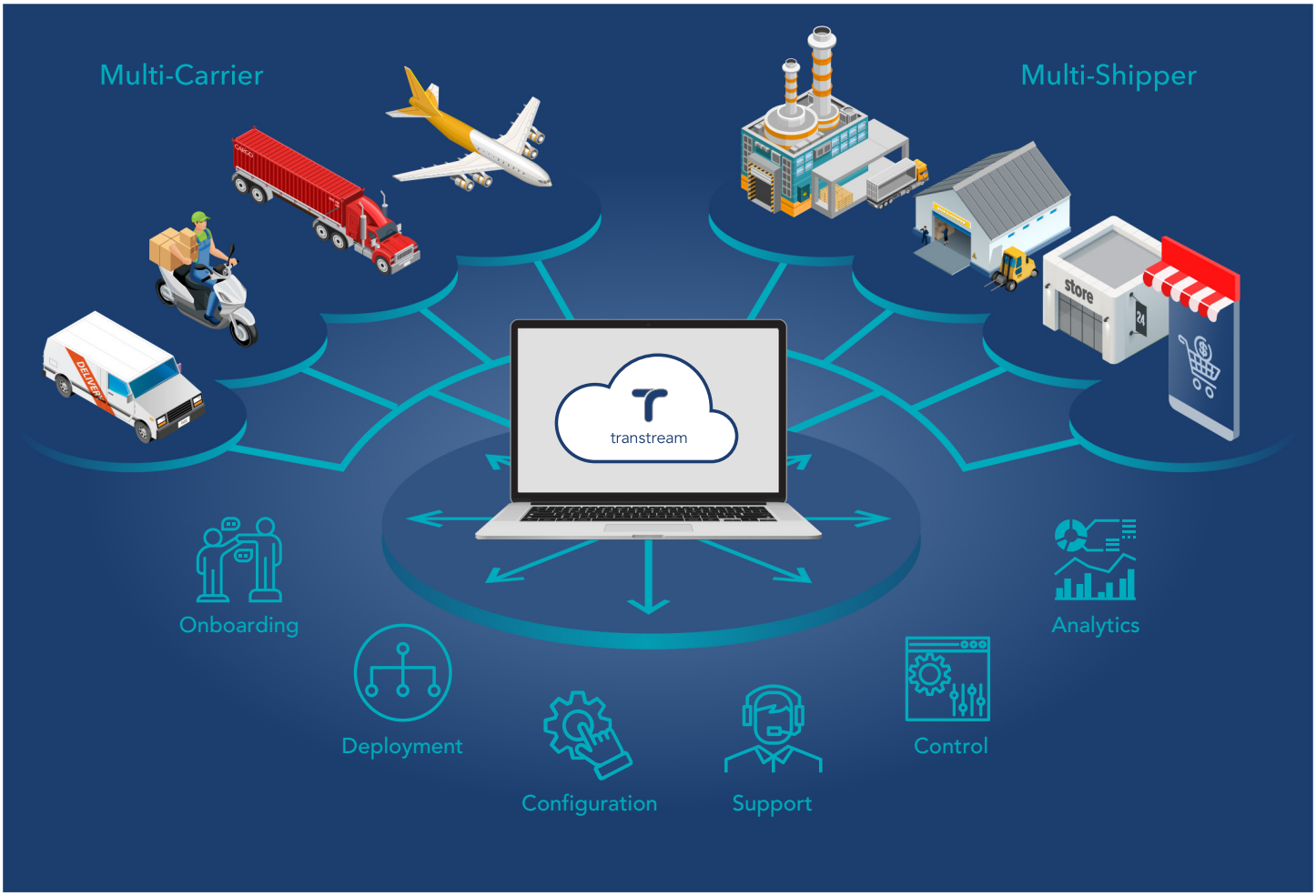


Improve customer ROI. A multi-carrier shipping system with multi-shipper management capabilities empowers retail solution providers with a unified view of their client's parcel shipping information. Using multi-shipper analytics tools, they can identify trends and glean valuable insights into how they can help their clients generate incremental revenue, while improving efficiencies and reduc-ing last-mile shipping costs.



Lower customer attrition. The more configurable solutions are able to adapt to customer needs even as needs change, the less likely those customers will be to migrate to a different solution. When it comes to support, end-user shippers would rather deal with a single vendor, which is what has led them to implement a multi-carrier shipping system process (instead of multiple single carrier solutions) in the first place. By taking more control over seamless multi-carrier shipping system deployment and faster support response times, retail solution providers can secure long-term relationships with their customers.

Transtream is a multi-carrier shipping system with multi-shipping capabilities



So, if you are a software developer, 3PL, broker or other retail fulfillment solution provider looking to seamlessly add hundreds of parcel and LTL services to your enterprise platform, Transtream can help you quickly expand your offering with a low cost of ownership. Transtream's multi-shipper parcel management solution provides you with all the controls and tools you need to independently onboard, configure, and support your entire client base. For more information about Transtream, contact Pierbridge at sales@pierbridge.com.

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