

LOGISTICS SOLUTION GUIDE:

What you need to know about retail logistics

Optimize your shipping strategy with expert support

Retail logistics is becoming more complex as trade-policy uncertainty, tariff changes, shifting carrier schedules and capacity constraints continue to affect sourcing, import planning and inventory availability. Whether shipments are merchandise, product displays, fixtures, returns or refurbished products, retailers need a logistics partner that can help move goods securely, manage cost pressure and keep up with changing customer demand.

The right logistics partner can make a measurable impact on your bottom line by connecting transportation strategy to inventory availability, lower landed cost, fewer stockouts and reduced reliance on expedited freight. Properly managed retail logistics also supports the consumer experience by helping ensure products are where they need to be across distribution centers, stores, marketplaces and homes.

Key areas within retail shipping

Retail logistics extends beyond moving goods from a production facility to a store. Today's retailers need one partner across wholesale, e-commerce, store replenishment, displays, returns and home delivery, with solutions that support shipments from factory to distribution center, store, marketplace and consumer. Common retail logistics needs include:



01 | Merchandise, replenishment and seasonal inventory

From toys to clothing to electronics, retail spans a wide range of product types. Logistics partners should adapt to specialized delivery requirements for each commodity, helping retailers manage back-to-school shipping, holiday peak-season planning, Black Friday and Cyber Monday promotions, seasonal redistribution and store replenishment.

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02 | Product displays and fixtures

Product presentation in the store has a strong effect on consumer behavior. Retailers turn to logistics companies for the transport, assembly and timed delivery of in-store displays, fixtures and point-of-sale materials for product launches, promotional windows and new store openings. These shipments are often big, bulky and fragile, requiring specialized planning and execution.



03 | Additional services

In addition to merchandise and display transport, retail logistics includes a range of related services. Depending on the shipment and retailer, this can include reverse logistics, retail returns, asset recovery, e-commerce shipping, home delivery, customs clearance, importer of record services, product kitting, labeling and technology deployment.

Five features to look for in a retail logistics provider

While the specifics may vary between companies and markets, the underlying qualities of the ideal logistics partner remain the same. As you adjust your retail operations, look for a forwarder with extensive experience and these five features:

Flexibility and resilience

Your stores' logistics demands may change annually, seasonally or with little warning. The right logistics provider can adapt to those changes, whether they are fulfilling new merchandise needs, supporting a product display rollout or shifting freight around disruption. Choose a company that offers dependable, world-class services including:

- Global sea, air and road freight procurement
- Domestic and international transportation
- Retail warehousing and distribution
- Store replenishment and pool distribution asset recovery
- E-commerce shipping and home delivery
- Product kitting, labeling and technology deployment
- Customs clearance, importer of record services, reverse logistics, retail returns and asset recovery

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Expansive network and trade expertise

To get the best service and rates possible, select a retail logistics provider with a broad network of industry connections and customs expertise. Look for companies with strategic airline and sea carrier relationships, along with a robust global network that includes China, Vietnam and Mexico. Your partner should have experience importing freight to the United States and other countries, handling customs clearance, providing landed-cost insight, and identifying alternative sourcing and routing options as tariffs and trade policies change.

Actionable visibility

Your shipments are critical to your business, and your team needs more than basic tracking. Look for a logistics company with comprehensive information technology capabilities that deliver actionable visibility, including milestone alerts, exception management, reporting, status notifications and data integrations. AIT's live purchase order management and Track & Trace capabilities, supported by the Infor Nexus platform, help retail teams monitor orders and act before a late shipment becomes a missed sales window.

Consultative account management and exception management

Communication is crucial to effective retail logistics. Look for a forwarder that provides comprehensive oversight, clear escalation paths and proactive exception management, with processes designed to keep your team informed when port disruption, geopolitical events, capacity changes or carrier schedule shifts threaten inventory availability.

Speed-to-market and margin protection

Product launches, promotional events, holiday peaks and store openings are moments when logistics directly affect sales. The right partner can help retailers protect margins by aligning transportation plans with inventory timing, reducing avoidable expedites, improving landed-cost visibility and lowering the risk of stockouts during critical selling windows.

AIT helps retailers plan and manage time-sensitive shipments across air freight, sea freight, road freight, warehousing and domestic distribution. Our retail logistics experience spans merchandise, product displays, store replenishment, e-commerce shipping, home delivery, reverse logistics and more for some of the world's top retail brands.

With longstanding carrier relationships, customs clearance expertise, landed-cost insight and flexible routing options, AIT helps retail teams adapt to shifting sourcing plans, tariff changes, capacity swings and disruption while supporting product launches, promotional events, holiday peaks and store openings.

Our teams combine omnichannel execution with actionable visibility, milestone alerts, exception management and reporting that help retailers make decisions before shipment delays affect inventory availability or sales opportunities.