

Ask the **Experts:** Preparing for Peak Season

Hear from key members of ProShip's Research & Development, Engineering, Integration, and Support teams as they answer popular questions about peak holiday shipping and the role multi-carrier shipping software plays.

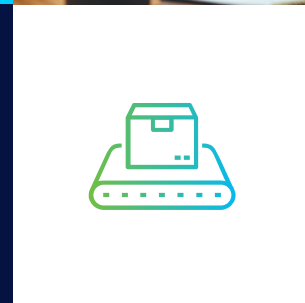
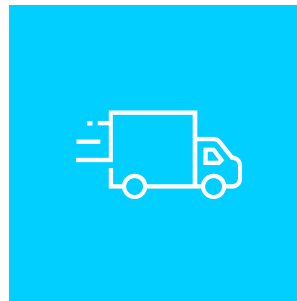
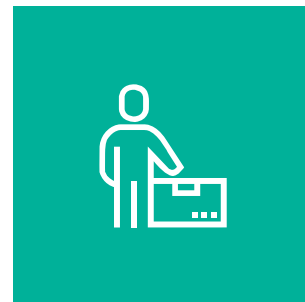
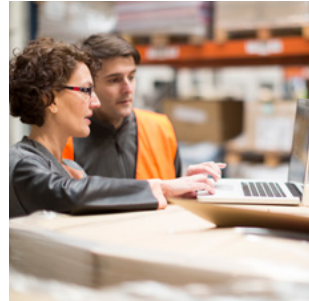
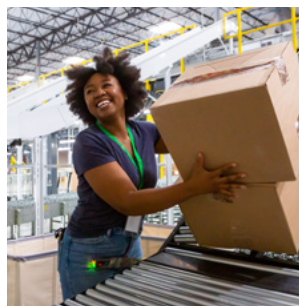


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Introduction

Peak shipping season brings a surge in order fulfillment activity and with it, many challenges for businesses that rely on smooth shipping operations. Being prepared is key to navigating this busy period and ensuring customer satisfaction. This Q&A exchange with ProShip experts dives into essential considerations for optimizing your Multi-Carrier Shipping Software (MCSS) to handle peak season demands.



Q&A with ProShip Experts

Optimizing MCSS for Peak Season

A smooth-running MCSS is vital for navigating peak season. This section explores how you can optimize your MCSS for peak season success through flawless integrations, proactive performance management, and strategic automation.



Integration & Data Management



Performance & Scalability



Business Rules & Automation





Integration & Data Management

Dive deeper into preparations for smooth MCSS integration with other systems and strategies for ensuring data integrity during peak volume.

Q What plans do we need to make for a seamless integration between our MCSS and our Warehouse Management System (WMS), Order Management System (OMS), or Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system to optimize order fulfillment and operations?

A Streamlined data exchange is crucial. Ensure your systems can communicate in real-time to avoid delays and errors. Consider API integrations or established connectors for optimal functionality. Also, understanding how your MCSS has integrated with your other systems (whether with Manhattan Associates, Blue Yonder, Körber Supply Chain, or other technology providers) in the past, can help you determine the best path of integration and data flow for your own operations. Vast knowledge from past integration experience is vital.

Q Beyond basic functionality, are there advanced integration features that can further optimize order fulfillment during peak season?

A Absolutely. Real-time data exchange ensures order information and shipping details are constantly updated across systems, minimizing inventory discrepancies and shipping delays during peak volume.

Q How can we ensure data integrity and minimize errors during the integration process, especially when dealing with high transaction volumes during peak season?

A Regular regression testing is critical. This involves running test shipments that encompass various scenarios to identify and rectify potential data integrity issues before peak season. Additionally, stress testing your servers during off-peak hours can help identify performance bottlenecks within your MCSS and ensure it can handle the high transaction volumes typical of peak season.



Performance & Scalability

Discover proactive measures to assess MCSS health, recommended performance metrics, and strategies for handling peak season surges through testing, monitoring, and cloud-based solutions.

Q What proactive measures can we take to assess the health and performance of our MCSS before peak season?

A Many leading shipping software providers offer health assessments. ProShip offers a yearly Peak Server Assessment project that analyzes your system and identifies areas for improvement. Additionally, your system administrator should perform regular health checks to monitor server performance metrics like processing times, error rates, and resource utilization (CPU, memory, disk space). Identifying potential bottlenecks early allows for proactive adjustments to ensure your MCSS can handle peak volume surges.

Q How can we develop a comprehensive testing plan that simulates peak season volume and identifies potential issues within MCSS and its integration with other systems?

A Create a repository of test shipments encompassing various scenarios you might encounter during peak season. Include edge cases and situations that have caused issues in the past. Automate testing requests whenever possible to streamline the process and allow for rapid simulations of high-volume situations. Continuously update your test suite as you encounter new issues or implement changes to your shipping processes.



Q What is the recommended frequency for conducting performance testing throughout the year, leading up to peak season?

A *While at least one comprehensive test before peak season is highly recommended, ProShip suggests ongoing performance testing throughout the year. Many customers perform tests in conjunction with ProShip automatic updates or Windows updates.*



Q How can we make sure our MCSS remains adaptable knowing a code freeze is coming?

A *Proactive planning is key. While code freezes may limit last-minute changes, there are still steps you can take to ensure your MCSS remains adaptable during peak season. Identify essential business rules and automation processes you want to implement before the code freeze. This could involve prioritizing cost-effective shipping options during peak season or streamlining end-of-day processing tasks. If you have a non-production environment that mirrors your production setup, consider developing and testing potential enhancements there during the code freeze. These enhancements could be implemented after the freeze lifts, providing additional adaptability for peak season.*

Q What specific performance metrics should we monitor to proactively identify potential bottlenecks within MCSS before peak season?

A *ProShip recommends compression testing to proactively identify bottlenecks. This involves accumulating a significant number of orders (1,000-10,000) during a non-peak day. While orders accumulate, core teams train and check onboarding procedures for any new workers. Once training is complete, a goal is set to process these orders through picking, packing, shipping, and trailer loading within a specific timeframe. This timeframe should reflect your desired peak season processing speed. This exercise exposes bottlenecks or confirms your system's ability to handle peak volume, allowing for adjustments before peak arrives.*



Business Rules & Automation

Understand how to leverage business rules to prioritize shipping criteria and discuss the importance of automation for streamlining processes.

Q What are the top 3 business rules we should have in place to optimize peak season operations?

A While specific needs vary, some generally recommended rules include:

- Rate shopping to secure the most cost-effective shipping options while offering and meeting for Estimated Delivery Date (EDD).
- Historical data writeback to track trends and optimize future shipments.
- Automatic closeouts or end-of-day processing routines, such as ProShip Scheduled Scripting and Tracking (PSST), to streamline end-of-day processing.

Q How can we leverage business rules to prioritize specific shipping criteria during peak season?

A Business rules can be powerful tools for prioritizing specific shipping criteria during peak season. You can configure rules to prioritize cost-efficiency, delivery speed, or a balance between both based on your business goals. For example, a rule might prioritize the most affordable service for standard orders during off-peak times but switch to prioritizing faster shipping options for all orders during peak season to meet customer expectations.

Q In addition to bug fixes, can we implement any essential rule changes or automation processes during the code freeze period to optimize peak season operations?

A While most MCSS don't enforce code freezes, many businesses implement them during peak season to maintain system stability. Here's how you can potentially leverage this period for improvements:

- **Limited Changes, Big Impact:** Focus on critical rule changes and automation processes that can significantly enhance your peak season operations. Your MCSS team can help you identify areas where automation can streamline workflows and improve efficiency.
- **Planning & Development:** If you anticipate a code freeze, consider planning essential rule changes and automation processes in advance. You can potentially work with your MCSS to develop and test these functionalities within a non-production environment during the freeze. This way, you're prepared to implement them as soon as the freeze lifts, maximizing your readiness for peak season.

Q&A with ProShip Experts

Ensuring On-Time Deliveries

Meeting customer expectations for on-time deliveries is paramount during peak season. This section shares MCSS features that empower you to secure cost-effective shipping options, navigate potential carrier constraints, and ensure your packages arrive on time.



Advanced Rate Shopping & Carrier Management



Advanced Delivery Features





Advanced Rate Shopping & Carrier Management

Explore how advanced features help secure cost-effective rates and mitigate carrier capacity constraints during peak season surcharges.

Q How can we leverage rate shopping features to secure the most cost-effective shipping options during peak season surcharges?

A Top-tier vendors offer advanced rate shopping functionality which allows you to compare rates from multiple carriers in real-time, including any peak season surcharges. This ensures you're always selecting the most cost-effective option for each shipment, even during peak season.

Watch [\[Parcel Shipping via ProShip\] What is Rate Shopping?](#) video to learn the 3 types of rate shopping ProShip offers.

Q What strategies can we employ to balance shipment volume across different carriers to mitigate potential capacity constraints with any single provider during peak season?

A Many MCSS partners offer Carrier Volume Balancing (CVB) logic. This feature allows you to distribute your shipment volume across different carriers based on pre-defined criteria. This helps mitigate the risk of exceeding capacity limits with any single carrier during peak season, ensuring on-time deliveries.





Advanced Delivery Features

Learn how advanced shipping features, such as Advanced Date Shopping (ADS), help estimate accurate delivery dates and how leveraging multiple carriers minimizes disruption risks.

Q How can features like Advanced Date Shopping (ADS) help estimate accurate Estimated Delivery Dates for our customers during peak season?

A ProShip's [Advanced Date Shopping \(ADS\) module](#) considers factors like carrier non-processing days (holidays, weekends), service level transit times, label creation time, customer choice, trailer pull times, and more to provide the most accurate estimated delivery date. This allows you to set realistic expectations for customers and avoid last-minute shipping scrambles.

Watch the [How ProShip Advanced Date Shopping Carrier Rate Shopping Works video](#) to see a detailed demonstration.

Q Does MCSS offer any features or functionalities that can help us anticipate and navigate potential disruptions caused by weather events or labor disputes during peak season?

A It's important to understand that ProShip is a multi-carrier shipping software solution, not a carrier itself. ProShip doesn't manage deliveries; it helps you process shipments and select carriers based on your contracts.

However, MCSS empowers you to navigate potential disruptions in two key ways:

- **Multiple Carrier Support:** MCSS offers modules for a wide range of carriers, and for ProShip, the list of both on-platform and API carrier connections continues to grow. Additionally, ProShip can handle non-supported carriers through custom integrations, creating a "Generic Carrier" option.
- **Self-Serve Carrier Switching Flexibility:** If a carrier experiences disruptions due to weather or labor disputes, MCSS flexibility allows you to seamlessly switch to a different carrier you have a contract with. This minimizes the impact on your deliveries by leveraging alternative shipping options.

It's important to note that ProShip cannot predict disruptions caused by external factors. However, having contracts with multiple carriers and the ability to switch between them significantly enhances your preparedness for unforeseen events during peak season.

For businesses with specific requirements regarding carrier overrides in case of disruptions, ProShip can potentially handle this need through custom integration projects. This could be a valuable consideration for companies that rely heavily on specific carriers during peak season.

Q How do you ensure your customers receive their products on time and before the holiday cutoff?

A Most leading MCSS offers several solutions to ensure on-time deliveries before holiday cutoffs:

- **Advanced Date Shopping (ADS):** As mentioned previously, ProShip's ADS is a powerful tool that considers 9 data sets to provide accurate Estimated Delivery Dates (EDD). This helps you select shipping options that meet your customer's desired delivery window before holiday deadlines.
- **Rate Shopping with Time-in-Transit:** While not as precise as ADS, rate shopping with a focus on time-in-transit allows you to select services that have a guaranteed delivery window that meets your holiday cutoff needs.
- **Custom Integration:** Your MCSS's integration team can develop specialized processes tailored to your specific holiday cutoff logic.

Q How can we leverage MCSS to streamline the return process and expedite customer requests, especially during peak season when return volumes might increase?

A While ensuring on-time deliveries is crucial, a smooth return process is also essential during peak season. Your MCSS should offer functionalities to streamline the return process, including:

- **Return Label Generation:** Generate return shipping labels directly within your MCSS, eliminating manual processes and expediting the return initiation for customers.
- **Return Tracking:** Allow customers to easily track the progress of their return shipment through your MCSS, improving transparency and customer satisfaction.
- **Automated Return Authorizations (RMAs):** Set up rules within your MCSS to automatically authorize returns based on predefined criteria, reducing manual workload and expediting the return process during peak season.





Support

Even with the best planning, unforeseen circumstances can arise during peak shipping season. Elite MCSS partners are committed to providing exceptional support to ensure your shipping operations run smoothly.

Q

How do you handle software updates and maintenance, especially during critical shipping periods?

A

ProShip prioritizes minimal disruption during peak seasons with our versionless deployment model and streamlined software update process. This means you always have access to the latest features and bug fixes without worrying about compatibility issues or managing specific software versions.

We offer two primary update methods:

- **Automatic Updates (Recommended):** The majority of ProShip customers utilize ProShip's Automatic Updates feature, which leverages the ProShip Scheduling & Tracking module (PSST). PSST automatically downloads and applies updates during scheduled "Daily Maintenance" events, typically occurring at 5:00 AM server time (this time can be customized). ProShip software updates do not require the stopping of the shipping services to be applied. This ensures your system remains current with the latest features and bug fixes without manual intervention.
- **Manual Updates:** While not recommended, some customers prefer to manage updates manually. This requires your IT team to download and apply updates on a regular basis (e.g., weekly or bi-weekly). However, ProShip's Automatic Updates are a reliable and efficient option to ensure your system stays up-to-date during peak season and year-round.

In addition to update methods, ProShip provides a comprehensive support ecosystem. This includes a user-friendly ticketing system, a knowledge base packed with articles and documentation (ProCyclopedia), and both a dedicated Strategic Account Manager and Customer Advocate. Our in-house development and 24/7/365 support teams offer a unique advantage, giving you direct access to the experts behind ProShip.

Q Do you have carrier quotas you need to meet to keep your volume discounts?

A

ProShip does not have carrier quotas, and we operate with a carrier-agnostic approach. This means we don't push specific carriers or prioritize them based on any incentives we might receive. Any volume discounts or quotas are determined by your individual contracts with each carrier. It's important to note that ProShip does help you manage your parcel volume to ensure you're hitting your volume minimums and not exceeding maximums with Carrier Volume Balancing (CBV).

Q What support resources does ProShip offer to help us navigate peak season challenges?

A

ProShip offers a comprehensive suite of support resources to assist you during peak season, including:

- **Dedicated 24/7/365 Peak Season Support Team:** ProShip assigns a dedicated, in-house support team to ensure you have direct access to specialists during peak season.
- **Knowledge Base:** ProShip's extensive knowledge base offers a wealth of articles, tutorials, and FAQs to answer your questions and guide you through common shipping processes.
- **Webinars and Training:** ProShip offers live and on-demand webinars on various shipping topics, including best practices for peak season success.
- **Strategic Account Managers:** ProShip offers a team of dedicated representatives (outside of their Customer Advocates who help with support issues) to provide proactive consultations to identify optimization opportunities and ensure you leverage ProShip to its full potential during peak season. By leveraging these resources, you can access the information and support you need to navigate peak season challenges and ensure your shipping operations run smoothly.



Conclusion

Peak season can be a hectic time for businesses, but with the right strategies and tools in place, you can navigate the surge in activity efficiently and profitably. MCSS empowers you to optimize your shipping processes for peak season success.

By leveraging advanced MCSS functionalities, you can:

- *Ensure on-time deliveries despite peak season surcharges*
- *Gain insights into potential bottlenecks and proactively address scalability concerns*
- *Maintain flexibility and adaptability in the face of unforeseen disruptions*
- *Streamline return processing to enhance customer satisfaction*



Don't wait until peak season arrives to optimize your MCSS. ProShip offers a variety of resources to help you prepare, including:

- **Peak Season Readiness Assessment:** Identify areas for improvement and ensure your MCSS is ready for the upcoming season.
- **Educational Webinars:** Gain valuable insights on best practices for peak season shipping strategies.
- **Dedicated Support Team:** Get expert assistance from ProShip specialists throughout the peak season.

Contact ProShip today for a discovery call to learn more about how our MCSS can help you achieve peak season success!



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See why top companies **trust** ProShip to optimize their peak season.

Top retail/e-commerce shippers **trust** ProShip multi-carrier shipping software to keep their peak season shipping operations running smoothly. **Schedule a discovery call** with a ProShip Parcel Expert to learn how we can optimize yours.

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