A Guide to Paper Packaging

How to add paper packaging to your operation and become more sustainable.

Navigating the switch to paper packaging doesn't have to be overwhelming.

Paper packaging is a fast-growing space as brands and retailers seek out more sustainable packaging solutions that consumers will recognize and reward with loyalty. This global acceleration in sustainable packaging is exciting and necessary. But rushing to add more paper packaging to your fulfillment operation without careful consideration might cause higher damage rates, higher freight costs, and unexpected equipment downtime. This guide is your tool to implement paper packaging and avoid those mistakes.

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5 Things to Consider When Making the Switch to Paper Packaging

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Whether you're making the switch to paper packaging for the first time, expanding the product SKUs you want to protect with paper, or switching to a new paper application, this guide will walk through important considerations and steps to effectively implement paper in your operation to:

Protect against damage

Increase packing productivity and throughput speeds

Reduce system downtime

Boost sustainability efforts

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1 Identify Your Goals and Pressure Points

Identify the reasons why you're making the switch. Are you feeling pressure from inside your organization to improve your sustainability scorecard? Are your customers reaching out with complaints or requests for recyclable packaging? Here are some common goals and pressure points for companies today.

Increase Sustainability

For brands looking to make responsible choices in packaging material, paper remains a top pick for being recyclable as well as being made from renewable resources. If sustainability is a top concern for you, it's important to get perspective on what's driving the demand. It could be:

Internal pressure to improve corporate sustainability practices from:

- Company leadership
- Investors
- Marketing and sales

External pressure from customers who prefer:

- Companies that show a commitment to sustainability
- Packaging materials that are easy to recycle or made with recycled materials

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Improve Fulfillment Operations

Is your operation as productive and efficient as you need it to be? Are you hitting your KPI targets? Perform a fulfillment assessment to identify areas of your operation that need improvement. Rank your objectives in order and keep them in mind to ensure your switch to paper packaging solves your specific needs.

Decrease damage rates and minimize returns

If you're experiencing high damage rates (and the unhappy customers who receive those damaged products), consider the type of packing application. Depending on your product, you may need to switch to paper void fill, or switch from paper void fill to heavy-duty paper cushioning.

Pack faster and more efficiently

Slow packing speeds can be attributed to many things. If you're struggling with slow packing speeds or packers wasting material in the process, it might be time to consider semi-automated systems that keep pace with your packers and standardize how much material is being used.

Increase order throughput

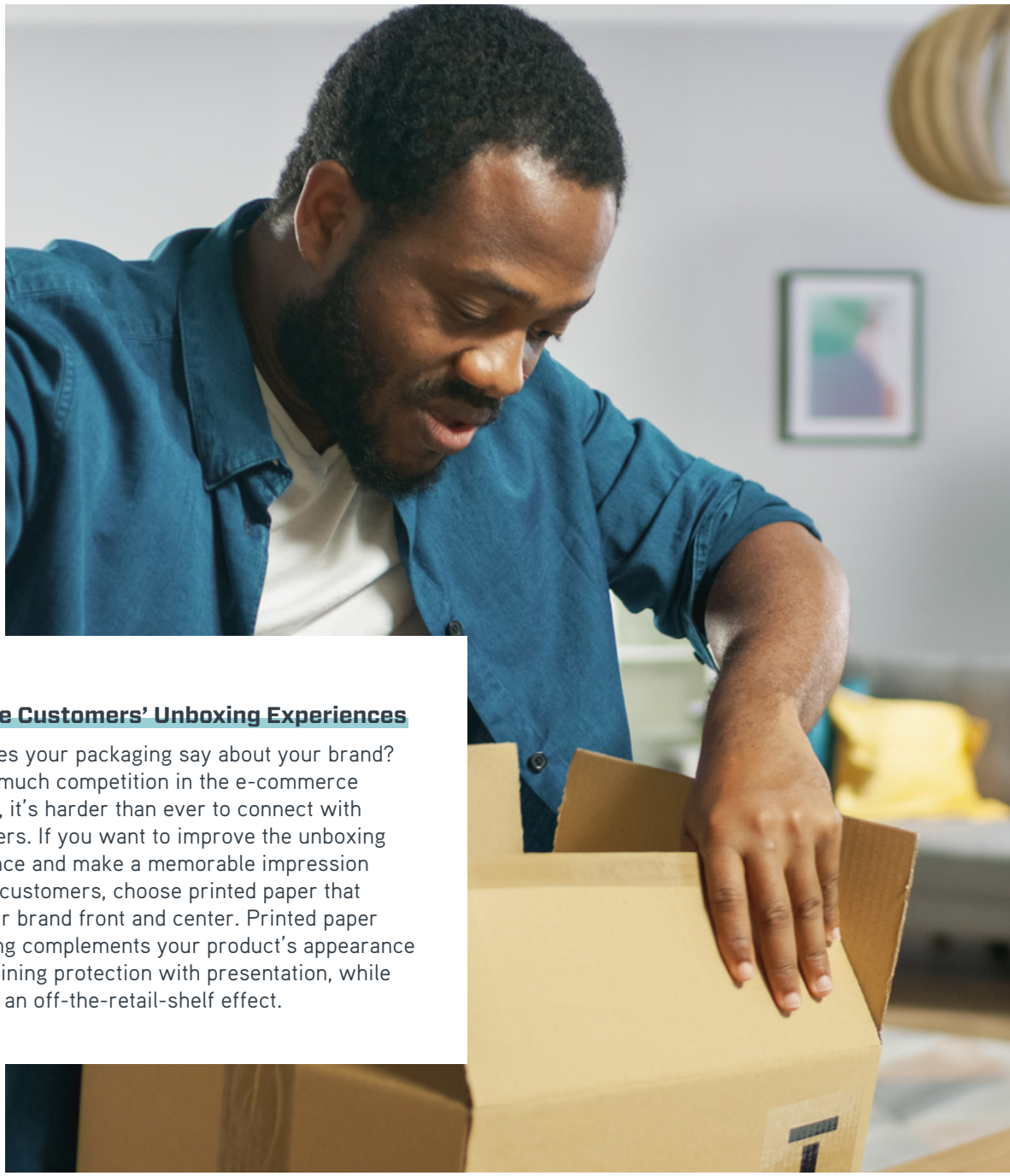
Demand can increase at any moment, especially for e-commerce fulfillment companies. If you're stuck with a paper system that slows you down, look for on-demand paper systems with multiple programmed speeds. Automated paper systems can perform as your complexity and throughput intensifies and flex to meet your throughput targets today — even the unpredictable ones — and build your capacity for growth tomorrow.

Decrease shipping costs

Would you like to reduce the dimensional weight of your box and pay less for shipping? It's time to rightsize your box and stop wasting ineffective void fill materials. Remember, not all paper is created equal. Look for paper suppliers whose materials protects against damage but require less material to perform. Using less materials also boosts your sustainability by consuming less paper.

Optimize labor resources

Labor continues to be a top concern for fulfillment operations. When selecting paper systems, ease of use and reliability are key. Hunt for on-demand paper solutions that require little to no training and make packing faster and easier for your workers. One way to optimize labor is by picking paper systems with high capacity trays that require less changeovers, meaning more production uptime. As a bonus, the more efficient your packers are, the more freedom you'll gain to relocate labor to other parts of your operation that require it.



Improve Customers' Unboxing Experiences

What does your packaging say about your brand? With so much competition in the e-commerce industry, it's harder than ever to connect with consumers. If you want to improve the unboxing experience and make a memorable impression on your customers, choose printed paper that puts your brand front and center. Printed paper packaging complements your product's appearance by combining protection with presentation, while creating an off-the-retail-shelf effect.

Did You Know? Online shoppers aren't ready to give up the bells and whistles that come from brick-and-mortar merchandising.

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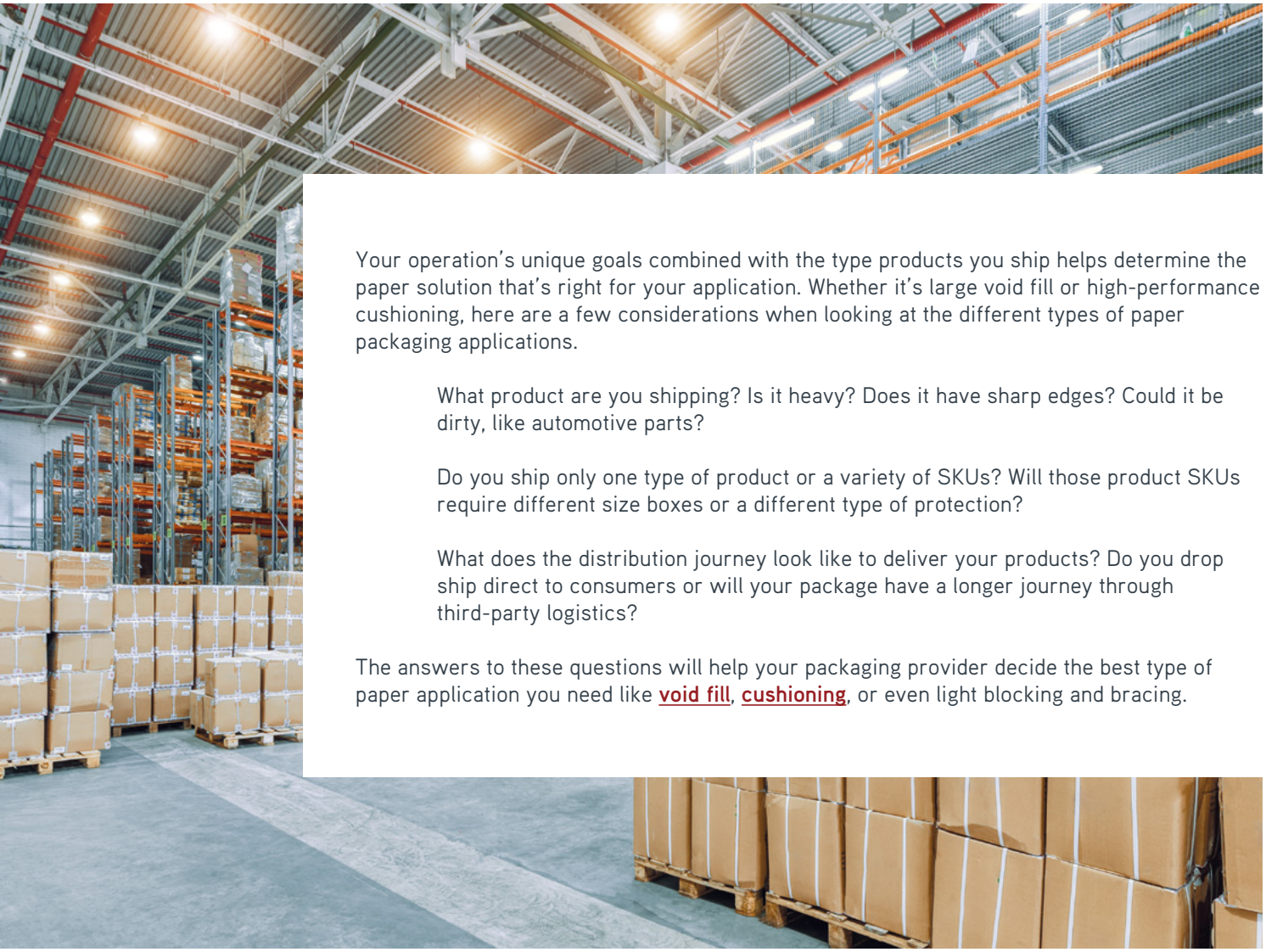
2 Determine Your Ideal Paper Application



Your operation's unique goals combined with the type products you ship helps determine the paper solution that's right for your application. Whether it's large void fill or high-performance cushioning, here are a few considerations when looking at the different types of paper packaging applications.

> What product are you shipping? Is it heavy? Does it have sharp edges? Could it be dirty, like automotive parts?
>
> Do you ship only one type of product or a variety of SKUs? Will those product SKUs require different size boxes or a different type of protection?
>
> What does the distribution journey look like to deliver your products? Do you drop ship direct to consumers or will your package have a longer journey through third-party logistics?

The answers to these questions will help your packaging provider decide the best type of paper application you need like **void fill**, **cushioning**, or even light blocking and bracing.

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3 Align the Paper Solutions to Your Operation

Yes, acquiring the right mix of paper solutions is crucial. But you can't neglect considering how all your equipment will work together. You need an expert who can do both — provide top performing paper solutions and will design and optimize your entire fulfillment environment. Consider the following recommendations to ensure your paper solutions are optimized for success right from the start.

Packing Operation Setup

Do you have a manual packing process with individual pack stations?	Consider →	Manual or on-demand paper solutions that improve your packer's productivity
Do you have iInline fulfillment with automated packaging lines?	Consider →	On-demand paper solutions to increase throughput speed
Do you have a mix of manual pack stations and inline automation?	Consider →	Paper solutions that can adapt to different fulfillment environments, depending on your needs

Operation Size and Order Throughput

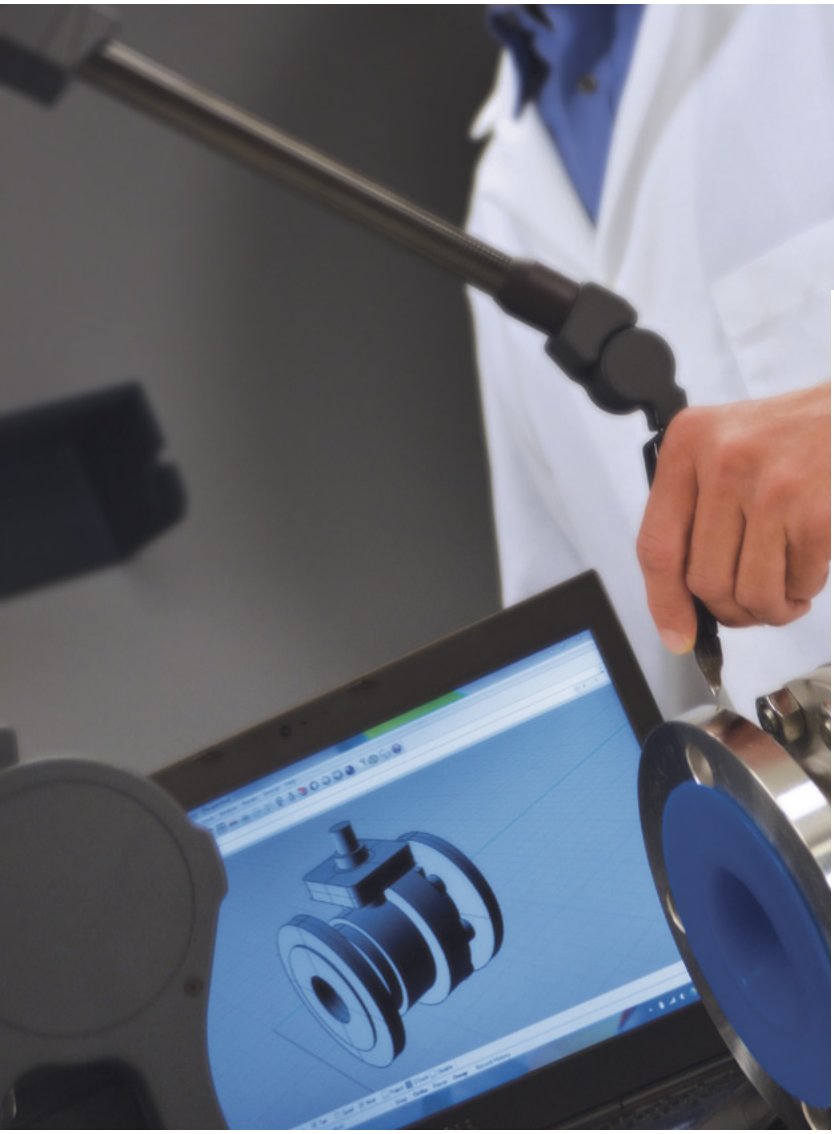
Are you a low-volume shipper?	Consider →	Small size, manual paper solutions that are low-cost, easy to use, and easy to store
Are you a high-volume shipper?	Consider →	Durable, on-demand paper solutions that are reliable and reduce downtime
Need flexibility to accommodate changes in demand or peak seasons?	Consider →	Paper solutions that can instantly scale production up or down, depending on your needs

4 Ask for an In-Depth Packaging Value Analysis

Can you prove the ROI of implementing a new paper solution? Do you have data to substantiate your decision and guarantee to your leadership that it will achieve your packaging goals? Don't commit to work with any packaging supplier until you have an in-depth packaging value analysis (PVA).

PVAs are data-driven documents that illustrate the value and savings you will realize with a particular packaging solution. As the customer, you'll supply baseline information about your operation (think product SKUs, order volumes, packaging mix, labor costs, and damage rates). Then, your packaging provider will show the benefits of optimizing your existing systems or implementing new paper solutions. These savings you might see include labor, shipping, material costs, storage, and more.

5 Test Your Package Design With the Experts



Ensure your paper packaging solution can protect and perform before you ship your first order. Have your package design tested with labs that are equipped to perform a range of industry-standard tests using simulated and real-world conditions such as shock, vibration, and compression. Look for testing facilities that:

- Understand the shipping and distribution environment
- Define the fragility of the product
- Select the appropriate packaging material
- Design the prototype package
- Verify the package through industry standard testing

By selecting the appropriate pre-shipment test procedure, you can be confident in the safe arrival of your products wherever their destination may be.

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