Your guide to repositioning for global trade
Together, we deliver

The business landscape has been curtailed dramatically by efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19 but with some countries now beginning to ease restrictions, companies could start to see new possibilities, especially when taking a more global view.

Our guide is designed to help you put your business in a position to successfully look further afield to new markets, to consider new ways of operating and to be prepared for trading internationally in a recovering world.
Prepare for ‘business as unusual’

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a dramatic impact on trade across the world. If you’re looking to explore alternative markets, you should prepare your business as well as you can. Build resilience where possible, structure your business to be flexible, and select service providers you can rely on.

This situation likely won’t last forever, so stay focused on your long-term plans – including any changes you may already have been considering to your import and export operations or supplier network.

Search out potential

Some countries have been more greatly affected by COVID-19 than others, and restrictions are being imposed and eased at different paces around the world. If you’re looking to find alternative import or export markets, identifying those where trade is being conducted with a greater degree of freedom could be a sensible strategy.

China is one country that has recently been easing restrictions and attempting to get back to ‘business as usual’. The International Monetary Fund forecasts that China and other emerging economies will have a less severe economic contraction in 2020 than developed nations, as well as a stronger rebound in 2021¹. FedEx can help you ship successfully to China and the Asia Pacific region, with the strength of our AsiaOne® network and dedicated direct flights to and from China and Vietnam. Find out more details about our shipping services.*

*Please note: we are adapting some of our services to reflect the rapidly changing situation across the world. For details about the current availability of our services, click here.

Target your e-commerce effectively

Selling online can be one of the simplest ways to become a global exporter, but it’s important to employ the most effective strategies for your chosen markets. Do you need to translate your website, or offer alternative delivery options to cater to different customer preferences?

The way customers shop online is also a key consideration. For example, if you are looking to China, then it may be best to partner with an established online platform rather than launching your own website in the country – at least in the beginning. See our guide for more information on delivering e-commerce in uncertain times.

Clear customs quickly

One of the most important ways to help ensure successful shipping is to get the paperwork right, so that your goods clear customs quickly and efficiently. If you’re shipping to unfamiliar markets, it’s really worth doing your research and understanding exactly what you need to complete and how, as well as researching whether there are any restrictions or tariffs on particular goods or materials.

Make sure you have the correct Harmonised System (HS) codes for all the goods in your shipments, record details accurately, and ensure you fill in all necessary documentation correctly. The FedEx Global Trade Manager tool can help customers to find the correct international paperwork and HS codes (see our video to learn more about HS codes), while you can also use our FedEx® Electronic Trade Documents service to help ensure a smooth clearance process.

Bolster your infrastructure

Broadening the markets you are trading with can mean enlarging your infrastructure domestically to cater to different demands. You may need to consider lengthening your customer service operating hours, for example, or employing people with certain language skills.

If you will need to import more raw materials to cater to higher demand, it’s worth assessing whether your current suppliers are able to meet your requirements or if you need to widen your base. Doing this could also reduce risks in your supply chain, particularly if you increase the number of countries or regions you import from. With the uncertainties that COVID-19 is bringing to global trade, this is something that could be worth thinking about.

As well as imports, you should also make sure your distribution infrastructure is adequate. Remember that you may also be dealing with returns or repairs from further afield than you are used to. FedEx® Global Returns can help support you in this with a streamlined solution that gives more control to both you and your customers.

Get local knowledge

It can be difficult to get a true understanding of overseas markets, so it’s a good idea to get as much local knowledge as you can to position your business and your proposition in the most effective way.

Consider differences in how businesses and people in other markets might wish to communicate with you, any product nuances or specifics that customers might prefer, and whether you’re able to supply customers in the ways they require.
8 Ship smartly and manage expectations

While parts of the world, including China, are beginning to emerge from the worst of the COVID-19 restrictions, the situation is fluid and your chosen region may still be experiencing some level of disruption.

This can affect timings for shipments, which may have an impact on both your imports and exports. It’s a good idea to build this into your production schedule, if relevant, and keep customers up-to-date on any constraints you are facing.

FedEx can leverage its own fleet of privately-owned cargo planes, meaning we can offer a relatively stable, reliable global network.

Helping you to trade globally

The COVID-19 outbreak has affected trade significantly but we have continued to operate around the world, connecting businesses to customers and helping to support international commerce.

You can rest assured that we will continue to do so. Our extensive global network can help you to find new possibilities around the world – whether that’s closer to home in Europe or further afield in locations such as the US, Latin America, the Middle East or Asia Pacific.*

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