
Reduce Risk and Strengthen Your Negotiating Position with a Diversified Parcel Carrier Mix

A practical checklist for building a more flexible small parcel strategy

INTRODUCTION

The carrier you depend on shapes the cost, reliability, and flexibility of your entire shipping operation.

When most or all your parcel volume runs through one carrier, such as UPS or FedEx, every decision that carrier makes becomes your problem.

Every rate increase or new surcharge applies across your entire network. A service change or disruption at that carrier can affect every package you send. And when your contract comes up for renewal, your carrier knows you have few other options, which weakens your position before the conversation starts.

The past few years have made these risks harder to ignore. Aside from annual general rate increases (GRI), national, regional, and alternative carriers have added new surcharges, revised their fuel surcharge tables, and changed the criteria that trigger existing fees. Labor disruptions have added service risk. Your costs and service conditions can change at any time of year.

Carrier diversification can address both problems.

A tested secondary carrier protects you when your primary carrier raises costs or struggles to deliver, and it gives you a credible alternative when your contract comes up for renewal. Diversifying also does not mean walking away from your current carrier.

The data and preparation behind a diversified strategy strengthen your position with your current carrier, even if most of your volume stays where it is. And you can build flexibility gradually, one portion of your network at a time, without disrupting the parts of your operation that already work.

The five steps that follow outline what a diversified carrier strategy requires, whether you ship with a single carrier today or already use more than one without a clear plan. Use them as a checklist. Each step ends with a question to answer before you move on, so you know whether that part of your strategy is in place.

The goal is to create a shipping network that is never one bad quarter away from a crisis.

SIDEBAR · THE LAST 12 MONTHS

A Few of 2026's Carrier Changes

Aside from annual general rate increases (GRIs), carriers across the market changed pricing throughout 2026. UPS and FedEx alone made nearly 50 pricing and surcharge changes. A few examples:

UPS	UPS raised its domestic Ground fuel surcharge to 21.75% in January, the first of four domestic fuel surcharge changes this year.
USPS	USPS raised Ground Advantage rates an average of 7.8% in January, added the first package surcharge in its history, a temporary 8%, in April, and began billing parcels under 1 pound at the 16-ounce rate in July.
FedEx	FedEx added 112 ZIP codes to its Delivery Area and Pickup Area Surcharge lists in July.
OnTrac	After a January base rate increase, OnTrac raised its peak large package charge 4.8%, to \$110.
Amazon Shipping	Amazon Shipping raised its residential ground peak fee 25%, to \$0.50 in shoulder weeks and \$0.75 at peak, and applies it to commercial packages as well.

01

01 STEP ONE

Know Your Current Shipping Profile

Before you add another carrier, you need a clear picture of what you ship today.

STEP ONE

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Carrier diversification starts with data. Without an accurate picture of your current shipping profile, you cannot tell which packages could move to another carrier, where your contract gives you room to negotiate, or whether an alternative carrier can meet your needs.

A COMPLETE SHIPPING PROFILE ANSWERS THESE QUESTIONS

- ☐ **Origins and zones:** Where do your packages ship from, and how far do they travel?
- ☐ **Weight:** What are your most common weight breaks?
- ☐ **Service level:** How much of your volume ships by expedited service compared with standard ground?
- ☐ **Package characteristics:** Which dimensions and packaging configurations do you rely on most?
- ☐ **Residential mix:** How much of your volume goes to residential addresses compared with commercial ones?
- ☐ **Accessorial exposure:** Which surcharges and fees appear on your invoices most often?

Answering these questions takes more than a spreadsheet. First, you need to collect data from all carriers. Next, you must normalize the data, then analyze it, before it can tell you anything useful. That work grows with volume. This is where a parcel partner with the right technology and experience does the heavy lifting for you.

Flexible and sticky volume

A complete profile separates your volume into two categories: flexible and sticky. Flexible shipments can move to another carrier without affecting delivery times or your operation.

Sticky shipments are harder to move because they depend on a specific carrier's capabilities, transit times, contractual commitments, or customer requirements.

It is fine if much of your volume turns out to be sticky. Moving even a portion of your network can open new options. The same profile also gives you a consistent basis for comparing carrier proposals, because every offer is measured against your real shipment data.

	● Flexible volume	● Sticky volume
WHAT IT IS	Shipments that can move to another carrier without affecting delivery times or your operation	Shipments tied to a specific carrier's capabilities, transit times, or terms
COMMON EXAMPLES	Standard ground parcels, lightweight residential packages, and destinations in dense metro areas that secondary carriers serve well	Time-definite expedited shipments, customer-mandated carriers, specialized handling, and rural or remote destinations
WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU	Your first candidates for a pilot with a secondary carrier	Volume that stays put for now, and that still counts toward your contract's discount tiers

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON



Do we know which portion of our parcel volume could realistically move to another carrier?

“

Every carrier conversation starts with your own data. If you cannot see which shipments drive your costs, you cannot tell which ones could move, and you cannot negotiate with confidence. The companies that get the best outcomes know their shipping profile better than their carrier does.”

Louis DeJianne

VP of Operations, TransImpact

02

02 STEP TWO

Identify Viable Secondary Carrier Options

Once you know what you ship today, the next step is finding carriers that could realistically handle a portion of that volume.

STEP TWO

At this stage, you are looking for where another provider could complement your existing network. Replacing your primary carrier overnight is rarely necessary.

90%

of companies now use more than one carrier

32%

use four or more

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Depending on your shipping profile, your options could include a variety of alternatives. Studies show that about 90% of companies now use more than one carrier and 32% use four or more. In addition to the traditional FedEx and UPS duopoly, many national, regional, and alternative carriers now compete for your business. This is especially true for the lightest packages reaching residential addresses, where USPS used to be the mainstay – and where it's often expensive to ship. Examples include GoFo, OnTrac, DoorDash, and Amazon Shipping.

A viable secondary carrier meets the requirements that matter most to your customers and your operation:

- ☐ **Service area overlap:** Does the carrier serve the destinations that make up a meaningful portion of your volume?
- ☐ **Transit time parity:** Can it match delivery times for the shipments you plan to move?
- ☐ **Technology integration:** Can its systems and application programming interfaces (APIs) connect with your warehouse, order management, and fulfillment processes?
- ☐ **Claims handling:** Does its claims process meet your requirements?
- ☐ **Customer experience:** Would your customers notice a difference if that carrier delivered their orders?
- ☐ **Total cost:** Would the carrier lower your total shipping cost once surcharges and accessorials are included?

When you find a strong candidate, start small. A pilot is far less disruptive than a network-wide carrier change. Moving a defined lane, region, service type, or customer segment to the secondary carrier lets your team see how it performs before you expand the relationship.

The objective at this stage is optionality. You need confidence that another carrier can handle your shipments when you call on it, and that confidence comes from real-world experience.

Start small. Prove the model. Then expand.

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON

- ☐ Have we tested at least one secondary carrier on a defined portion of our network?

Today's Carrier Market

SEGMENT	EXAMPLES	WHERE THEY FIT
National	FedEx, UPS, USPS, Amazon, OnTrac, GoFo, UniUni	Broad reach — roughly 70–100% of the U.S. population, with many newcomers offering competitive rates over incumbents.
Regional & super-regional	LSO, GLS US	Own dense zones — LSO across Texas, GLS in the West. Often beat national transit times in footprint.
Last-mile & gig-enabled	Veho, Better Trucks, Jitsu, DoorDash	Flex capacity with demand. Strong on metro residential speed and delivery experience.
Consolidators & cross-border	APC, Asendia, DHL eCommerce	Carry the long haul, then hand off to a postal or regional last mile — account for that in any USPS comparison.
Heavy, oversized & white-glove	XPO, TForce	Bulky, freight-adjacent and in-home delivery beyond standard parcel dimensions.

03

03 STEP THREE

Build Contractual and Operational Flexibility

A secondary carrier only helps if you can move volume to it. Your contracts and your operation both need to make that practical.

STEP THREE

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Start with your carrier agreements. When you renew or negotiate a contract, watch for provisions that limit your ability to use other providers, and avoid long-term exclusivity clauses that restrict your options.

Then consider how much of your parcel volume you want concentrated with one carrier. There is no universal threshold. The right level depends on your network, your service requirements, and the alternatives available to you.



A WORD OF WARNING

Moving volume away from your primary carrier can drop you below the discount tiers or volume commitments in your contract. When that happens, you can lose discounts on the volume that stays, which raises your cost on every remaining package. Spotting that risk before it happens is complicated. An experienced negotiating partner, along with technology that monitors your shipments over time, helps protect the discounts you expect.

Your operation also must support the change. Moving volume should never depend on workarounds your team cannot sustain, so your warehouse and fulfillment systems need to handle multiple carriers without adding significant effort.

A flexible operation can answer yes to these questions:

- ☐ Can our shipping system rate and select multiple carriers?
- ☐ Can warehouse employees process shipments for any carrier without changing their workflow?
- ☐ Can our systems route shipments automatically based on service, cost, or destination?
- ☐ Can we track shipments from multiple carriers in one place?
- ☐ Can we audit and compare invoices across carriers?

Operational flexibility matters because a secondary carrier's value depends on your ability to use it. If moving volume requires new manual processes, a system overhaul, or major warehouse disruption, those costs can cancel out the advantage.

Flexibility only matters if your operation can use it.

BEFORE YOU MOVE ON

- ☐ Could we shift a meaningful portion of our volume without rebuilding our shipping operation?

Is your shipping software holding you back?

Many companies ship through software their carrier provides, such as UPS WorldShip or FedEx Ship Manager. These systems work well with that one carrier, which becomes the problem when you want to add another, because a second carrier means running a second system alongside the first and asking your warehouse team to maintain manual workarounds.

A multi-carrier shipping platform removes that barrier. It compares rates across carriers when a label is created, routes each shipment by the rules you set, and tracks every carrier's packages in one place. It also keeps your shipment data in a single format, which makes auditing and future negotiations far simpler.

04

Three ways to get more from your next carrier negotiation

Your discount is only the beginning of the story.

04 STEP FOUR

Use Data to Drive Carrier Negotiations

Diversification makes your shipping operation more resilient, and it changes the conversation at contract renewal. With complete shipment data and credible alternatives, you can weigh your carrier's proposal against real options.

STEP FOUR

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Going into a renewal, a strong negotiating position rests on:

- ☐ A complete, current shipment profile
- ☐ Your total shipping cost by shipment type
- ☐ Your accessorial and surcharge exposure
- ☐ Your historical shipping volume
- ☐ Performance data by carrier
- ☐ Quotes or proposals from secondary carriers

The question that matters at renewal is what the contract will cost across your real shipment profile. The new base rate is only one part of that answer. Once you know the full cost, you can compare it with what your alternatives offer.

A secondary carrier strengthens your position even if you never move volume to it. Showing your carrier that you have options can turn a routine renewal into a real negotiation.

Parcel contracts are complex, and the stakes grow with your volume. Many companies negotiating on their own do not know which terms are open to negotiation, from surcharge discounts to minimum charges and discount tiers. Evaluating even one carrier's proposal against your full shipment profile is difficult, and comparing several requires a platform that models each offer against your complete data. A partner that negotiates with carriers every day brings both: the technology to model each proposal, and the experience to know which terms matter most for your operation.

SIDE NOTE

The same analysis applies to annual rate increases, even when no renegotiation is underway. A carrier may announce its general rate increase as a percentage, but that figure rarely matches the change in your total shipping cost. Accessorials and surcharges can change the final impact considerably, and accurate modeling is often the only way to see it.

Your best negotiating position is knowing you have options.

**BEFORE YOU MOVE ON**

Are we negotiating against real alternatives and our total shipping cost?

05

05 STEP FIVE

Monitor and Adjust Continuously

Carrier diversification is ongoing work. Carrier pricing changes. Service performance changes. Your customer base and shipping profile change, and new carrier options emerge.

STEP FIVE

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Your carrier mix must be reviewed regularly, at least twice a year, to confirm that your current allocation still makes sense. Each review answers these questions:

- ☐ **On-time delivery:** Are carriers meeting expected service levels?
- ☐ **Damage rate:** Are certain carriers generating more damaged shipments?
- ☐ **Claims resolution:** How quickly and effectively are claims handled?
- ☐ **Cost:** Has your total shipping cost changed?
- ☐ **Surcharges:** Are new or rising accessorial charges changing the economics?
- ☐ **Volume allocation:** Is too much volume concentrated with one carrier?
- ☐ **Customer impact:** Are service differences affecting customer satisfaction?

Good answers depend on reviewing performance data and cost data together. A low-cost carrier becomes expensive when its service creates additional costs or causes customer problems. The carrier with the strongest service can also cost more than some shipments justify. The goal is a balanced, flexible network that can move volume when your economic or operational requirements change.

Parcel shipping generates a large amount of data, which makes it well suited to ongoing analysis. A partner that keeps your shipment and invoice data current in one system and runs these reviews on a regular schedule means you enter every contract renewal with current cost and performance data already in hand, and your day-to-day operation runs more smoothly.

Treat diversification as an ongoing discipline.



BEFORE YOU MOVE ON



Do we have a recurring process for reviewing carrier cost, performance, and volume allocation?

Where to Start

Start with Step 1. Your shipping profile is the foundation for everything else on this checklist. You cannot choose the right secondary carrier without knowing which shipments could move. You cannot decide how much volume to concentrate with one carrier without knowing where you stand today. And you cannot negotiate from data you do not have.

Progress also does not require completing the whole checklist at once. A company that knows its shipping profile, has a secondary carrier running on one defined lane, and enters its next renewal with real numbers is already better prepared, even with the remaining steps still in progress.

For many companies, the obstacle is resources. Analyzing data takes time, technology, and parcel expertise. TransImpact's Transportation Spend Management and Parcel Contract Negotiation services turn your shipment and invoice data into a clear picture of your carrier risk and the information you need to negotiate your next renewal with confidence.

Your Carrier Diversification Checklist

These five questions show where your carrier strategy stands today. Can't answer "yes"? Focus on that step next.

**01****Know Your Current Shipping Profile**

Do we know which portion of our parcel volume could realistically move to another carrier?

**02****Identify Viable Secondary Carrier Options**

Have we tested at least one secondary carrier on a defined portion of our network?

**03****Build Contractual and Operational Flexibility**

Could we move a meaningful portion of our volume without rebuilding our shipping operation?

**04****Use Data to Drive Carrier Negotiations**

Are we negotiating against real alternatives and our total shipping cost?

**05****Monitor and Adjust Continuously**

Do we have a recurring process for reviewing carrier cost, performance, and volume allocation?



Smarter Supply Chains. Stronger Margins.

To see where your parcel network stands,
request a call with our parcel experts.

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