

DISTRIBUTORS:

5 Challenges of B2B Ecommerce

AND HOW TO SOLVE THEM



Commerce and ERP systems don't always work for B2B use cases. Here's why.

It's time to revisit B2B order management.

Why? Because customer expectations are at an all-time high. And every B2B customer is a B2C shopper too. Driven by the seamless experiences of B2C ecommerce leaders, your B2B customers now expect more. It's no longer OK to offer a sub-par experience. Your customers expect more detailed status updates and on time delivery. What's more, many buyers are looking to reduce their inventory risk and want more just in time fulfillment. But this can pose unique challenges for distributors.

Distribution orders often have more moving parts. And the B2C centric commerce platforms weren't designed to handle this B2B complexity. So let's look at 5 distribution use cases and how a distributed order management system, like Fluent Order Management, can help solve them.

01. Preorders on future inventory

When it comes to stock availability, distribution is different. Most B2C systems are designed to track 'stock on hand'—what's available right now. But if you have long order lead times, that simply



doesn't work. You need a way to understand not just what's available today, but when new stock will become available in the future. And you need the ability to allocate that future inventory to an order. Fluent Order Management does just that. It lets you track, and promise against, inbound inventory. What's more you can create your own inventory statuses and use them in your fulfillment logic for even more control over how stock is allocated to an order.

In addition, if future inbound inventory won't let you ship complete from a single location, rather than splitting the shipment, with Fluent Order Management, you can also automatically trigger a location-to-location transfer based on the rules you define.

02. Orders sourced from multiple locations

When an order is placed, can you ship it from a single location? In some instances it may make more sense to ship from multiple locations where product is in stock rather than transfer stock to



consolidate a shipment, or when shipping from a smaller warehouse with order volume restrictions. Or you may have certain products that can only be shipped from specific locations.

For example, products that need:

- Specialized handling equipment for heavy or hazardous items that are only available in a specific warehouse
- Special truck types for transportation

Regardless of the reason, you'll need to split the order—which for some systems can be a challenge. With Fluent Order Management you can split an order many times and track those shipments separately, but still provide your customers with a single view of the order and detailed status for each shipment.

03. Orders that are open for weeks or months

B2C orders are quick. A customer places an order, it's shipped. Chances are the order was only



'in process' for a few days at most. But B2B orders are different. They are often placed months in advance. And may change over time. So you need a way to manage large volumes of orders that are still in process. In Fluent Order Management you can create your own order statuses, and create rules for when an order can be updated based on order status. What's more, if an order status needs to be updated based on a trigger or event from another system, you can automate that process.

04. Order status updates triggered by events from other systems

Distributors often have complex fulfillment processes. They may include both manual steps, or activities that occur in other systems.



For example:

- Fraud or credit checks
- Compliance or regulatory checks - can this product be sold/shipped to this customer or location
- Triggering payment at a specific time in the order process
- Invoicing
- Pricing finalization
- Managing value added services
- Entitlements verification
- Drop ship functions
- Complex fulfillment requirements
- Setting up services tickets or installation scheduling
- Exchanges/rebate considerations (e.g., automotive battery core exchange, used containers, etc.)

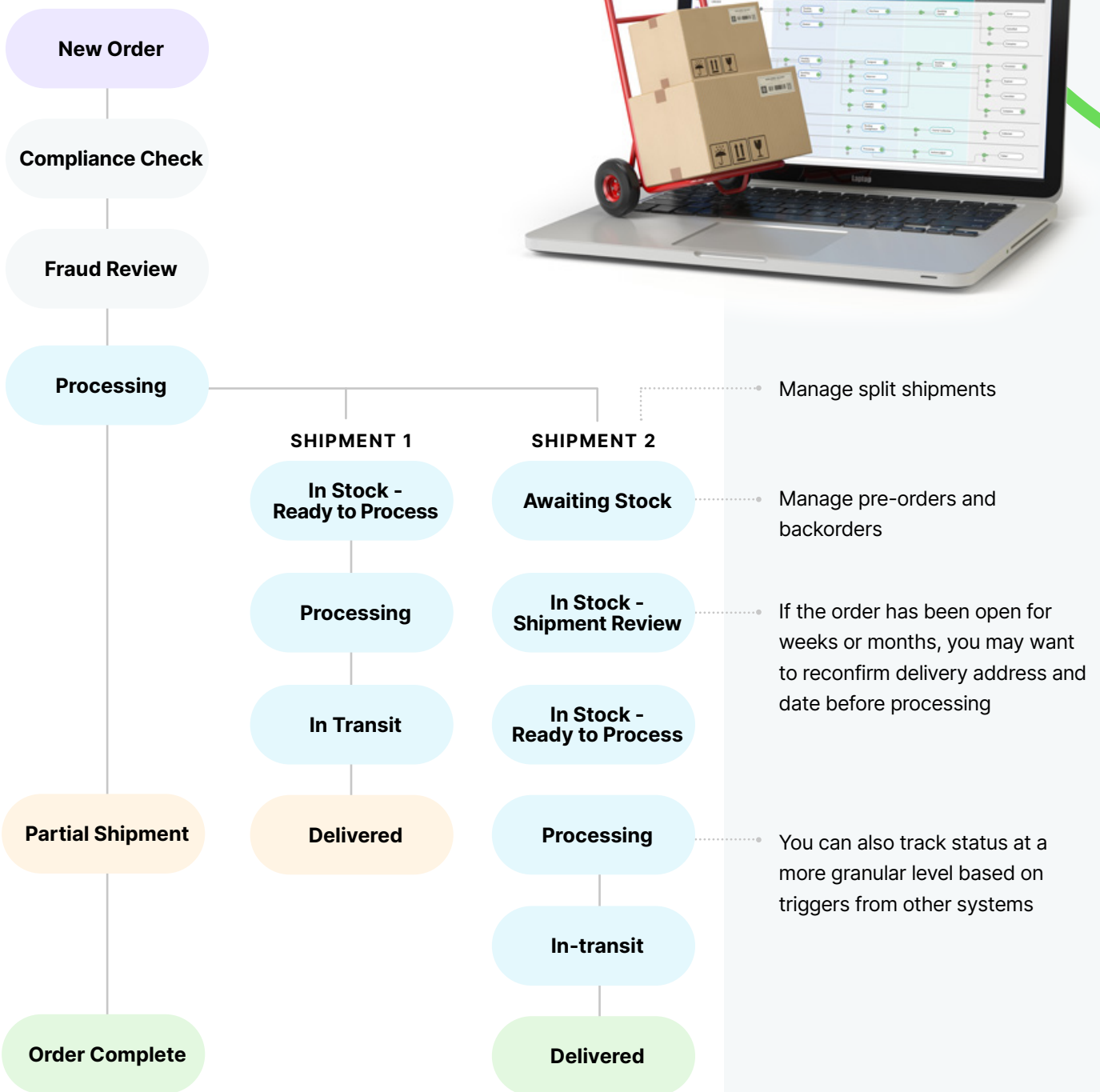
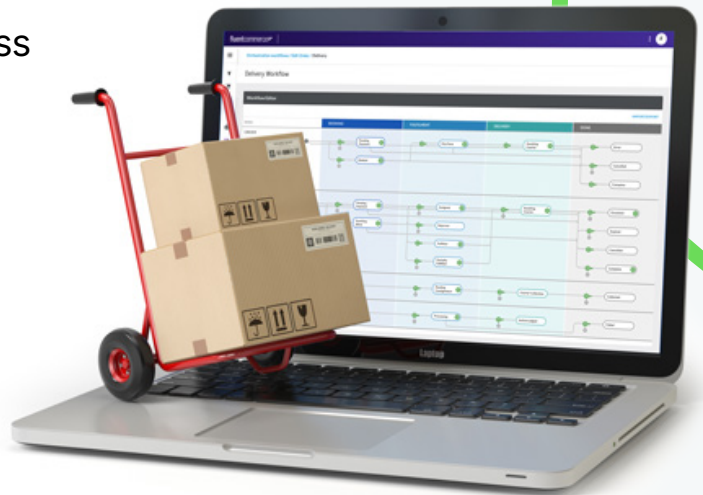


With Fluent Order Management, you can create rules that will update order statuses based on triggers or events received from other systems. You can also trigger events in third-party systems to move an order along in the process automatically. That way you can reduce manual effort, and prevent order processing delays.



Benefits of a flexible Order Management System

- Create the order statuses that fit your business
- Update status based on triggers from other systems
- Trigger events and processes in other systems
- Get full control over every step in the ecommerce order fulfillment process



05. Invoicing based on quantity fulfilled, not quantity ordered

While B2C orders require a customer to enter a final quantity up front, that doesn't always work for B2B orders. You may have contracts in place that let you over or under fulfill an order. So you need a way to manage that process. If an order has been prepaid, you might need to trigger a credit memo, or an additional invoice. And if not, you may need to adjust the quantity and invoice after fulfillment.

Fluent Order Management was designed to support these unique use cases. Its flexible framework lets you create workflows and triggers that fit your specific use cases. That way you can increase efficiency and boost customer satisfaction.



See how it works!

For more information on how Fluent Order Management can improve your distribution operations, schedule a demo today.

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