

# Workflow for Optimized FBA Operations

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**Abstract:** *Optimizing workflows for Fulfillment by Amazon (FBA) operations is essential for e-commerce sellers seeking efficiency and competitiveness in online retail. This abstract examines the strategies and methodologies employed to enhance the FBA process. It explores the systematic approach of FBA, from product selection and inventory management to order processing, logistics, and performance monitoring. Through effective inventory forecasting, streamlined order management, and strategic logistics planning, sellers can minimize costs, improve customer satisfaction, and drive sales growth. Leveraging technology solutions and implementing best practices such as clear standard operating procedures and employee training further contribute to workflow optimization*

**Keywords:** workflow, FBA, Amazon, seller

## 1. Introduction

Fulfillment by Amazon (FBA) has changed the world of package delivery, not only for sellers but for buyers as well. The idea is for FBA to simplify the process of selling products online by allowing sellers to store their inventory in Amazon's fulfillment centers. When orders are placed, Amazon takes care of packing, shipping, and customer service on behalf of the seller. This seamless process enables sellers to focus on growing their businesses without worrying about the logistics of order fulfillment. It also means quicker deliveries for customers, as the packages are kept close by, especially in running items.

Fulfillment by Amazon, or FBA for short, operates on a straightforward yet powerful premise. Sellers send their products to Amazon's fulfillment centers, storing them until a customer order.

When an order is received, Amazon picks, packs, and ships the product to the customer's doorstep. Additionally, Amazon handles customer inquiries, returns, and refunds, providing end-to-end support throughout the purchasing journey.

Based on the item and customer's location, same-day delivery also becomes possible, further improving customer experiences.

Optimized FBA operations are essential for sellers looking to thrive in competitive e-commerce. A streamlined fulfillment process means sellers can enhance efficiency, reduce costs, and deliver exceptional customer experiences. It also ensures that orders are processed quickly, inventory levels are maintained accurately, and customer inquiries are addressed promptly.

In this whitepaper, we will look into the intricacies of FBA operations and explore different strategies for optimizing every aspect of the fulfillment process. From inventory management to order processing and logistics, we uncover best practices and insights to help sellers maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of their FBA operations.

## 1.1 Understanding the Basics of FBA

Fulfillment by Amazon (FBA) operates through a systematic process that simplifies the Selling Journey for merchants. The idea is to reduce fixed costs while increasing process efficiency.

### 1) Step-By-Step Process

Here is a step-by-step process of how FBA works:

#### a) Step 1: Product Selection and Listing

The journey begins when a seller decides to list their products on Amazon's marketplace. Sellers choose the products they want to sell, ensuring they meet Amazon's guidelines for quality and compliance.

For example, Sarah, a small business owner, selects handmade candles that she wants to sell online.

#### b) Step 2: Shipping Inventory to Amazon

Once the products are selected, Sarah will ship her inventory to one of Amazon's fulfillment centers. She will create a shipment plan in her Amazon seller account, specifying the quantity and details of the products she sends.

She will then prepare her candles for shipment, label the packages according to Amazon's requirements, and send them off to the fulfillment center.

#### c) Step 3: Inventory Storage and Management

Upon arrival at the fulfillment center, Amazon receives and stores Sarah's inventory in its vast warehouses. Amazon's sophisticated inventory management system tracks each unit of Sarah's candles, ensuring accurate stock levels and seamless order fulfillment.

#### d) Step 4: Customer Orders and Fulfillment

When a customer places an order for Sarah's candles on Amazon's website, the fulfillment process kicks into gear.

Amazon's system automatically selects the nearest fulfillment center with Sarah's candles in stock and prepares the order for shipment. The order is picked, packed, and labeled with the customer's address.

**e) Step 5: Shipping and Delivery**

Once the order is packaged, it will then be handed over to Amazon's trusted network of carriers for delivery to the customer's doorstep.

Amazon offers various shipping options, including standard, expedited, and same-day delivery, ensuring customers receive their orders in a timely manner.

If there is a close fulfillment center, Amazon will also list same-day delivery option on the product page, adding an improved buyer's journey element into the mix.

**f) Step 6: Customer Service and Returns**

Throughout the process, Amazon provides comprehensive customer service support to sellers and buyers.

If a customer has any questions or concerns about their order, they can contact Amazon's customer service team for assistance. In case of returns or exchanges, Amazon handles the logistics and facilitates a seamless resolution for both parties.

**2) Benefits of Using FBA for Sellers**

Fulfillment by Amazon (FBA) offers many benefits to sellers, making it an attractive option for businesses of all sizes. Medium and small business particularly benefit from FBA, reducing overheads and making product handling easier.

Here are 13 key benefits that FBA offers:

- **Prime Eligibility:** Using FBA, sellers automatically qualify for Amazon Prime, which enhances their product visibility and increases the likelihood of attracting Prime customers who prioritize fast shipping.
- **Access to Amazon's Customer Base:** Sellers leveraging FBA gain access to Amazon's vast customer base, tapping into millions of potential buyers worldwide.
- **Global Reach:** FBA enables sellers to expand their reach globally, allowing them to sell their products in international marketplaces without the hassle of managing cross-border logistics.
- **Increased Sales:** With Amazon's trusted brand reputation and seamless shopping experience, FBA sellers often experience higher sales volumes compared to non-FBA sellers.
- **Prime Shipping Benefits:** FBA provides sellers access to Amazon's world-class fulfillment network, offering fast and reliable shipping options such as Prime Two-Day and Prime Same-Day Delivery.
- **Scalability:** FBA accommodates sellers of all sizes, from small businesses to enterprise-level operations, allowing them to scale their businesses efficiently without worrying about logistics constraints.
- **24/7 Customer Support:** Amazon offers round-the-clock customer support for both sellers and buyers, ensuring prompt resolution of any issues or inquiries that may arise.
- **Inventory Management:** FBA handles inventory storage and management on behalf of sellers, eliminating the need for costly warehousing facilities and streamlining the supply chain process.
- **Multi-Channel Fulfillment:** Sellers can use FBA to fulfill orders from other sales channels, such as their own

website or third-party platforms, leveraging Amazon's fulfillment expertise and infrastructure.

- **Enhanced Seller Performance Metrics:** Sellers using FBA often benefit from improved seller performance metrics, including faster shipping times, higher customer satisfaction ratings, and lower order defect rates.
- **Buy Box Advantage:** FBA sellers are more likely to win the Buy Box, the coveted placement on product pages that drive the majority of sales on Amazon's platform, increasing visibility and sales opportunities.
- **Flexible Pricing Options:** FBA offers flexible pricing options for sellers, allowing them to choose between fulfillment fees based on the size and weight of their products or a subscription-based model for high-volume sellers.
- **Focus on Business Growth:** By outsourcing fulfillment tasks to Amazon, sellers can focus their time and resources on core business activities such as product development, marketing, and customer acquisition, driving long-term growth and success.

This shows that FBA is a 'prime' tool for sellers to leverage Amazon's robust infrastructure and expertise. It allows sellers to streamline their operations, increase sales, and provide exceptional customer experiences, ultimately driving business growth and profitability.

**3) Challenges and Pain Points in FBA Operations**

Fulfillment by Amazon (FBA) offers many benefits to sellers, but it also comes with its own challenges and pain points. Understanding and addressing these challenges is essential for optimizing FBA operations.

Here are some common challenges that FBA sellers face and ways to avoid them:

**a) Inventory Management Issues:**

- **Challenge:** Keeping track of inventory levels and ensuring adequate stock levels can be challenging, leading to stockouts or overstocking.
- **Solution:** Implementing inventory management software and regularly monitoring inventory levels can help prevent stockouts and overstocking. Utilizing Amazon's inventory management tools can also streamline the process.

**b) High Fulfillment Costs:**

- **Challenge:** FBA fees can add up quickly, cutting into profit margins and reducing overall profitability.
- **Solution:** Analyze product margins and pricing strategies to ensure fulfillment costs are factored into product pricing. Negotiating lower fulfillment fees based on volume and optimizing packaging to reduce dimensional weight can also help mitigate costs.

**c) Shipping and Transportation Delays:**

- **Challenge:** Shipping delays and transportation issues can lead to late deliveries and dissatisfied customers.
- **Solution:** Work with reliable carriers and logistics partners to minimize shipping delays. Utilize Amazon's transportation services and take advantage of expedited shipping options to ensure timely deliveries.

**d) Quality Control and Returns:**

- *Challenge:* Managing product quality and handling returns can be time-consuming and labor-intensive.
- *Solution:* Implement stringent quality control measures to ensure product quality before shipment. Provide clear return policies and streamline the returns process to minimize disruptions to operations.

**e) Competition and Pricing Pressure:**

- *Challenge:* Intense competition on the Amazon marketplace can lead to pricing pressure and reduced profit margins.
- *Solution:* Differentiate products through unique features, branding, and value-added services to stand out from competitors. Monitor market trends and adjust pricing strategies to remain competitive while maintaining profitability.

**f) Account Suspension and Policy Violations:**

- *Challenge:* Violating Amazon's policies or receiving negative feedback can result in account suspension or restrictions.
- *Solution:* Familiarize yourself with Amazon's policies and guidelines to ensure compliance. Monitor account health metrics and address any performance issues promptly. Provide excellent customer service and resolve disputes proactively to maintain a positive seller reputation.

**g) Seasonal Demand Fluctuations:**

- *Challenge:* Managing fluctuations in demand during peak seasons or holidays can strain fulfillment capabilities.
- *Solution:* Forecast demand accurately based on historical sales data and market trends. Increase inventory levels and staffing during peak periods to meet customer demand effectively.

**h) Product Listing Optimization:**

- *Challenge:* Optimizing product listings for visibility and conversion can be challenging, especially for new sellers.
- *Solution:* Invest in keyword research and optimize product titles, descriptions, and images to improve search rankings and attract potential buyers. Utilize Amazon's advertising and promotional tools to increase product visibility and drive sales.

By proactively addressing these challenges and implementing effective strategies, sellers can overcome obstacles and optimize their FBA operations for long-term success and growth.

**1.2 Maintaining An Optimized FBA Work Flow**

FBA is a great way to optimize your operations, but that doesn't mean that once you sign up and qualify, it is smooth sailing from then on. While the process becomes much easier and cost-effective than maintaining your own inventory, it is important to note that careful planning and inventory management on your part is also crucial.

**1) Effective Inventory Management: Forecasting Requirements**

Inventory management is critical to an optimized FBA workflow. Proper planning and forecasting of inventory

requirements are essential to ensure smooth operations and prevent stockouts or overstocking.

Here's how sellers can effectively manage their inventory for FBA:

**a) Historical Data Analysis:**

- Start by analyzing historical sales data to identify trends and patterns in product demand. Review past sales performance, seasonality, and any fluctuations in demand to inform future inventory planning.

**b) Demand Forecasting:**

- Use demand forecasting techniques to predict future sales volumes accurately.
- Consider factors such as market trends, seasonal variations, promotions, and upcoming events that may impact product demand.

**c) Safety Stock Levels:**

- Maintain safety stock levels to buffer against unexpected demand or supply chain disruptions fluctuations.
- Determine the appropriate level of safety stock based on lead times, order frequency, and demand variability.

**d) Lead Time Analysis:**

- Analyze lead times for product replenishment from suppliers to ensure timely inventory restocking.
- Consider transportation times, order processing, and production lead times when calculating lead time requirements.

**e) Supplier Relationships:**

- Build strong relationships with suppliers to facilitate efficient order fulfillment and minimize lead times.
- Negotiate favorable terms and agreements with suppliers to ensure reliable and timely delivery of inventory.

**f) Just-in-Time Inventory Management:**

- Implement just-in-time (JIT) inventory management practices to optimize inventory levels and reduce carrying costs.
- Coordinate closely with suppliers to schedule deliveries based on real-time demand signals.
- Minimize excess inventory holding as much as possible to reduce fixed costs.

**g) Inventory Turnover Ratios:**

- Monitor inventory turnover ratios to assess the efficiency of inventory management processes.
- Aim for higher inventory turnover rates to free up working capital and minimize carrying costs associated with excess inventory.

**h) ABC Analysis:**

- Conduct an "ABC analysis" to categorize inventory items based on their value and contribution to overall sales.
- Classify products into A, B, and C categories to prioritize inventory management efforts and allocate resources effectively.

**i) Utilize Inventory Management Software:**

- Invest in inventory management software and tools to streamline inventory tracking, replenishment, and order processing.
- Leverage automation and technology to optimize inventory management processes and minimize manual errors.

**j) Real-Time Inventory Visibility:**

- Maintain real-time visibility into inventory levels across multiple sales channels and fulfillment centers.
- Implement inventory tracking systems and dashboards to monitor stock levels, track inventory movements, and generate actionable insights.

**2) Order Management for Processing and Fulfillment**

No matter how well you forecast, without efficient order management on your part can lead to confusion at the end FBA center, leading to poor customer experiences.

Here's how sellers can streamline order processing and fulfillment within the FBA framework while leveraging automation to enhance efficiency:

**a) Order Processing Workflow:**

- Sellers can monitor incoming orders through the Amazon Seller Central dashboard.
- Use different workflows to manage order processing, including
  - Order acknowledgment,
  - Inventory checks, and
  - Shipping preparations.

**b) Automated Inventory Management:**

- FBA's automated inventory management system tracks inventory levels in real-time.
- Sellers can set up automated alerts for low stock levels and replenish inventory proactively.
- This helps sellers avoid stockouts and fulfillment delays.

**c) Shipping Label Generation:**

- FBA generates shipping labels automatically for orders fulfilled through the program.
- This way, sellers are relieved from the manual task of generating shipping labels.

**d) Prime Eligibility and Fast Shipping:**

- FBA enables sellers to offer Prime-eligible products with fast and reliable shipping options, enhancing product visibility and customer trust.

**e) Order Tracking and Customer Notifications:**

- Amazon provides order tracking and status updates to customers, allowing them to monitor the progress of their orders from shipment to delivery.
- Automated notifications keep customers informed and engaged throughout the fulfillment process.

**f) Multi-Channel Order Integration:**

- Sellers can integrate FBA with other sales channels and e-commerce platforms to seamlessly manage orders from multiple sources. Integration streamlines order aggregation, processing, and fulfillment across different channels.

**g) Order Routing and Distribution:**

- FBA optimizes order routing and distribution by selecting the most appropriate fulfillment center for each order based on factors like proximity to the customer, inventory availability, and shipping speed requirements.

**h) Bulk Order Processing:**

- Sellers can process bulk orders efficiently through FBA, leveraging Amazon's infrastructure and fulfillment capabilities.
- Bulk processing streamlines order handling and reduces fulfillment costs per unit.

**i) Automated Returns Management:**

- FBA automates the returns management process, handling return requests, and managing product restocking and reselling.
- Sellers benefit from simplified returns handling and reduced administrative burden.

**j) Performance Metrics and Insights:**

- Amazon provides sellers with performance metrics and insights to evaluate order management efficiency and identify areas for improvement.
- Sellers can track key metrics like
  - Order fulfillment rates,
  - Shipping times,
  - Satisfaction rates
  - Profit margins
  - Administrative costs,
  - Customer feedback scores, and more.

**3) Logistics and Shipping in FBA via Warehousing and Distribution**

Efficient logistics and shipping play a critical role in maximizing the benefits of Fulfillment by Amazon (FBA) and ensuring timely delivery of orders to customers.

Here's how sellers can optimize warehousing and distribution processes within the FBA framework:

**a) Strategic Inventory Placement:**

- FBA offers strategic inventory placement across fulfillment centers to minimize shipping costs and delivery times.
- Sellers can utilize Amazon's network of fulfillment centers to store inventory closer to customers, reducing transit times and improving order fulfillment efficiency.

**b) Dynamic Inventory Allocation:**

- FBA's dynamic inventory allocation system automatically assigns inventory to fulfillment centers.
- This allocation is based on:
  - Demand patterns,
  - Geographic location,
  - Seasonal trends, and more.

**c) Just-in-Time Inventory Management:**

- FBA enables sellers to adopt just-in-time inventory management practices, minimizing excess inventory holding costs and storage fees.

**d) Optimized Shipping Strategies:**

- Sellers optimize shipping strategies by selecting the most cost-effective and reliable shipping methods for FBA orders.
- They use FBA's discounted shipping rates and carrier partnerships to minimize shipping costs and transit times.

**e) Carrier Selection and Negotiation:**

- Sellers evaluate carrier options and negotiate favorable shipping rates and terms to minimize transportation costs and maximize delivery reliability.
- They consider factors like shipping speed, package dimensions, and destination zones when selecting carriers for FBA shipments.

**f) Utilization of Amazon Partnered Carriers:**

- FBA sellers can leverage Amazon Partnered Carriers for discounted shipping rates and streamlined logistics services.
- Partnered carriers offer competitive rates for inbound shipments to Amazon fulfillment centers and outbound shipments to customers.

**g) Real-Time Inventory Visibility:**

- FBA provides real-time inventory visibility and tracking capabilities, allowing sellers to monitor inventory levels, inbound shipments, and order status updates. Real-time data insights enable proactive decision-making and inventory management.

Inventory management, efficient shipping strategies, and streamlined logistics workflows are essential for achieving success in competitive e-commerce via FBA.

**Performance Monitoring and Analysis for FBA: Key Metrics and Tools**

Performance monitoring and analysis are crucial for evaluating the success of Fulfillment by Amazon (FBA) operations and identifying areas for improvement. Here are key metrics for measuring FBA performance and various tools and technologies available for monitoring FBA operations:

Performance Metrics	Monitoring Tools/Technologies
1. Order Fulfillment Time	1. Amazon Seller Central
2. Order Accuracy Rate	2. Inventory Management Software (e.g., Skubana, SellerActive)
3. Inventory Turnover Ratio	3. Analytics and Reporting Tools (e.g., Sellics, Helium 10)
4. Shipping Cost per Order	4. Shipping and Logistics Solutions (e.g., ShipStation)
5. Customer Feedback and Ratings	5. Feedback and Review Management Tools (e.g., Feedback Genius)
6. Return Rate	6. Inventory Tracking Systems (e.g., ScanPower)
7. Inventory Health	
8. Sell-Through Rate	

Let's take a closer look at these next.

**a) Key Metrics for Measuring FBA Performance**

- **Order Fulfillment Time:** Measure the time taken from order placement to shipment confirmation. Shorter

fulfillment times indicate efficient order processing and faster delivery to customers.

- **Order Accuracy Rate:** Monitor order fulfillment accuracy by comparing the number of orders shipped correctly against the total orders processed. A high order accuracy rate signifies reliable FBA operations and customer satisfaction.
- **Inventory Turnover Ratio:** Calculate the rate at which inventory is sold and replaced over a specific period. A high inventory turnover ratio indicates efficient inventory management and optimized stock levels.
- **Shipping Cost per Order:** Analyze the average shipping cost incurred for each order fulfilled through FBA. Lower shipping costs per order indicate cost-effective shipping strategies and optimized carrier selection.
- **Customer Feedback and Ratings:** Evaluate customer feedback, reviews, and ratings to gauge satisfaction levels and identify areas for improvement in FBA operations, including order fulfillment, packaging, and delivery.
- **Return Rate:** Monitor the percentage of orders customers return due to product defects, shipping errors, or dissatisfaction. A low return rate indicates high product quality and customer satisfaction.
- **Inventory Health:** Assess the health of FBA inventory by monitoring factors such as excess stock, aged inventory, and inventory performance index (IPI) scores. Optimize inventory health to avoid storage fees and improve operational efficiency.
- **Sell-Through Rate:** Calculate the percentage of available inventory sold within a specific timeframe. A high sell-through rate indicates strong demand for products and effective sales performance.

**b) Tools and Technologies for Monitoring FBA Operations**

- **Amazon Seller Central:** Utilize the Seller Central dashboard to access real-time data on orders, inventory levels, and performance metrics. Seller Central provides valuable insights into FBA operations and enables sellers to manage their accounts effectively.
- **Inventory Management Software:** Invest in inventory management software solutions that integrate with Amazon FBA to track inventory levels, forecast demand, and automate replenishment processes. Popular options include Skubana, SellerActive, and TradeGecko.
- **Analytics and Reporting Tools:** Leverage analytics and reporting tools to analyze FBA performance metrics, generate customized reports, and identify trends. Tools like Sellics, Helium 10, and Jungle Scout offer advanced analytics capabilities for Amazon sellers.
- **Shipping and Logistics Solutions:** Explore shipping and logistics software platforms that streamline order fulfillment, carrier selection, and shipping label generation for FBA shipments. ShipStation, Easyship, and Shippo are popular choices for managing shipping operations.
- **Feedback and Review Management Tools:** Use feedback and review management tools to monitor customer feedback, respond to reviews, and enhance seller reputation on Amazon. Feedback Genius, FeedbackWhiz, and Seller Labs provide tools for managing customer communication and feedback.

- **Inventory Tracking Systems:** Implement barcode scanning systems and RFID technology to track FBA inventory movements, improve inventory accuracy, and prevent stockouts or overstocks. Inventory tracking systems like ScanPower and Teikametrics offer robust inventory management solutions.

These metrics and tools help sellers monitor and analyze FBA performance, optimize operational efficiency, and drive business growth on the Amazon marketplace.

### Best Practices for FBA Optimization

While there are several different steps you can take to optimize your FBA operations, three stand out as the most prominent ones as 2024 rolls in.

#### a) *Establishing Clear Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)*

Establishing clear standard operating procedures (SOPs) is crucial for optimizing FBA operations. This involves documenting workflows comprehensively, defining roles and responsibilities clearly, setting performance standards, and ensuring regular review and updates of SOPs to reflect changes in processes and technology.

Here is a short overview of these steps:

- **Documenting Workflows:** Create detailed documentation outlining each step of the FBA process, from receiving inventory to shipping orders.
- **Defining Roles and Responsibilities:** Clearly define roles and responsibilities for each team member involved in FBA operations to avoid confusion and ensure accountability.
- **Setting Performance Standards:** Establish performance standards and benchmarks for key metrics such as order fulfillment time, order accuracy rate, and inventory turnover ratio.
- **Regular Review and Updates:** SOPs should be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect changes in processes, technology, and business requirements.

#### b) *Technological Solutions for FBA Management*

Using technological solutions for FBA management is essential in today's competitive environment. Sellers can benefit from investing in specialized FBA management software, which offers several key features for sellers. These include features such as

- Inventory management,
- Order processing,
- Analytics, and
- Integration with Amazon Seller Central.

Integration with ERP and CRM systems further streamlines data flow, enhances visibility, and improves decision-making capabilities.

#### c) *Employee Training and Skill Development*

Employee training and skill development is yet another critical consideration for optimizing FBA operations.

Establishing comprehensive training programs covering FBA processes, technology tools, and best practices is essential.

The key aspects are providing hands-on training sessions, emphasizing quality control, and encouraging adherence to SOPs.

Continuous learning initiatives, such as workshops and industry conferences, foster a culture of innovation and knowledge-sharing within the organization, leading to improved operational efficiency and customer satisfaction.

## 2. Conclusion

Fulfillment by Amazon (FBA) operations is imperative for sellers aiming to thrive in today's competitive e-commerce environment. This is especially the case for SME (small and medium enterprises). By following the instructions clearly, sellers can enhance operational efficiency, reduce costs, and deliver exceptional customer experiences.

The adoption of advanced tools and technologies, coupled with a focus on continuous improvement, enables sellers to stay ahead of the curve and drive long-term growth and profitability.

It is now more important than ever for sellers to adapt to changing market dynamics, consumer preferences, and technological advancements. Technological advancements, collaboration, and customer-centricity are critical for sellers to position themselves for success in the dynamic world of online retail.

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