

Checklist: Is your returns process as cost-efficient as you think?

Evaluate your current returns process and identify areas for improvement. Use this self-assessment to see where you stand and how you can make your returns process a key driver of profitability and customer satisfaction.



Checklist



Paperless & labelless, digital returns experience

- Do you offer a fully digital returns process for your customers?
- Are they able to initiate returns online without the hassle of printing labels or filling out forms?



Improvement tip: Customers today expect a frictionless, paperless returns process that they can manage online. Implementing this will not only save costs but enhance customer loyalty



Offer exchanges to increase re-conversion

- Are you actively offering product exchanges at the point of return to keep customers engaged and avoid losing revenue?



Improvement tip: Many customers like the item but simply need a different size or color. Make the exchange process smooth and effortless to keep them happy and the revenue within your business. Turning a return into an exchange is a great way to retain sales and boost customer satisfaction



Vouchers as refund option

- Do you provide store credit or vouchers as a refund option to keep customers shopping with you instead of offering only cash refunds?



Improvement tip: Vouchers help retain cash in your business and encourage customers to come back for more. It's a crucial feature for a returns platform to offer, ensuring you keep revenue in-house while providing customers with flexible options



Refunding speed and ease

- How fast can your customers get their money back? Does your refund process create frustration or build trust?



Improvement tip: Faster refunds boost trust and drive repeat purchases. A good returns platform should be the master of refunding, giving you the flexibility to speed up the process when it matters most—whether for key customers or critical moments in your business. Slow refunds are a common pain point that can cost you customers. Make it quick and seamless to keep them coming back.



Customer service workload on claims and deviations

- How much time does your customer service team spend handling returns and claims? Are they overwhelmed by the manual work involved?



Improvement tip: Letting returns be a manual process for your customer service team not only takes up valuable time but also increases the risk of human error. This doesn't just drive up costs—it also slows down the entire process, making it harder to handle returns and claims efficiently. This is especially critical during high-sales periods like the holiday season or Black Friday, when speed and accuracy matter most. Automating your returns can free up your team to focus on growth-driving activities



Efficient warehouse returns

- Is your returns process in the warehouse manual or efficient? Are there bottlenecks that slow down item handling?



Improvement tip: Not all returns follow a smooth, predictable flow. Issues like missing order numbers, faulty products, policy violations, and claims are more common than you'd think. A strong returns platform should efficiently and automatically handle these deviations, minimizing manual errors. This improves warehouse efficiency, reduces delays, and ensures customers get their refunds faster



Time to re-sell returned items

- How long does it take for returned items to be sellable again? Are they sitting in limbo or quickly made available to customers?



Improvement tip: A standout feature in a returns platform is the ability to sell a returned product the moment the customer initiates the return—we call it virtual stock. By calculating the estimated return time, you can list the item for sale before it even arrives back at the warehouse. This not only results in significant cost savings but also greatly boosts your product turnover rate.



Optimized return routing

- Do you send returned products to the location where demand is highest, or do they all go back to a central warehouse?



Improvement tip: The platform you choose should automatically route items to the right destination—whether that's the location with the highest demand, a repair partner, a charity, or a local return hub. This shouldn't be a manual decision; a smart business engine should handle it based on the rules you set, optimizing for the most profitable outcome. For example, a high-season product might go directly to a store with low supply and high demand. This improves turnover rate and significantly reduces transportation and handling costs.



International shipping costs & customs

- Are you shipping internationally and encountering high return handling costs or customs complications?



Improvement tip: When shipping to countries with customs regulations, having a returns hub or bulk shipment process in place is often essential. The platform you choose should automate customs handling and manage returns before they leave the country, or keep them within the local market if that's your strategy. Even when your customers are buying across borders, they still expect a localized experience. Streamlining this process will not only speed up refunds, keeping customers happy, but also significantly reduce your costs and operational headaches..



Compliance with EU 'right to repair' legislation

- Are you prepared for the 2026 EU Right to Repair legislation? Have you set up a scalable, logistically sound repair process?



Improvement tip: By 2026, all mid-to-large retail companies will need to offer repairable products and a smooth repair process to meet regulations and avoid fines. The most challenging part? The logistics flow. A strong returns platform should seamlessly manage this, sending claimed products directly to repair partners and back to the customer—bypassing the warehouse entirely. This reduces transportation and handling costs while ensuring a faster turnaround for the customer, keeping you compliant and enhancing your brand's sustainability image.



Handling wholesale and bulk returns

- Do you sell wholesale and struggle with large, bulk returns or out-of-season products piling up in your warehouse?



Improvement tip: The returns process for B2B is very different from consumer returns. You're dealing with bulk shipments, large quantities, and often out-of-season stock, which can take significant time and resources to manage. A good returns platform should easily handle large quantities, block orders that are faulty or don't meet your return policy, and streamline the entire process to save time and reduce manual effort



Customer claims without original order info

- Can you handle customer claims even if they can't provide the original order details? How flexible is your process?



Improvement tip: A good returns platform should allow you to create a new order even if the original one is missing, ensuring everything still works legally within your ERP system. This flexibility enables you to efficiently process customer claims while staying compliant with regulations. It simplifies the claims process, reduces friction, and keeps your customers happy.



Profitability of products, including returns

- Do you know how much each product really costs you once sales, returns and claims are factored in?



Improvement tip: Analyzing product profitability, including the cost of sales and returns, can help you make smarter stocking and pricing decisions.



Customer buying patterns & profitability

- Do you understand your customers' buying and return patterns? Are your most frequent returners also your least profitable?



Improvement tip: Segmenting customers by return behavior is a must-have feature and something that should be addressed at the management level. High return rates impact the entire business, from profitability to operations. By analyzing these patterns, you can tailor your marketing and return policies to minimize returns and maximize profitability across the board.



Return freight vs. outgoing freight

- Are you paying the same amount for return freight as the original outgoing shipment, even if only part of the order is returned?



Improvement tip: Our platform can automatically downsize returns to a smaller package when the return weight falls below a certain threshold—without you lifting a finger. This ensures you're not overpaying for return shipping, optimizing costs effortlessly.



Low-value items – keep or return?

- Are you asking customers to return low-value items that cost more to ship back than they're worth?



Improvement tip: Make sure the platform you choose has the ability to let customers keep low-value items instead of shipping them back for central handling. It should allow you to create an order without the physical product returning to the warehouse. This not only saves on costs but also enhances the customer experience, making customers more likely to speak positively about your company.



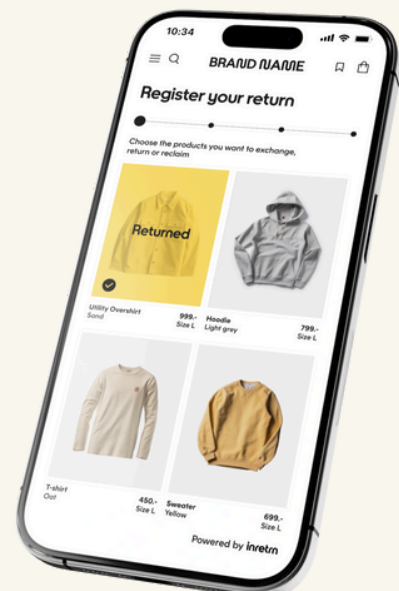
Omnichannel returns in stores

- Can customers return online purchases in-store for a true omnichannel experience?



Improvement tip: Not all platforms can support handling returns of online purchases in your physical stores. However, utilizing all your sales channels to create a seamless omnichannel experience is crucial for both profitability and delivering a complete customer journey. Ensuring your platform can manage in-store returns for online orders builds trust, loyalty, and reduces shipping costs

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Recommendations for improvement

Now that you've gone through the checklist, here are a few key features to look for when evaluating a returns platform:

Key takeaways

- ✔ Implement a **digital-first approach** – Move away from paper-based returns and embrace a streamlined, digital solution.
- ✔ Optimize your **refund and exchange options** – Offer vouchers or exchanges to turn returns into re-conversions.
- ✔ **Automate** where possible – From warehouse processing to customer communications, automation can save time and reduce costs.
- ✔ **Prepare** for future legislation – Don't wait until 2026 to get your repair flows in order; **be proactive.**
- ✔ Leverage data for profitability insights – **Analyze your returns** and claims data to understand product and customer profitability better.

