



# Shipping for the First Time with NorthStar: How We Get You Ready for Your Tradeshows





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Coordinating a tradeshow can be stressful and confusing, especially if you're new to the experience. Many people feel lost the first time they look at a tradeshow schedule, often because they've just been handed responsibility for coordinating the events in addition to their normal job duties. Choosing the right partners, especially when it comes to tradeshow shipping, can make the difference between a successful tradeshow season and a series of expensive, embarrassing mistakes.

## The Tradeshow Challenge

If you're taking on your company's tradeshow schedule for the first time, you're probably feeling a bit overwhelmed. There are new forms to complete, new terms to learn, and new problems to solve. This is what we call the "tradeshow challenge," and we've helped thousands of customers work through it successfully.

### Tradeshow Shipping

Shipping can be one of the most confusing elements of tradeshow planning. In many cases, the person responsible for coordinating a company's tradeshow has no experience with shipping, let alone the sort of complex, tightly-scheduled shipments that tradeshow require.

The stakes are high when you're shipping to a tradeshow. Not only do you have to coordinate the planning and shipping to the event, but you have to handle the return shipping as well. If your exhibit properties don't arrive on time, your company could miss an important marketing opportunity. If your shipping costs run over budget, the event could turn into a losing proposition. If you miss a step moving out of one tradeshow, your next show may not have display materials. In any case, shipping mistakes won't reflect well on the person who coordinated the shipments.

On the other hand, if you choose the right tradeshow shipping company—an expert partner who gets your material where it needs to be and helps you understand the process—your tradeshow challenge could turn into a career success story.

### Meet NorthStar

At NorthStar Express Freight, we specialize in tradeshow shipping. It's the only thing we do. For more than 20 years, we've helped customers understand their tradeshow shipping options and achieve their tradeshow objectives on time and on budget.

Our shipping professionals know the tradeshow industry inside and out, and we're here to coach you through your entire event season. We'll help you assess your event calendar, assist with your paperwork, schedule and execute your shipments. Through it all, we'll keep our eyes on the goal: making it easier and more cost-effective for you to get your tradeshow properties to & from your events.

### How can NorthStar help with your tradeshow challenge?

Other shipping companies may do a fine job with your other shipping needs, but developing and executing a tradeshow shipping plan is nothing like delivering a document to an office. Tradeshow require precise timing, accurate documentation, and sustained communication. As an industry expert, NorthStar is uniquely qualified to meet your tradeshow shipping needs.





NorthStar's consultative approach is designed to help you make informed decisions and take the guesswork and anxiety out of tradeshow shipping. We'll even take the time to train you in order placement, so that you can become self-sufficient and manage many aspects of the shipping process yourself.

## How We Do It

At NorthStar, we know that every company has unique priorities, and every tradeshow coordinator has a different level of experience and comfort with the shipping process. That's why we never take anything for granted. When we start working with a new customer, we take the time to get to know the company and make a full assessment of their tradeshow schedule, display properties, and requirements.

Don't worry if you feel unprepared. We've been helping customers navigate the world of tradeshow shipping for more than twenty years, and we know exactly what questions we need to ask up front to ensure a worry-free tradeshow season. During our initial assessment, we'll look at your tradeshow schedule and find out where you are in the planning process by talking through a few key considerations:

- **Display properties:** What exactly are you planning to ship to your tradeshows? Do you already have an inventory of your exhibit components and other materials?
- **Display storage locations:** Where do you store your display materials? Are your properties kept with an exhibit house, in off-site storage, or at your office?
- **Tradeshow personnel:** Who will be traveling to your shows? In many cases, the person coordinating a company's tradeshow schedule does not actually attend the shows. We'll ask about the people you'll have at the show site and find out whether they'll need training on the move-out process. This includes completing the Material Handling Agreement (MHA) and other paperwork necessary for effectively moving your materials out of the event.
- **Post-show shipping:** Have you thought about where you'd like to move your exhibit properties after your show? This is often overlooked in tradeshow shipping, but a failure to plan ahead can lead to costly mistakes.

We'll also get to know you as a tradeshow coordinator and learn about your previous experiences. If you're brand new to tradeshow shipping, we'll help you understand how the process works, and we'll help you get comfortable with the unique vocabulary of tradeshows and transportation.

If you have coordinated tradeshows in the past, we'll ask you about your experiences—the things that worked, the things that didn't, and what could have made the process easier for you.



### Knowing The ABF's of Tradeshow Shipping:

Part of our initial process is based on what we call the "ABF's" of shipping: Area, Building, and Freight.

#### Area

We start by assessing the **Area** where we will pick up and deliver your tradeshow materials. This advance preparation helps us identify and solve potential problems before they arise. Are you located on a college campus, military base, or in a secure zone? Every part of the country has its own set of weather hazards, traffic patterns, and other geographic considerations. We'll apply what we've learned in the past to make your experience as smooth as possible.



#### Building

Next, we'll get to know the specific **Building** where you store your tradeshow material. The building's operating hours, loading dock availability (if any), freight elevator capacities, and other access requirements are just a few of the things we'll know before your shipping day arrives.

#### Freight

Finally, we get a complete picture of the **Freight** you're shipping to your shows. We don't ask general questions like "how many boxes do you have?" We know that the only way to ensure an error-free shipping experience is to know exactly what needs to go on the truck. We'll ask you about the size, shape, weight, and contents of each container you need shipped. That way, we'll know in advance what type of equipment and manpower will be required to complete the move.

If you don't have all the answers right away, don't worry. We'll make note of any open questions and follow up on them as action items while we finalize your shipping plan.



## Planning Your Tradeshow Season



Once we've familiarized ourselves with the ABF's and your tradeshow schedule, we develop a plan for your entire season. The more details we have worked out in advance, the less time you'll need to spend making last-minute decisions.

To create your shipping plan, we break your event schedule down by quarter and look at your needs three months at a time. Before the beginning of each quarter, we'll work with you to determine the pick-up and delivery location for each shipment and the appropriate timing for each one. Once we've chosen the dates and destinations, it's time to schedule your shipments.

When you work with NorthStar, you have two options for scheduling your shipments: enter your orders online, or let us take care of it with a little assistance from you. We've found that many customers prefer to leave the scheduling to us for the first quarter or two, and then take the reins once they've become more comfortable with the process.

If you choose to let NorthStar schedule your shipments, we won't leave you in the dark. We'll communicate with you at every step of the way, and you'll also have access to view your orders online at any time. Even when you are entering your own orders, you're not alone. We're always there to coach you through the process and help you work through your orders until everything is perfect.

### Shipping Day and Beyond

You'll feel the NorthStar difference the day before your tradeshow materials leave for their first show. For one thing, you'll never be caught off guard when that day arrives, because we send an email confirmation the day before each pickup to make sure that you're prepared in advance. We've heard stories of customers who lost track of their schedule and didn't have their shipments prepared when the trucks rolled up. That's an expensive, embarrassing mistake, and we'll make sure it doesn't happen to you.

We know how important it is that your shipments arrive on time, so we track your shipment every step along the way from pickup to delivery. While there's no way to guarantee that a shipment won't be affected by a snowstorm or other unavoidable event, we'll work with you to anticipate delays and come up with the best solution when one can't be prevented.

Another NorthStar difference? We're there for you on weekends. Many shipping companies staff their offices from Monday to Friday and leave you with a voicemail greeting if you need help on the weekend. That can cause frustration with any type of shipping, but it's especially problematic in tradeshow shipping, because many shows open and close on the weekend.





### An Ongoing Relationship



Our goal is to form a lasting relationship so that we can continue to assist you as your needs evolve over time. Part of that long-term relationship involves helping you become more self-sufficient. As we teach you the ins and outs of tradeshow planning, paperwork, and scheduling, you may find that you're able to handle many aspects of the process yourself. Of course, we'll still be there to do anything you need us to do, any time you need us.

NorthStar's unique Advance Show Planning process helps our customers stay on top of their tradeshow schedule. Throughout the year, we'll check in with you to discuss your upcoming shows and any items that may have changed. We take the lead in managing your schedule so that you can focus on your other responsibilities.

Our commitment to understanding your company's goals and requirements means that we can help you deal with change as it occurs. How likely is it that you'll still have the same group of people attending your tradeshow two years from now? When new people join your team (or get assigned to work on tradeshow), we'll help get them up to speed.

We'll also keep you up to date when something changes in the world of tradeshow shipping. New standards, new paperwork, new rules to follow—we make it our business to know what's happening. As your partner in tradeshow shipping, we want to make sure that you're never caught off guard.

### The NorthStar Difference

When you're considering which tradeshow shipping company you want to work with, there are several factors to consider, including service, communication, cost, and industry expertise. We're proud to say that our customers have found we excel in these areas.

### Unmatched Service

We know that customer service is the key to successful long-term relationships. That's why we've built our business on service. In fact, our #1 core value is "Creating Exceptional Service Experiences."

When you choose NorthStar, you'll get a dedicated account manager—someone who knows you, your display material, and your company. Your account manager serves as a single point of contact when you're planning and scheduling your shipments, and he or she will always be ready to answer any questions you might have.

### Uncommon Communication

We make it a point to communicate by email or telephone before, during, and after all of your events. Schedules, people, and materials change at a rapid pace. By staying connected, we minimize surprises. For example, when your CEO forgets to turn in the Material Handling Agreement at the close of the show...expect a call from NorthStar!

Whatever It Takes.  
**NorthStar**  
EXPRESS FREIGHT

**Login**

User ID

Password





### Lower Costs Through Greater Efficiency

Cost is often the primary consideration when a company chooses a tradeshow shipping partner. A bargain-basement price tag may seem attractive at first, but if you simply go with the lowest bidder, you may pay a steep price in the end.

The complexities of tradeshow shipping offer plenty of opportunities to incur unexpected costs. Inexperienced tradeshow coordinators working with big-name shippers or no-frills carriers often face the embarrassment of explaining why their shows went over budget. Here are three of the biggest financial pitfalls NorthStar can help you avoid:



**Forced freight:** If your exhibit properties are not cleared from the show floor on time, the materials are moved back to the service contractor's warehouse or shipped by the show's "official" carrier. As you can imagine, you'll pay extra for that move. You may still have to deal with the hassle of getting your exhibits to their next destination and prepay the carrier. Our decades of specialized experience will help you avoid forced freight charges by ensuring clear communication and timely pick-up at all times.

**Service miscues and delays:** Many low-cost carriers don't provide inside pick-up and delivery, after hours service, palletizing of boxes, extra men, or weekend pick-up and delivery. If you choose a low-service carrier, you may find yourself scrambling to fix mistakes or make other shipping arrangements at the last minute. NorthStar will help you avoid these costly and avoidable surprises.

**Inefficient planning:** Typical shipping companies aren't used to planning for the unique requirements of a tradeshow schedule, so they may overlook opportunities to ship your materials more efficiently. If we see a chance to lower your costs by consolidating shipments, storing locally between events, or shipping directly to another destination, we'll be sure you don't miss out.

NorthStar can also make you more efficient simply by taking stress and uncertainty out of the equation. When you have access to all the information you need and know that your shipments are in good hands, you'll have more time to spend on your other responsibilities.

### An Industry Expert

More than any other factor, we believe that our exclusive focus on tradeshow shipping sets us apart from the competition. Our deep knowledge of the tradeshow industry allows us to plan more efficiently, communicate more effectively, and above all, get our customers' display properties to the right location at the right time.

Our expertise pays off for customers in other ways, too. If you're looking for a new exhibit house, service contractor, storage location, crating firm, or other tradeshow vendor, we can make recommendations based on our customer's experiences. We can even help you grow your business by suggesting new tradeshows that you might not be aware of in your industry.







### Tradeshow Shipping Can Be Made Easier!

Ready to learn more about how NorthStar Express Freight can solve your tradeshow shipping challenge? Click the button below to get started, call us at 800-787-1800 or email [shippingcoach@northstarexpress.com](mailto:shippingcoach@northstarexpress.com).

Here's what you can expect when you start working with NorthStar:

1. **Contact us:** Complete our contact form, and we'll email or call to set up a 10-15 minute call.
2. **Initial call:** We'll call you to discuss your needs, schedule, and existing challenges.
3. **Planning:** We'll create a service agreement and shipping plan for your review.
4. **Agree to move forward:** You let us know that you're ready to begin your partnership with NorthStar Express.
5. **First shipments:** We'll work with you to finalize your shipping plan and schedule your first shipments.

CLICK OR CALL TO DISCUSS  
YOUR TRADESHOW OR  
MARKETING EVENT  
SCHEDULE AND GET A  
QUOTE

LET'S GET  
STARTED

