



## Specialist e-fulfilment for technology products

Why technology products deserve more  
than just 'pick, pack & dispatch'

“Going the extra mile...”

[www.qcom.co.uk](http://www.qcom.co.uk)



**qcom**  
Technology Service & Support



## 1. Introduction

One of the defining business impacts of the global coronavirus pandemic was a remarkable acceleration in the shift towards shopping online.

Of course this trend has been underway for many years now, not just in consumer retail but also in B2B procurement. As existing businesses have moved online and new ecommerce competitors have arrived, so we have also seen the rise of the third-party order fulfilment service.

This is no surprise – order fulfilment is fertile ground for outsourcing. To do it efficiently and effectively usually requires a scale, specialist infrastructure, and expertise that only the largest manufacturers and distributors find easy to deliver in-house.

As a result, there is no shortage of internet fulfilment services to choose from, all ready to store, pick, pack and send just about anything you can imagine, from niche craft products to the most mundane of business supplies.

But as technology manufacturers know better than anyone, not all products are created equal.

And this really matters for order fulfilment, where the nature of a product, its complexity, its application and context, its position in the product lifecycle, and its relationship to your customer base all have a critical role to play in deciding what kind of service you need and how best you can use fulfilment to create value and competitive advantage for your business.



## 2. The basics of order fulfilment

For a typical commodity or FMCG product, the basics of order fulfilment are fairly simple to identify (if not to always to achieve).

### 1. Goods in & storage / inventory

Secure and efficient storage is fundamental. Stock needs to be received; usually de-palletised or unboxed; checked; and the details imported into a stock management system to keep products organised and ready for the next order.

### 2. Order Processing

The core pick, pack and dispatch process needs to be fast, economical and, above all, accurate if you are to stand a chance of reliably meeting modern customer expectations.

### 3. Shipping

Fast and reliable shipping is essential for modern ecommerce operations. It is vital that the most appropriate form of shipping is found for each circumstance, whether post, courier or other.

### 4. Returns

An efficient returns function is important for even the most basic of products, allowing for goods to be returned and either a refund or replacement product to be processed.







### 3. Order fulfilment for technology products

While these four processes cover the essentials of order fulfilment for simpler products, technology products rarely match this ‘send and forget’ model.

These are typically sophisticated and complex products for which customers – whether consumers or businesses – may need significant help and support, from an initial enquiry right through to purchase, use and, ultimately, end-of-life disposal.

To build the kind of service that can support that entire lifecycle and deliver lasting customer loyalty and brand value, a technology manufacturer or distributor is likely to need much more than simply a pick, pack and dispatch model.

#### 1. Assembly, configuration & testing

While commodity and FMCG products typically come off of the pallet and into shipping, technology products are frequently more complex and customisable.

Many B2B technology products are offered in different configurations, which can call for panel and cabinet building, cable and wiring assembly, and/or software configuration before dispatch.

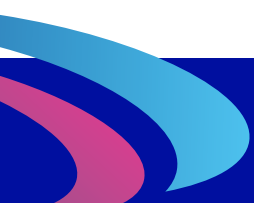
Products often require testing before they go out the door.

And, as we will see, delicate and high-value electronics often require ‘white glove’ handling throughout.

#### 2. Installation

Many technology products can require specialist installation, either as standard or as part of an enhanced service offering.

This is particularly true of B2B technologies which may have to integrate with existing networks or equipment in the retail, hospitality or manufacturing environment for example. But it can also be true of some sophisticated B2C technologies such as smart home audio or air conditioning.



### 3. Technical support & helpdesk

Technical support for technology products is often much more than simply dealing with problems when something goes wrong. Effective technical support can start before a product is even bought, handling questions about specification and compatibility for example. It can also be there to help the customer set up and use their new product, and upgrade or modify it later on.

And yes, it will be just as important if something does go wrong – particularly in the 85% or more of instances at Qcom where we find that telephone support can resolve problems without either a product return or a field engineer dispatch.

### 4. Product repair and maintenance

The returns procedure for simple commodity and FMCG products is typically a swap out or refund operation. Technology products require a significantly broader range of options.

While swap out or refund options will certainly be required for faulty equipment, it is likely that a combination of warranty and non-warranty repair options will also be desirable. In some cases a purely back-to-base workshop repair option will suffice; in others (typically fixed installation B2B equipment or premium consumer products) a field engineering solution will be required.

### 5. Modifications and upgrades

Few technology products, if any, operate in complete isolation from their environment. From firmware upgrades to new features and integrations, technology products often require modifications or upgrades through their life.

While consumers have become used to carrying out such updates on their own everyday technology, the volumes, size and complexity of B2B technologies mean that only a return-to-base or field engineering solution is a viable solution for business customers.

### 6. End of life

From legislation such as the WEEE directive, to social and political calls for a more circular economy, pressures are growing on manufacturers to close the loop on their product lifecycles, and provide end-of-life options for consumers and businesses with redundant or no-longer-required equipment.

Options can include disposal and destruction, recycling, refurbishment and reuse / resale to extract any residual value in the equipment.



## What is 'white glove' fulfilment

The promise of 'white glove' service is everywhere in today's fulfilment, logistics and transport sector. Demand for it has, at least in part, been driven by the rise and rise of home delivery and the so-called 'Amazon effect' – a philosophy of convenience-first, customer-first market positioning driving up customer expectations.

In many cases, 'white glove' has simply come to mean a higher quality of service or special attention to detail. This can be about care, speed, convenience, or a combination of all three. But while these additional commitments are growing increasingly important to companies across a wide range of sectors, 'white glove' for technology products carries very specific connotations and requirements.

Delicate and high-value electronics often require facilities such as isolated cleanrooms, anti-static protection, temperature and humidity control, and advanced security.

Specialist equipment often calls for specialist handling, such as to preserve sterile packaging on medical equipment or maintain accurate calibration on weighing and measurement devices.

Many technology products in both B2B and high-end retail markets benefit from enhanced care designed to deliver a premium customer experience. This could



include personalised delivery slots, home installation and configuration, user training, and aftermarket support.

In all these customer-facing scenarios, the extra white glove treatment can come right down to the way technical delivery or engineering staff are dressed and trained, to ensure an understanding of service values as well as technical excellence.

For Qcom, white glove covers all of these and more, as the embodiment of our 'going the extra mile' commitment.



## Case study

Qcom supports this premium audio-visual technology company with an end-to-end 'white glove' e-fulfilment, commissioning, and support service.

This US manufacturer of high-end AV equipment needed a technical service partner able to provide a comprehensive and scalable package in support of fast-growing UK demand.

### A bespoke solution

The product and its sophisticated technology require secure and clean storage to protect delicate electronics. A dedicated area in Qcom's Technical Resource Centre provides the environment needed to ensure white glove storage, packaging, and handling.

The brand's innovative packaging requires a completely bespoke e-fulfilment process, from carton construction, product packaging, labelling and sealing, to dispatch, inventory management and full reporting.

The e-fulfilment process is triggered by email alerts generated whenever an end user places an order through the brand website. Our warehouse team then picks the parts required from the clean room, and packs them into branded packaging.

Once this process has been completed, and the correct labels have been applied, the product is dispatched to the end-user.

Careful inventory logistics and management of stock ensures that product levels remain above an agreed threshold, making sure all orders can be completed within the service level agreement.

### The result

This UK wide e-fulfilment service allows our customers to meet increasing demands in the UK market whilst maintaining its premium service levels and the quality of its unique packaging solution.

As a result of Qcom's commitment to 'go the extra mile', the customer has been able to use our white-labelled outsourcing solution to scale its business.





## 4. One-stop-shop outsourcing with Qcom

In truth then, order fulfilment is just one part of the whole-of-life technical service and support cycle which technology brands require if they are to meet the ever-growing expectations of both consumer and business customers.

By understanding order fulfilment in this context, technology manufacturers and distributors can transform the customer experience, giving themselves a vital competitive advantage and creating long-term reputational value for their business.

And by outsourcing order fulfilment to a full-service specialist like Qcom, they can achieve these strategic gains alongside significant efficiencies and cost savings.

The specialist provider's investment in dedicated facilities, technology and skills lays at the heart of this.

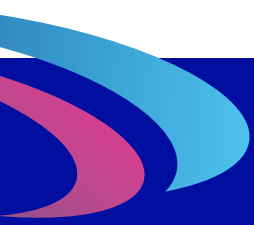
Qcom's multi-functional Technical Repair Centre (TRC) and specialist engineering team is a great example.

**On-site warehousing** means we can manage both product and spares inventory for our clients, including demo and even bonded new stock for resale.

Our **dedicated inventory system** ensures professional and fully-audited handling of stock, supporting a full pick-and-pack service for the order fulfilment of either components or complete technology products.

Crucially, our **dedicated assembly, commissioning and testing stations** allow us to support complex B2B and consumer technology product roll-outs and re-work projects.

All of this means we can offer the kind of **white glove services** require by delicate electronics and specialist equipment.





Beyond the TRC, we have an **efficient and effective logistics** operation, including a technical courier network and 15 forward stock locations.

And our **field services from installation to repair** are delivered by our exceptional team of field service engineers throughout

the UK and Ireland, with joint venture alliances ensuring coverage across EMEA. Together with our **state-of-the-art workshop** facilities, this means we can support technology products with a truly comprehensive pan-European aftermarket service.

---

## Discuss your technology order fulfilment today

As we have seen, working with a specialist order fulfilment provider is an ideal way for companies to leverage the benefits of business process outsourcing.

But to maximise all of the competitive, service quality and cost advantages, technology manufacturers should look beyond a simple 'pick, pack and dispatch' operation.

Instead, whether outsourced or delivered in-house, order fulfilment for technology products should be seen as part of a comprehensive whole-of-life service and support lifecycle.

**To discuss the service and support requirements of your technology product, contact Qcom today on (0)1905 827650 or email [outsourcing@qcom.co.uk](mailto:outsourcing@qcom.co.uk)**

