

# Convenient returns for the modern customer

Complicated or costly returns can lose shoppers valuable time and the economy millions of pounds in lost productivity

**B**ritish shoppers estimate they spend an average of 52 minutes every year returning unwanted purchases, costing the UK economy up to £505m, according to an independent study released by CollectPlus, the parcel delivery and returns service.

Founded in 2009, CollectPlus is the UK's largest independent store-based parcel delivery and returns company. It answers a clear need for a more accessible alternative to the Post Office by having a network that is open early until late, seven days a week. With more than 5,800 parcel outlets in its network, CollectPlus provides consumers with a way to return their unwanted online shopping purchases at a time and place that suits them.

CollectPlus's network grew by 25% in the 2013/14 financial year alone, driven by record online retail sales, with a growing element of volume driven by mobile. Its reach is reflected in the proximity of its stores to consumers – more than 90% of the urban population live within one mile of a CollectPlus store, and 89% of rural consumers are within five miles.

## A reliable returns network designed around the consumer

CollectPlus's research reveals that 39% of consumers have returned items they have bought online in the past year, with the average person each spending 8 hours and 42 minutes returning goods over the course of 2014. Almost a fifth (19%) have taken time out of work to return an item, one in 10 during their lunch hour.

Neil Ashworth, chief executive of CollectPlus, says: "We know that people want a service that fits into their lives and offers them a local drop off point. Providing customers with an excellent experience is at the heart of what we do at CollectPlus. Whether a customer is returning one or



several parcels, we want them to have the best possible experience from start to finish."

CollectPlus's research also demonstrates that UK retailers could be losing out on sales if they do not offer a range of convenient returns options for their online customers to choose from. Three quarters (75%) of online shoppers are revealed to be more likely to shop with a retailer that offers free returns. Meanwhile, charging for returns has the opposite effect, with 74% less likely to use that retailer. Two thirds (66%) of online shoppers admit they are put off buying from a retailer if the returns process is unclear or complicated. Encouragingly, however, 77% of shoppers admit that they will buy more from a retailer in the future if they offer convenient returns.

Ashworth adds: "Returns have historically

been a forgotten part of the retail world and in desperate need of retailer focus. Promisingly, 2014 saw returns become better integrated into the retail business model and is an area that has begun to generate innovation. The returns chain is a complicated one, but as a cross functional part of the business, affecting everything from inventory control and logistics, to customer services and the business' bottom line, it is an area that retailers must continue to invest in this year."

## Returns made easy

By offering a convenient returns service to more than 260 retailers from local stores in the UK, CollectPlus's client base has grown rapidly. Its convenient, tracked returns service is used by retailers including John Lewis, Very.co.uk and The White Company,



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giving online shoppers the option to return their unwanted online purchases via their local convenience store, newsagent, supermarket or petrol station, at a time that suits them.

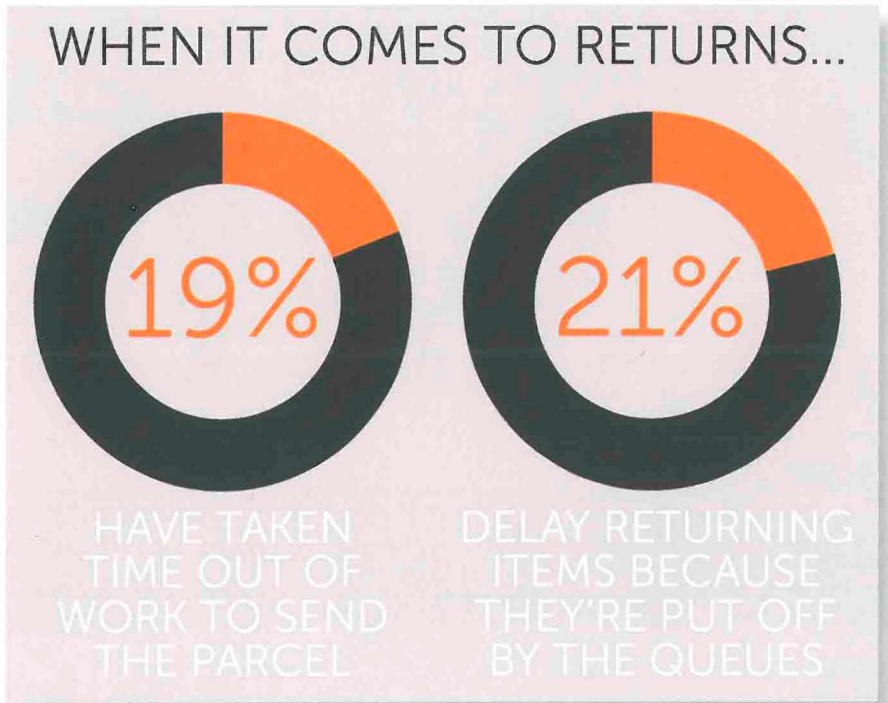
CollectPlus provides online shoppers with a more convenient alternative to the Post Office in terms of opening hours and locations through its parcel outlets, nearly all of which are open seven days a week, early until late.

This is even more important considering the fact that 21% of shoppers delay returning packages because they do not want to wait around in a queue, one in seven resent having to plan their day around Post Office opening hours and 27% are put off shopping online because of the hassle of returning anything they do not like.

Ashworth says: “Convenience is still king for the online shopper and inflexible returns options have the potential to negatively impact the overall shopping experience for them. It’s tricky buying something for someone else and it’s important that consumers have the option to easily return any purchases they decide they don’t want. Even when shopping for themselves, particularly for clothes, a simple returns process gives shoppers the freedom to buy a few different styles and colours, then try them, keep them or return the ones that aren’t their style. It gives them fashion freedom.”

**“People want a service that fits into their lives and offers them a local drop off point”**

**Neil Ashworth, CollectPlus**



**Convenience and a quality customer service**

Nearly all stores offering the CollectPlus service are open to shoppers early until late, seven days a week. With 38% of CollectPlus customers dropping off parcels outside traditional opening hours, the service solves a long-term problem for consumers.

Ashworth says: “Convenient returns are not only important to people with busy lives or who have work commitments, but to anyone who wants more control over how, when and where to pick up and drop off their

purchases. More and more people are using our services as their go-to brand when they need to return a parcel. Forward-thinking retailers are making returns services more flexible so shoppers can return parcels to a range of convenient points, not just the Post Office, and do not have to go out of their way to send an item back.”

**CollectPlus takes away the pain of returning unwanted online purchases with its returns service. Please contact the team at CollectPlus at [sales@collectplus.co.uk](mailto:sales@collectplus.co.uk) for more information**

