

By Todd Bernitt, Vice President of Managed Services for Robinson Fresh

In any environment, managing fresh product supply is challenging. Today, that's especially true. Regardless of any comprehensive planning you've done, supply shortages are bound to occur.

Because of this, many retail suppliers have established last minute supply chains to cover unexpected shortages. Unfortunately, volatility in demand pushes more and more volumes through these secondary channels. Channels that were not intended to handle such high demand. Across the board, we're seeing expedited secondary supply chains become overwhelmed.

Adding suppliers and pairing faster shipping options can be the winning combination for retailers hoping to keep up with an environment that keeps throwing curve balls.

Plug into third party supply networks

Prior to 2020, [consumer trends](#) were already leading grocery retailers down the fast and next day delivery ecommerce path. In light of 2020 events, this shift to "always on" expedited supply chains has sped up exponentially.

As retailers rush to handle current needs, they should also focus on longer term, expedited supply chains. These expedited solutions, previously thought to be one-off situations, will likely become a part of regular strategies moving forward. In fact, it won't be surprising to see these options become the heart of the supply chain.

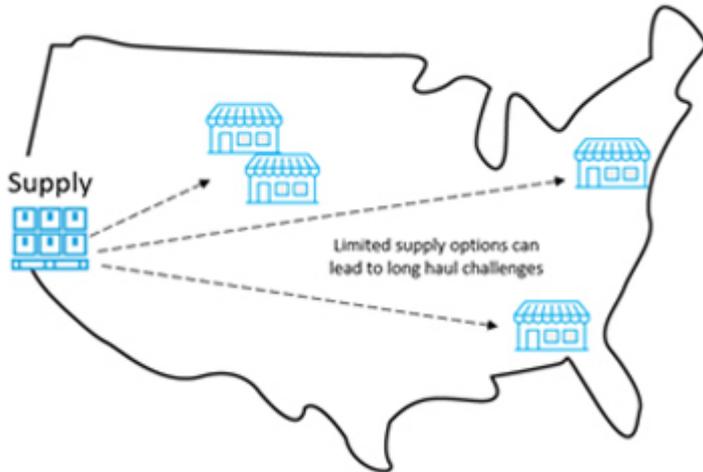
By plugging into third party supply and distribution networks, retailers will be able to more successfully cover supply demands from both a volume and geographical perspective. This will also allow retailers to align supply networks with the growing need for these types of supplies. Your SKUs must be as close to the consumer as possible to execute at the point of sale.

Combine supply and service

Fast supply sourcing is only as good as having the means in which to deliver. Having the right supply in the wrong place is essentially having no supply at all. Fast, efficient shipping

increases the return on investment of comprehensive supply networks.

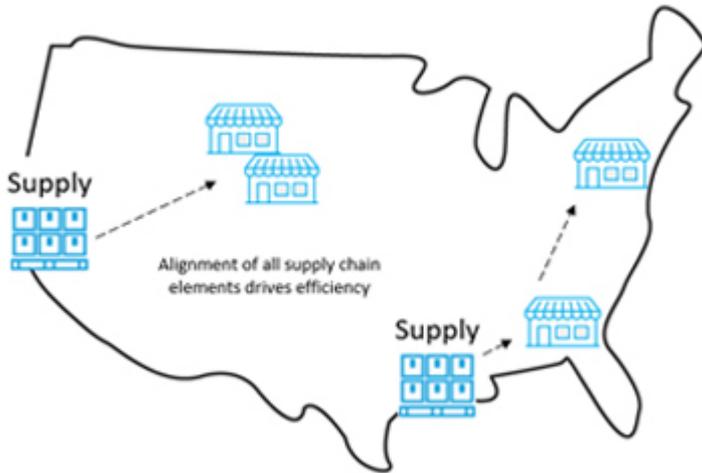
Let's look at a direct to store solution. Alone, this option doesn't ensure supply is geographically aligned, which could slow down turnaround time. This is an unoptimized solution.



The right supply in the right place with the wrong shipping option is another missed opportunity for fully expedited supply chain solutions.



Now, a geographically aligned supply plus expedited shipping is the service combination that ensures an optimized approach so retailers can cover supply gaps and accommodate today's consumer demand for fresh products.



Robinson Fresh can help you develop these types of tailored, market-leading solutions, without sacrificing accuracy or efficiencies.

Secondary or expedited supply chains are needed long term

Even prior to the events of 2020, the demand for products requiring an expedited supply chain was increasing. Fresh cut produce, meal kits, and ready to eat products were driving the need for faster supply chains.

What were once considered fast supply chains will soon become the standard expectation, which will effectively shorten expedited shipping timelines even further. Consumers shopping in-store will expect supplies to be on shelves consistently and when not, their expectations for restocking will be hours versus days.

Volume surges may stabilize as COVID-19 passes, but consumer expectations will remain. Retailers who can utilize expedited supply chain models to instill long-term, organization-wide changes will be the best poised for growth and revenue generation in the future.

The meaning of successful supply chains is changing for retailers around the world. Navigating the changes and developing a balanced expedited strategy doesn't have to be difficult if you work with a provider like [Robinson Fresh](#) that can reliably meet all of your fresh produce and cold chain logistics needs today and in the future. [Connect with an expert](#) today.