Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for Fulfilling Orders

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What is a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)?

A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) is a set of documented step-by-step instructions used to carry out routine tasks. SOPs ensure uniformity, improve quality and operational efficiency, and reduce communication gaps and errors.

An SOP for order fulfilment outlines each task, role, and responsibility involved in the order lifecycle, enhancing customer satisfaction.

Why Do You Need an SOP for Order Fulfilment?

1. Multiple Stakeholders: Clear documentation of roles and responsibilities.
2. Time-sensitive Tasks: Ensures delivery timelines like SDD (Same Day Delivery) or NDD (Next Day Delivery) are met.
3. Training New Staff: Helps in onboarding and knowledge transfer.
4. Process Consistency: Reduces errors and enhances customer experience.

Stage 1: Receiving Inventory

1. Verify the quantity of received shipment (boxes, pallets, etc.).
2. Record discrepancies between received and expected inventory.
3. Store and sort inventory by size, type, and other criteria.
4. Conduct reconciliation count.
5. Contact the supplier for variances and update inventory records.
6. Place items on designated shelves.

Stage 2: Quality Check

1. Define quality criteria (e.g., intact components, no damages).
2. Visually inspect items against product images.

3. Validate product attributes (color, size, etc.).
4. Segregate and mark checked items.
5. Move rejected items to a designated return area.

Stage 3: Picking

1. Generate optimized pick lists by warehouse zones.
2. Print and assign pick lists.
3. Use barcode scanners for item verification.
4. Avoid moving all picked items to one station.
5. Final check before transferring to packing.

Stage 4: Packing

1. Match product sizes to box sizes.
2. Define packaging material by product type.
3. Stock packing stations with required materials.
4. Pack items, include inserts (coupons, freebies), seal, and label.
5. Mark orders as 'ready to dispatch'.

Stage 5: Shipping

1. Sort packed orders by courier partner.
2. Move orders to the shipping area.
3. Load items carefully to avoid damages.

Stage 6: Handling Returns

1. Inspect returned items for components and tags.
2. Conduct quality check.
3. If resellable: restock item.
4. If damaged: send for refurbishment.
5. Update inventory accordingly.

Bottom Line

A well-defined SOP is essential whether you're a startup or an established ecommerce company. It helps improve operational efficiency, maintain consistency across fulfilment stages, and deliver a better customer experience.