

A background image showing two women in a workshop or craft studio. The woman on the left has long dark hair and glasses, wearing a white shirt. The woman on the right has short dark hair and is wearing a dark top with a white apron. They are both smiling and looking towards the right. In the background, there are shelves with various items, a large green plant on the left, and a wooden workbench on the right with a small potted plant and a white object on it.

8 Inventory management tips to make the most of a sales surge



Seasonal spikes in demand, such as a rush for back-to-school products, can create a windfall for small businesses.

But if you don't have the right inventory on hand, you might miss out.



Prepare to capitalize on a sales surge by implementing these **simple and efficient inventory management solutions for your small business.**

1

Develop a data-supported strategy

Study relevant sales data from previous years, using the figures to inform your stocking strategy.

Aim to procure a majority of the items you'll need roughly three months ahead of a potential surge, says Steve Mastrogiacono, senior vice president of inventory management at Staples. If resources are limited, focus on the products that are expected to yield the highest profit.





When gathering data, cast a wide net

In addition to reviewing your own historical data, keep a close eye on wider industry and consumer spending trends.

For example, if you're introducing a new item, analyze predictive data for a clearer understanding of potential performance. Or if limited consumer spend is forecasted, you might consider shifting your strategy to avoid a loss.



3

Encourage advance orders

Encourage customers, especially those that tend toward high-volume orders, to place advance orders to secure a timely fulfillment.

Their engagement not only allows you to move products earlier, but it also helps you to analyze your sales estimates so you can adjust your strategy if needed.



4



Alert your suppliers

If you anticipate a need to order goods at a greater volume or frequency, give your supplier ample notice — up to six months in advance, if possible — so they can prepare, advises Mastrogiacono.

Close communication can likewise lead to stronger supplier relationships, which comes in handy if your order requires any last-minute adjustments.

5

Anticipate obstacles

Throughout the year, keep careful records of any supply-chain disruptions, such as damaged products or transportation failures that could reduce inventory during the peak demand. Use this data to determine if safety stock is necessary, and if so, what quantity.



6

Identify a backup

Even if you've partnered with reliable suppliers, establish a backup supplier — especially if you're working with geographically disparate suppliers and you anticipate last-minute needs.

Consider splitting orders from the start, so a backup supplies a small portion of the product. That way, if your primary supplier is unable to fulfill orders, your backup can keep some inventory flowing in while it ramps up to provide more.





7

Consider drop shipping

Drop shipping is a fulfillment method many large companies employ in which a third-party supplier ships products directly to consumers, meaning merchants don't have to keep the product in stock.

Before a surge, consider employing a temporary drop shipping service for products expected to sell quickly. This removes the strain on internal manpower while freeing up space for inventory.



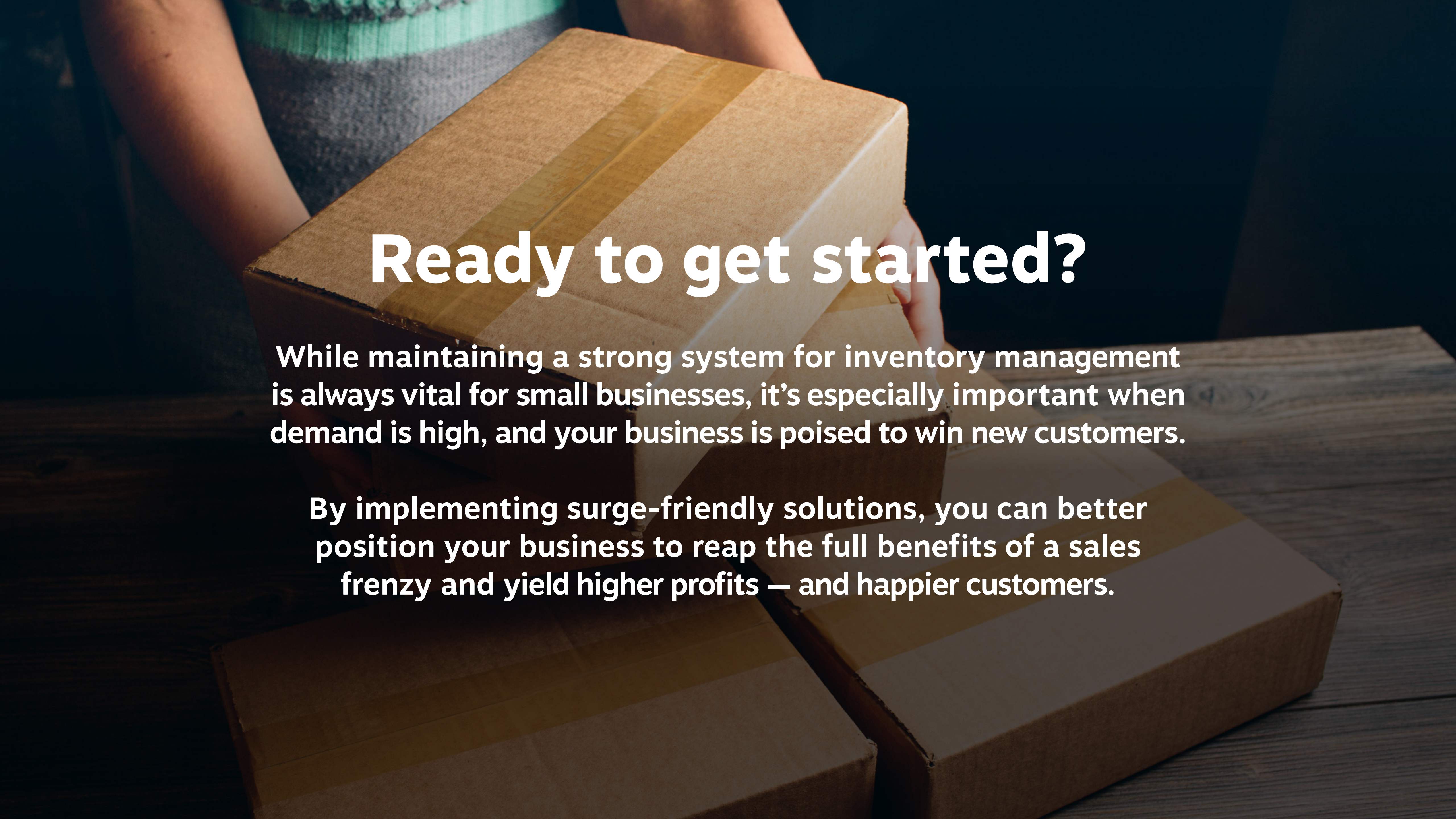
8

Optimize your storage space

If you store your inventory in a warehouse, perform a walkthrough to confirm that your most popular products are organized and accessible.

When making space for increased inventory, be sure to account for any safety stock as well as room to navigate. Utilizing additional self-storage? Look for flexible access hours.



A person's hands are shown holding a cardboard box, with another box resting on a wooden surface below. The background is dark and out of focus.

Ready to get started?

While maintaining a strong system for inventory management is always vital for small businesses, it's especially important when demand is high, and your business is poised to win new customers.

By implementing surge-friendly solutions, you can better position your business to reap the full benefits of a sales frenzy and yield higher profits — and happier customers.

Looking ahead to small business success?

For more small business inventory management tips,
visit the [Staples Business Resource Center](#).

