

TEXTE

How Covid disrupted our Christmas toy deliveries

Monday December, 27th 2021

On a misty morning just before Christmas, a shipping container finally arrived at a warehouse in Leeds - seven weeks late. It was shipped from Ningbo in China, carrying toys and games. Other containers expected before Christmas won't arrive until January.

5 As supply chains around the world battle with the impact of the Covid pandemic, businesses are facing frustrating delays as they struggle to meet consumer demand.

To make matters worse, the cost of global shipping has risen dramatically this year.

10 It is good news for shipping companies - who are estimated to make record profits of \$150bn (£113bn) this year, according to maritime consultancy Drewry. But it is an extra burden for many other businesses.

Out of kilter

Boxer Gifts is a family-run Leeds-based firm which develops and designs games and seasonal presents, and this is their busiest time of year.

15 Nearly all their stock is manufactured in China. That helps keep consumer prices down and container deliveries used to be incredibly reliable. But not this year.

"Now 95% of them are at least a week late," says Thomas O'Brien, Boxer Gifts' managing director.

20 "The container that arrived today, it was delayed three weeks getting out of China. It was delayed another month on the sea. For a seasonal business, this is stock that people can't buy until the last minute."

The trouble is there aren't enough empty containers in China to meet the demand for sending goods around the world.

The empties are in the wrong places, stuck in other ports thousands of miles away, with no ships available to pick them up.

25 Covid shutdowns and delays have put global supply chains out of kilter.

After a difficult year in 2020, retailers tried to get stock in early. But that surge in demand, coupled with a shortage of ships and containers in the right place at the right time, simply made the situation worse. (...)

Soaring costs

30 The result is that the short-term cost of sending freight from Asia to Europe has risen by 366% this year, Ms Bockmann says. (...)

Ports are working longer hours to keep trade moving, while more ships are on order to try to cope with the demand - but it will take time for things to settle down.

35 "We have moved to almost constant 24/7 working in the big locations, we have added more capacity and hired more people," Tim Morris, chief executive of the UK Major Ports Group, told a recent UK parliamentary committee hearing.(...)

Other issues, such as the aftermath of Brexit in the UK, and the shortage of HGV drivers, have added to pressure on the system.

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