

The Primary Logistics Needs of Life Science Companies

The low volume life science market has significant complexities when it comes to logistics. Shippers must have an educated understanding of Good Distribution Practice (GDP) methods and processes, and detailed knowledge of how to ship the pharma related product in question. These products can range from novel prototypes up to final stage development pre-trial products, including component ingredients and failed items being returned for analysis.

As a consequence of the complexity, the need for add-on features when shipping are high on a per shipment basis. Unique packaging, individual insurance and special requests in-transit are often what is required for a temperature-sensitive, high-value shipment to be delivered in its desired state and on time. Additionally, customs teams in each country do not regularly see items like these, so it's easy to see why most life science companies have major concerns when shipping. It's therefore essential to work with a specialist logistics partner to effectively outsource the process beyond standard logistics provisions.

YSDS Life Science sat down with four prominent UK life science companies, all identifying four different but equally important aspects of the logistical needs of the life sciences industry.

A Close Collaboration Between The Shipper and Logistics Provider

Products shipped in the Life Science industry are often referred to as "high value". This is generally speaking a misnomer however, as the products themselves have little monetary value. The value lies in the role they play in the bigger picture; these are business-critical shipments for companies



often in the start-up, spin-out or SME phase. The success of a project and conformity to agreed timelines can have significant impacts on proof-of-concept, funding conversations, and meeting critical strategic markers with mentors. So, what's the most important factor for shipping success in this low volume-high value market?

LocateBio specialises in developing next generation orthobiologic products to relieve symptoms for people with musculoskeletal conditions. Its products are novel, with complex shipping requirements. "As a start-up company, we require a fast turnaround from collection to delivery to ensure that project timelines are adhered to and last-minute requests are processed quickly and efficiently," says Lyndsey Johnson – Scientific Programme Manager at LocateBio.

What Johnson highlights as the most important factor when working with a logistics provider is regular communication with a dedicated contact who can handle their account throughout the entire shipping process: "This saves us having to bring new people up to speed each time a shipment is raised, and makes the process so much easier."

Backup Solutions, Proactivity and Flexibility

Whilst clear communication is a must, the logistics provider's ability to solve problems is equally as important. This according to Dr. Peter De'Ath, Head of Client Account Management at HistologiX: "The importance of high value insurance cover and timely solutions for when things do go wrong cannot be highlighted enough."

HistologiX is a CRO specialised in tissue-based analyses. The company receives precious tissue samples from its clients, which are then processed and redistributed. Their predominant shipping needs are for ambient shipments of immunohistochemically stained tissue mounted on glass microscope slides and formalin-fixed paraffin-embedded (FFPE) tissue blocks, as well as refrigerated and frozen tissue shipments. "Due to our fast-paced research environment, we are not able to hold fixed shipment dates and we often need to arrange reduced temperature shipments on short notice," says De'Ath.

Shipping high-value, temperature-controlled or time-dependent items has always been a strategic challenge, not only because of the flexibility required, but also because of external conditions the shipper cannot control, i.e. weather, staffing issues, strikes, transport problems, national holidays, conflicts, political events, etc.

Summarising HistologiX' logistics needs, De'Ath says: "It has to be adaptable to whatever is currently happening in our laboratories and have clear backup solutions in order to deal with all unexpected delays." Johnson agrees: "A logistics provider needs to show great willingness to think outside the box and actively contribute with solutions to get things back on track as quickly as possible."

The Highest Quality

The biotech company Emergex highlights the need for logistical quality. Emergex is pioneering the development of a range of 100% synthetic CD8+ T cell-priming immune set-point candidates. The candidates are designed to harness the body's natural cellular immune response to destroy pathogen-infected cells, and to provide broad and robust immune protection for some of the world's most urgent infectious diseases.

Emergex' shipping requirements vary over different temperature-controlled conditions. So how do you ensure quality in the shipping process? By working with GDP certified partners.

GDP – Good Distribution Practice – describes the minimum standards a wholesale distributor must meet to ensure that the quality and integrity of goods is maintained throughout the supply chain. "It's of critical operational importance that we have access to GDP-certified solutions for time and temperature-sensitive products," says Chad Zaloumis – Purchasing and Warehouse Manager at Emergex.

De'Ath continues this argument, "A GDP certification gives us complete confidence that our precious and highly valuable materials will be handled with care and the utmost quality of service."

Full Visibility and Transparency

The rapidly growing cell and gene therapy subsegment within the life sciences industry is putting increased demands on the entire logistics chain, of which visibility and transparency is a huge part, for an optimal vein-to-vein process.

Pharmaron is a cell and gene therapy CDO contract manufacturer. Its predominant shipping needs are small-scale shipments, mostly on dry ice and -80°C, and raw material sampling. As its products are mostly classified as controlled substances, Pharmaron needs to acquire pre-authorization from the receiving sites when shipping abroad. Full transparency in this process is something the company values highly: "Since starting to work with our specialist logistics partner, we've come to understand that gaining pre-authorization isn't a six week process (as it was for us with our previous logistics provider). It's all a matter of communicating clearly with the consignee and being fully transparent with us, the shipper, so that we can work collaboratively to get all the necessary pieces in place for a successful and smooth shipment process," says Simon Davies – Shipping and Logistics Specialist at Pharmaron.

Knowing where your product is and how it's doing at all times is key for making the right decisions. If the condition of a business-critical shipment changes anywhere on its journey, sufficient data and information is needed to make the necessary changes. "Knowing that we will get regular updates for expected movements, and receive a notification if something goes wrong, along with suggested solutions, is very important. Being transparent and taking ownership when things do go wrong allows us to know the full picture so that we can make the right decision to correct it. Having access to all of the information available allows us to share it with interested parties, whoever that is – whether they are scientists or our customers," says Davies.

LocateBio, HistologiX and Emergex all agree on the importance of traceability. As Johnson summarises, "Traceability of product throughout the shipping process is of paramount importance to us."

Common Factors

Although LocateBio, HistologiX, Emergex and Pharmaron are all different types of companies within the life science industry, all have similar logistics needs that are complex

and multifaceted, requiring specialised knowledge, proactive problem solving, and stringent quality controls. Close collaboration, clear communication and full visibility are essential for ensuring the successful delivery of high-value, temperature-sensitive shipments. Partnering with a specialist logistics provider that understands these unique requirements can significantly impact projects, operations, customer relationships, and ultimately business success.



John Coleman

John Coleman, Business Unit Director for YSDS Life Science, has worked with temperature-sensitive logistics for the past 20 years. His expertise spans cold chain logistics, quality assurance, risk assessment and clinical trial logistics, making him a leading authority in ensuring the successful shipment of temperature-sensitive products.



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