

# Ready to scale?

How Ryder got Free Fly Apparel ready for the holidays.

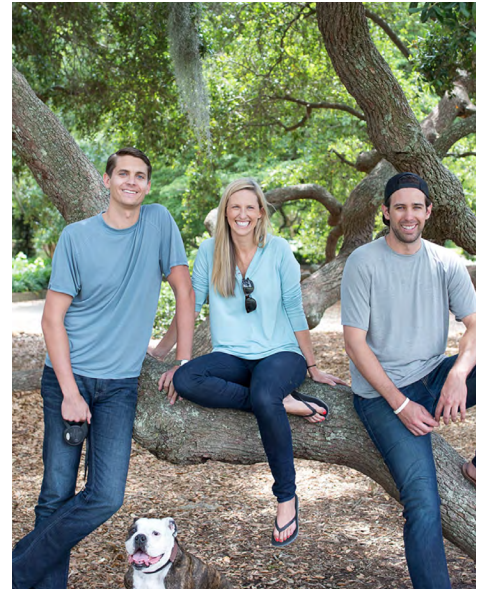


# Free Fly: Culture-driven living in the outdoors

Free Fly Apparel started out in 2010, when Tanner Sutton was working as a fishing guide in Montana. A long-time lover of the outdoors, Tanner's biggest frustration was the lack of comfortable high-performance apparel available on the market. Unable to find what he was looking for, Tanner decided to create it himself.

With the help of his sister Jenna Elliot, then a product marketer at Nike, Tanner created their first product: an activewear shirt made of bamboo and quick-dry fabric. At that moment, Free Fly Apparel was born.

Today, Free Fly Apparel has celebrated its 10th birthday and strives for the same mission it did at the very beginning: **creating comfortable, high-performance apparel that inspires people to spend more time in nature.** In addition to sales at the brand's own direct-to-consumer (DTC) e-commerce store, Free Fly Apparel products are sold at 400 specialty retailers across the U.S.



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**400**  
The number of specialty  
retailers that sell Free Fly  
Apparel products in U.S.

## Finding a value-led 3PL

For Free Fly Apparel, partnering with a 3PL wasn't just a matter of getting their products from A to B; it was a question of finding a provider whose values clearly aligned with theirs.

"We were having difficulties with our initial 3PL partnership, and our operation was beginning to struggle. For the next phase in Free Fly's story, it was really important for us to find a provider that really connected with our brand and direction," says Mary-Chelsea Banister, Senior Manager at Free Fly Apparel.

As a brand that's powered by simplicity and purpose, Free Fly Apparel knew they needed a 3PL partner with in-depth understanding both of their industry and their mission. Not being experts in logistics themselves, the decision by the team at Free Fly Apparel to outsource fulfillment meant that a lot of trust was needed.

"Ryder provided the perfect balance of having advanced systems that are backed by decades of proven industry expertise. **Just like us, they take great pride in what they do. This made Ryder the ideal partner as our business grows,**" said Mary-Chelsea Banister, Senior Manager at Free Fly Apparel.



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Mary-Chelsea Banister  
Senior Manager at Free Fly Apparel



## Ready to launch in time for the holiday season

Choosing to switch 3PL providers as peak season looms can seem like a risky strategy. As the period of the year with the greatest revenue potential, it's important to safeguard against disruptions to fulfillment that could impact the customer experience.

But as scaling up and down effectively around seasonal and promotional peaks becomes integral to success, partnering with a 3PL with a stellar onboarding process offers plenty of rewards.

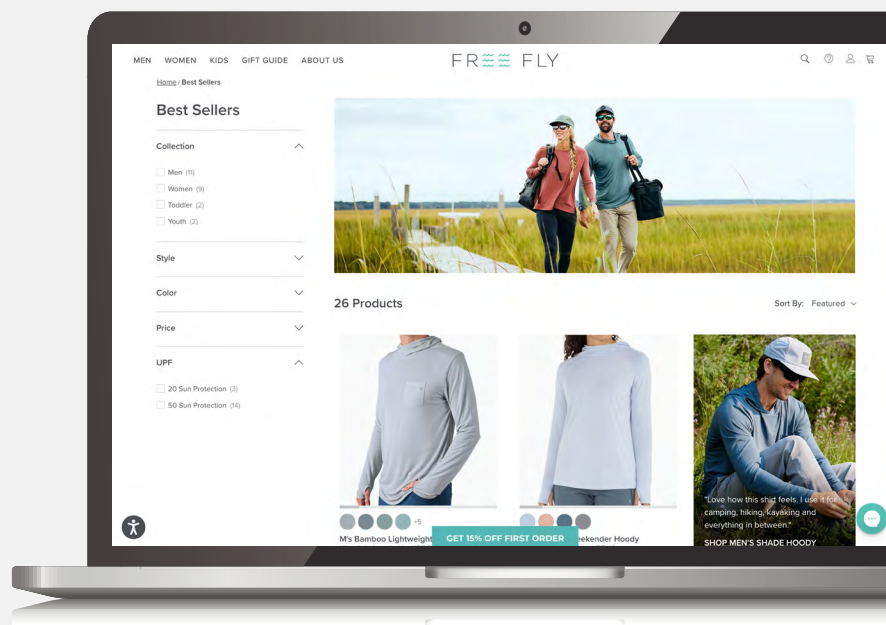
“The exponential increase in supply chain complexity caused by rapid growth in order volume is a common pain point for merchants, especially with the boom in e-commerce sales triggered by COVID-19,” said Greg Morello, President and Chief Commercial Officer at Ryder. “We have become the go-to partner for fast-growing brands that want the best technology, but also need a partner that understands how to design a solution that accommodates high SKU counts, high volume, and multiple delivery channels.”

With a hybrid DTC e-commerce and wholesale distribution operation, Free Fly Apparel knew that simply flipping the switch to on wasn't going to be the best approach. The team at Ryder helped the brand to build a staggered onboarding process at the 3PL's newest Columbus, Ohio facility, with the brand's e-commerce and wholesale channels launching a week apart in October 2021.



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President and Chief Commercial Officer  
at Ryder



“Free Fly Apparel has a fast-growing DTC e-commerce operation with many of these customers concentrated in the Southeast. The brand also serves 400 specialty retailers nationwide, with volumes varying from 50 to 2,000 items in a single order,” said Caitlin Postel, Business Development Manager at Ryder. “Both of these channels require fast, efficient fulfillment, and we’re able to effectively serve these businesses from the same distribution point.”

Located in the Columbus industrial zone—the second Columbus-area facility operated by Ryder—the DC opened in May 2021, and features state-of-the-art omnichannel capabilities, sure to support Free Fly Apparel’s growth in years ahead. All within competitive two-day ground coverage to many major metropolitan areas.

“The team at Ryder did a fantastic job of taking a very complex process and presenting it as straightforward as possible. As a brand-new facility, the Columbus location was able to completely accommodate our needs,” Banister says. “Ryder struck the perfect balance between keeping us in the loop so we felt confident during the transition and not bogged down with all the technical details.”

**Thanks to a smooth onboarding process, Free Fly Apparel’s fulfillment operation was hitting all of its SLA requirements within the first week of launching, which created strong confidence for a successful holiday season.**

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**Mary-Chelsea Banister**  
Senior Manager at Free Fly Apparel



# Scaling through e-commerce technology

Achieving sustainable e-commerce growth isn't just about how many square feet of warehouse space you have at your disposal; it's also about whether you have the systems on hand to take your business from 50 to 5000 orders a month.

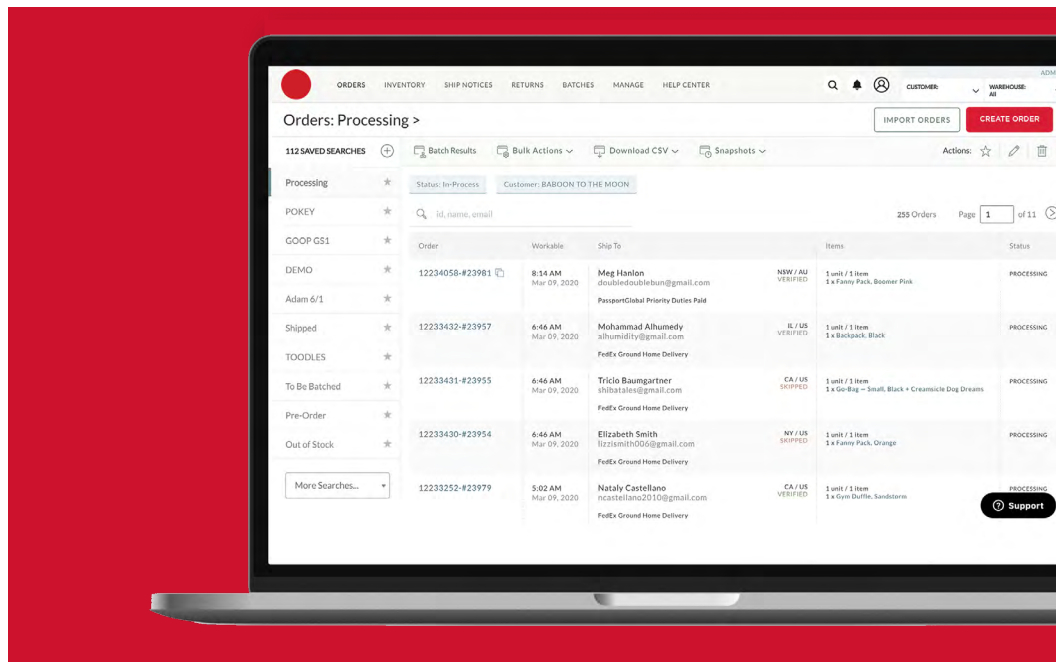
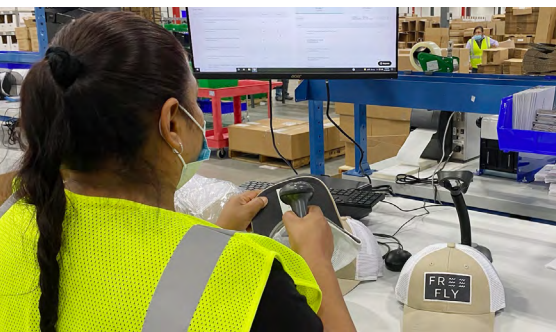
“For Ryder, investing in advanced automation is a long-term strategy to future-proof itself against disturbances in the marketplace,” says Ryan Powell, Senior Vice President of E-commerce at Ryder. “The Ryder platform is the culmination of these efforts to give our customers unparalleled visibility and control over their fulfillment operation, without needing to have their own staff present in a warehouse.”

The Ryder proprietary technology platform enables merchants to integrate seamlessly with their e-commerce store to manage orders, track inventory, and view the status of shipments in real time for granular control over their operation. For Free Fly Apparel, this played a key role in the ease of partnering with Ryder.

**“We love the simplicity of the Ryder platform, and how easy it’s been to train our staff on it for better insight into our operation.** We’ve also been impressed with how Ryder has looked to the long-term, mitigating issues with scaling and preparing for the new normal following the pandemic,” Banister says.

The power of e-commerce technology with merchant-facing and warehouse-facing visibility into orders and inventory doesn't just make it possible to scale effectively, but also to build close, more trusted relationships with your 3PL.

“‘Collaborative’ would be the keyword we would use to describe our experience with Ryder,” Banister says. “We’ve learned that if you don’t outsource to a 3PL that’s a true partner to your business, it’s going to impede your growth. We wanted to find someone who could scale with us in all elements of business, and we’ve found that with Ryder.”



## About Ryder System, Inc.

Ryder System, Inc. (NYSE: R) is a leading logistics and transportation company. It provides supply chain, dedicated transportation, and fleet management solutions, including warehousing and distribution, e-commerce fulfillment, last-mile delivery, managed transportation, professional drivers, freight brokerage, leasing, maintenance, commercial truck rental, and used vehicle sales to some of the world's most-recognized brands. Ryder provides services throughout the United States, Mexico, and Canada. Ryder is regularly recognized for its industry-leading practices in third-party logistics, technology-driven innovations, commercial vehicle maintenance, environmental stewardship, corporate social responsibility, world-class safety, and security programs.

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