



**2024**

# **Big & Bulky, Done Better:**

**Survey reveals top challenges and  
how businesses are solving them**





## When it comes to home delivery, big and bulky merchandise has always been a bit of a misfit.

Their non-standard dimensions often result in slower movement and higher costs through distribution facilities and delivery networks. These obstacles hinder retailers' ability to convert buyers, offer convenient delivery, and efficiently manage the complex distribution process involving multiple transportation partners.

The burden is so significant that over one-third (36.7%) of the 150 retailers, e-tailers and other businesses surveyed by Roadie and Supply Chain Dive's studioID have even restricted delivery for certain oversized items. Respondents reported multiple customer experience (CX)

and logistics challenges in big and bulky delivery but also shared the solutions they're leveraging to solve last-mile challenges for these difficult-to-deliver items. By taking the pain out of the fulfillment and delivery of oversized merchandise, they're unlocking an efficient, easy-to-manage, customer-satisfying and revenue-driving big and bulky delivery experience.

"Most merchants don't sell just small items; they sell a broad range of SKUs, and customers expect to have a consistent experience across all those SKUs," says Chris Grubb, head of marketing at logistics and crowdsource delivery platform Roadie, a UPS company. "Because big and bulky deliveries tend to be a little bit more difficult, a retailer who can make it easier and more seamless, similar to what customers get on smaller items, stands to win a greater share of the customer wallet."



# The State of Big & Bulky Delivery

Many items consumers want to buy are defined by carriers as oversized goods — 50 or more pounds and/or 48-plus inches. How many items? Among the survey respondents, just over a third say that **11% to 20%** of their goods are oversized, and another **44%** say “oversized” describes **21%** or more of what they sell.

The delivery experience for those oversized goods is important to businesses because it’s important to their customers; **60%** call the oversized goods delivery experience very important to consumers’ overall experience with their companies. The other **40%** call it somewhat important.

“Speed and efficiency wins the customer experience and customer’s wallet,” says Dennis Moon, COO and head of operations at Roadie. “If Amazon is going to deliver to me in two or three days, then other retailers need to be able to provide a comparable service to compete for that wallet.”

The majority of respondents use a mix of delivery services to handle their big and bulky goods, led by national and regional parcel carriers (**76% each**), followed by couriers (**69%**) and LTL carriers (**54%**). Crowdsourced delivery, in which gig drivers make point-to-point delivery right from a store or distribution center (DC) to the home, has been used by **43%** of respondents. The oversized items respondents need to have delivered most commonly require lifting straps (**70%**), hand carts/dollies (**66%**) and/or pallet jacks (**56%**).

Toughest of all for consumers and retailers, big and bulky items usually cost more to deliver than smaller items, and **44%** of respondents pass along the full cost of these oversized deliveries to customers. Another **35%** subsidize some of the costs and **21%** offer free delivery of oversized goods.



“**Speed and efficiency wins the customer experience and customer’s wallet. If Amazon is going to deliver to me in two or three days, then other retailers need to be able to provide a comparable service to compete for that wallet.**”

**DENNIS MOON**

*COO and Head of Operations at Roadie*

# The Challenges of Oversized Delivery

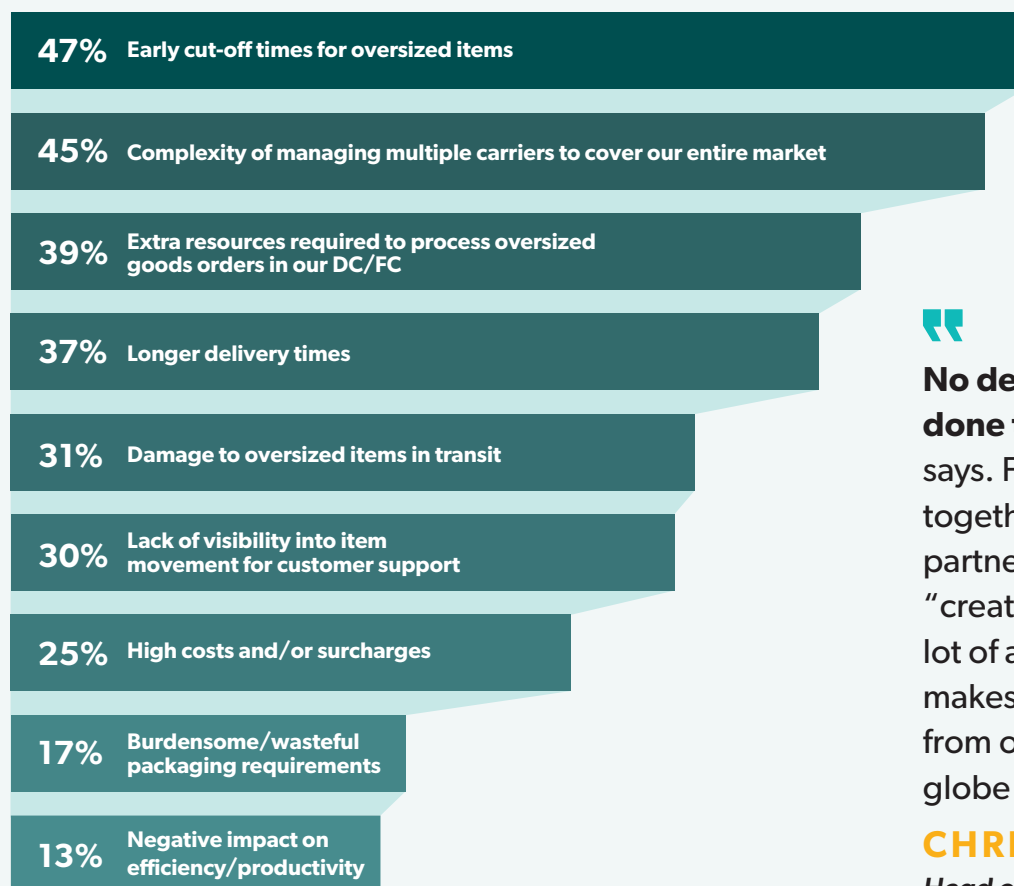
Fulfillment and delivery systems are built around standardization and efficiency; big and bulky items put those to the test in both logistics and customer experience, creating headaches for many respondents.

The top challenges on the logistics side are the early cut-off times carriers often require for oversized items (47%) and the complexity of managing multiple carriers to cover the entire market they serve (45%). (See Figure 1.)

FIGURE 1

## Big & Bulky Logistics Pain Points

Respondents were asked to select their top three.



**No delivery provider has done this at scale,”** Grubb says. For retailers, stitching together a network of multiple partners for oversized delivery “creates a lot of friction, a lot of additional costs, and it makes the service inconsistent from one part of the country or globe to the next.”

**CHRIS GRUBB**

*Head of Marketing at Roadie*

“No delivery provider has done this at scale,” Grubb says. For retailers, stitching together a network of multiple partners for oversized delivery “creates a lot of friction, a lot of additional costs, and it makes the service inconsistent from one part of the country or globe to the next.”

Other top challenges include the allocation of extra resources required to process oversized goods orders in distribution or fulfillment centers (39%), since oversized goods often require special equipment, storage and additional manpower to handle, and longer delivery times (37%).

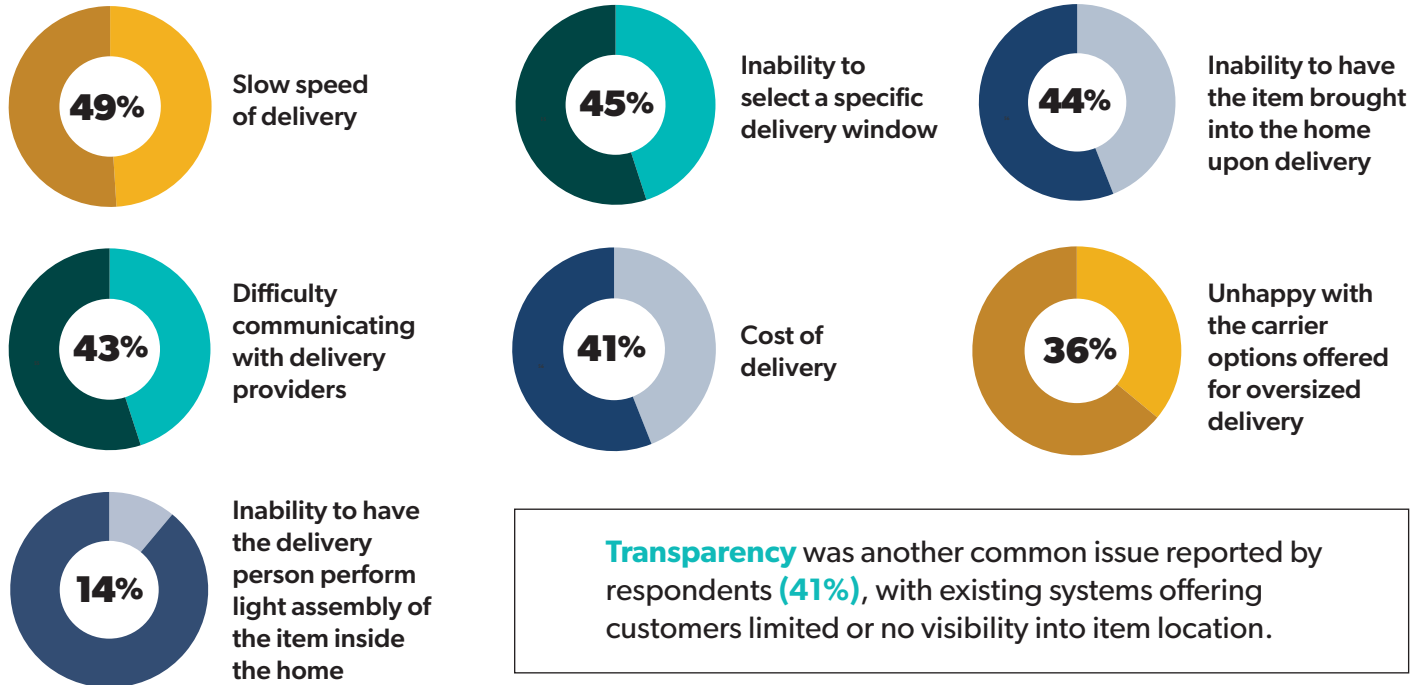
All those logistical hurdles don’t just impact the fulfillment center; all the carrier constraints, fees and delays ultimately mean slower, less convenient and more costly deliveries for the customer. And when customers see how different the delivery will be compared to a standard-size item, they too often click away without completing the purchase. Survey results reveal that slow delivery speeds (49%) top the list of reasons for cart abandonment, followed closely by the lack of flexible delivery windows (45%). Other notable concerns include the absence of in-home delivery options (44%) and communication difficulties with delivery providers (43%). (See Figure 2.)



FIGURE 2

## How Oversized Delivery Issues Cause Cart Abandonment

Respondents were asked to select their top three.



"It's really hard to provide this end-to-end visibility across the different players or partners that you're using to deliver your bigger and bulkier items due to the patchwork of different systems involved," explains Grubb.

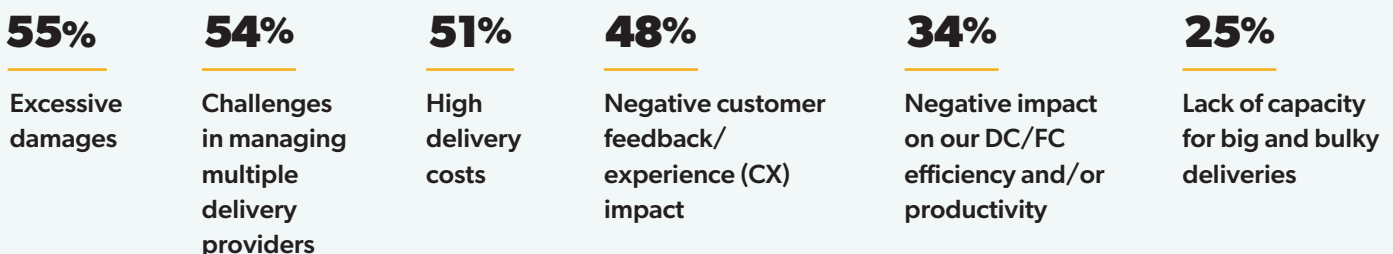
Sometimes, the challenges of getting a big and bulky item delivered to a customer are so onerous that the retailer decides to stop offering delivery on specific or all of their oversized goods. This choice is to the detriment

of the businesses because 93% of respondents agree that their oversized items tend to be high-margin.

Respondents report that excessive damage is the leading reason for making such a decision (55%); this is likely due to the complex logistics and multiple handling points involved in getting large items to customers' front doors. Managing multiple providers (54%) and high delivery costs (51%) rounded off the top three challenges currently faced. (See Figure 3.)

FIGURE 3

## Reasons Retailers Stop Offering Oversized Delivery





## Transforming Big & Bulky Delivery

With all the logistics challenges and negative customer impacts of big and bulky delivery, it's no wonder respondents have a long list of goals for improving the entire end-to-end experience. Number one, which is an especially frustrating consideration for customers already spending a lot on the product itself, is reducing or eliminating the oversized delivery fees they are currently expected to pay (47%). (See Figure 4.)

In a separate question, respondents pointed to free oversized delivery (45%) and ultrafast, same- or next-day delivery (41%) as the top factors influencing the overall customer experience.

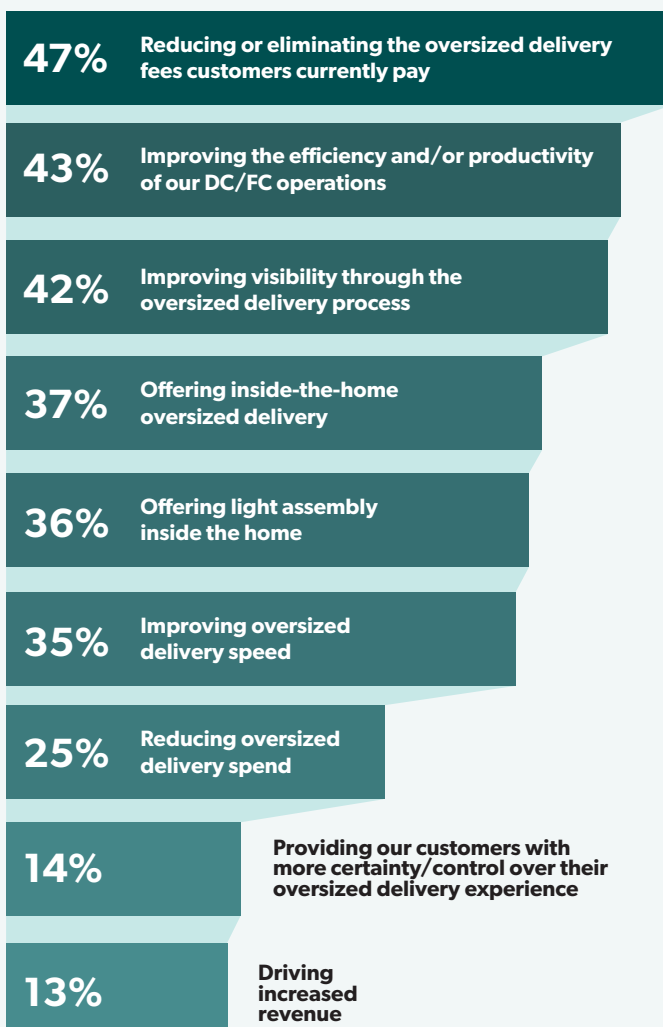
"If you can access delivery pricing that is low enough to enable you to offer oversized delivery for free or reduced price, that will compel conversion," Moon says.

However, achieving such a reduction requires a lot of their other goals to be met. As noted in Figure 4, respondents are eager to improve the efficiency and/or productivity of their DC/FC operations (43%) and improve visibility through the oversized delivery process (42%), something that becomes much more accessible with a single provider.

FIGURE 4

### Goals for Improving Big & Bulky Delivery

Respondents were asked to select their top three.



“It’s in the name itself; big and bulky items take up a lot of DC space, and fewer of those items can be placed on the transportation they’re currently using,” says Moon. “If you’re trying to get things out of the DCs at a faster pace but you have a traditional carrier who only picks up on a Tuesday, those orders take up precious space in the staging area.”

As respondents seek new solutions to meet their many goals for improving their big and bulky logistics and delivery offerings, several priorities rise to the top of the list. First among these is identifying a single provider across their service areas (47%) — to date, a big challenge since the marketplace has lacked a nationwide big and bulky home delivery specialist. (See Figure 5.)

Respondents also value the cost savings and convenience of eliminating packaging requirements for their oversized goods. “If you can eliminate touches and movement, packaging can be minimal,” says Moon, since products are exposed to much less wear and tear.

When choosing oversized delivery partners, businesses must still prioritize achieving their overall goals — usually associated with the bottom line, which is partially driven by customer satisfaction. They understand the value of



a fast, efficient and affordable delivery experience that keeps customers happy. This is reflected in respondents’ top priorities: 63% seek a partner who can contribute to an increase in oversized item sales, while 57% value improved customer experience for oversized deliveries. (See Figure 6.)



**Retailers are going to be able to increase their sales if they can offer faster delivery and provide a better experience.**

**CHRIS GRUBB**

*Head of Marketing at Roadie*





FIGURE 5

## What's Most Valuable in Oversized Delivery?

Respondents were asked to select their top three.

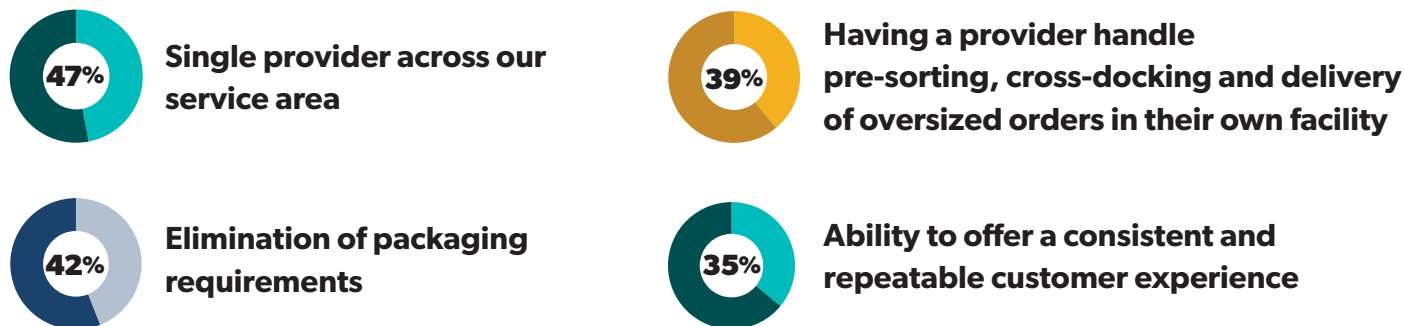
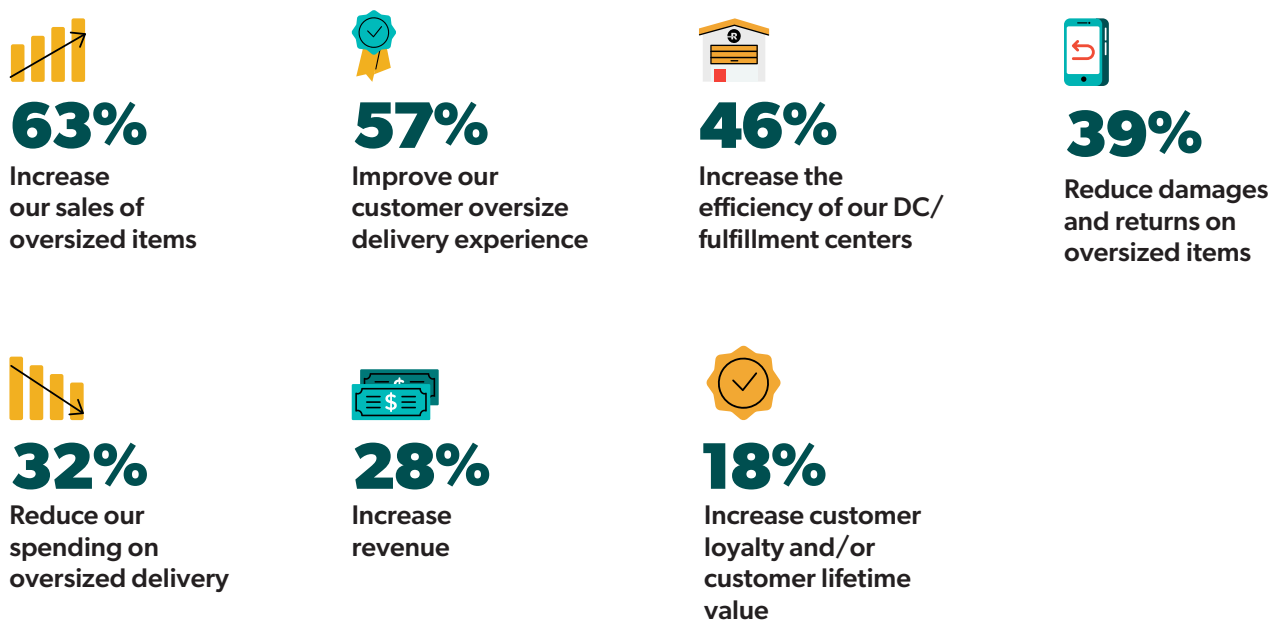


FIGURE 6

## Top Potential Benefits from an Oversized Delivery Partner

Respondents were asked to select their top three.



# Leveraging 3rd Party Oversized Goods Cross-Docking

More than four in five (82%) respondents have addressed a portion of their big and bulky delivery challenges by leveraging third-party providers to cross-dock these goods. Respondents experienced in outsourcing cross-docking for big and bulky goods have seen some clear logistical benefits, including increased efficiency and freeing up warehouse room (46% each) by removing those awkward and space-consuming items from their own DCs.

According to the survey, outsourcing pre-sorting, cross-docking and delivery of bulky goods to suitable providers translates to the high reported benefit (62%): increased productivity. This surpasses the 56% who anticipate such a benefit but have not yet partnered with a cross-docking provider to bring it to fruition. (See Figure 7.)

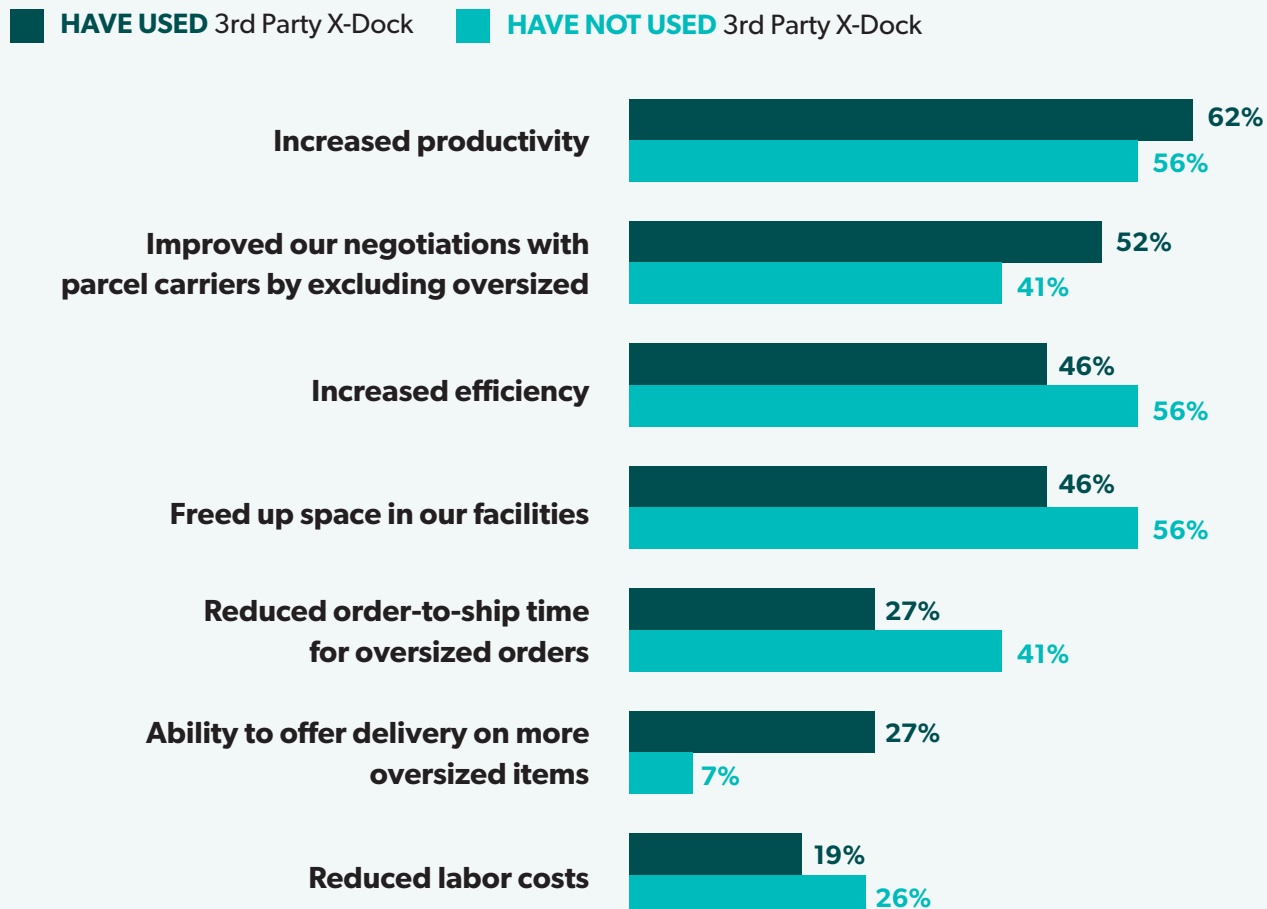


According to the survey, outsourcing pre-sorting, cross-docking and delivery of bulky goods to suitable providers translates to the highest reported benefit: increased productivity.

FIGURE 7

## Benefit or Anticipated Benefit from 3rd Party Oversized Cross-Docking

Respondents were asked to select their top three.



Most of the gains come on the logistics side of the equation. However, it takes more than cross-docking of oversized goods to change the home delivery customer experience. By combining cross-docking with on-demand last-mile delivery, retailers are finding a way to offer consumers the ultrafast delivery speed, visibility and control over delivery windows that they increasingly demand.

Roadie has introduced a new solution to do just that, helping retailers solve the big and bulky delivery problem once and for all. It starts with RoadieXD™, a new and rapidly expanding network of cross-docks to enable ultrafast local delivery of big and bulky goods through the Roadie platform. RoadieXD™ is live in Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas, Miami and New York City — and is quickly adding new locations.

After tendering a consolidated load of oversized items to Roadie for cross-docking via RoadieXD™, the Roadie platform matches independent drivers with vehicles and equipment. Drivers combine numerous deliveries to create a cost-effective and highly efficient route, sometimes as much as 100 miles from the cross-dock facility.

With this combined solution, retailers can leverage a single provider to offer same-day delivery across a wide range of SKUs with minimal cost and complexity. They get the logistics benefits of cross-docking big and bulky goods along with the ultrafast, crowdsourced delivery model that drives customer satisfaction and loyalty to address both sides of the issue.

“There are really two pieces that we’re trying to solve for, speed and efficiency,” Grubb says. That efficiency translates to cost savings — with additional advantages for UPS customers — as well as the loyalty-driving benefits of a great delivery experience and the late cut-off times that drive purchases; many products are purchased between 5 p.m. and 8 p.m., and RoadieXD™ enables retailers to accept and fulfill those orders for delivery the next day, even combining oversized and smaller items, such as a 75-inch TV and HDMI cable, in the same order.



**Most options for big and bulky delivery are too expensive, take too long or are too complex. By solving those challenges with combined cross-docking and crowdsourced delivery, retailers are increasing conversion, basket sizes and loyalty,” Grubb says.**

As the research revealed, big and bulky item delivery has frustrated retailers and customers alike. But it no longer needs to be a burden. By leveraging solutions designed to solve the problems oversized deliveries present — cross-docking to address logistics challenges and crowdsourcing to provide the speed, visibility and convenience customers demand — retailers are finding a way to offer the same fast and satisfying delivery experience for everything they sell, no matter the dimensions.







Roadie, a UPS Company, is a logistics management and crowdsourced delivery platform. Founded in 2014, Roadie offers businesses fast, flexible and asset-light logistics solutions for last-mile delivery. Roadie enables local delivery to more than 97% of U.S. households by providing access to more than 200,000 independent drivers nationwide – allowing businesses to offer their customers delivery optionality for almost any industry, from airlines to artisans.

Roadie's solutions include: local same-day delivery, delivery from warehouse with in-house sortation, oversized delivery, sustainable delivery, returns and more. For more information, visit [www.roadie.com](http://www.roadie.com).

Connect with Roadie to get started:  
[www.roadie.com](http://www.roadie.com).

