

woo

Avalara

⚙ ShipStation®

Go global with confidence

A practical guide to building
a cross-border tech stack that scales





Introduction: The cross-border opportunity is real — but only if the experience holds up

Cross-border ecommerce is a [\\$1.21 trillion market](#), and most of that money goes to brands that figured out three things: show prices in local currency, don't surprise customers with fees at the door, and ship reliably enough that "international" doesn't feel like a risk.

When that infrastructure doesn't hold up, shoppers notice immediately. [48% of online shoppers abandon carts the moment unexpected costs appear at checkout](#), and the gaps in storefront localization, tax transparency, and fulfillment reliability account for the vast majority of cross-border revenue left on the table.

48% of online shoppers abandon carts the moment unexpected costs appear at checkout

This guide covers the infrastructure behind those three things — your storefront, your tax configuration, and your shipping operations — using WooCommerce, Avalara, and ShipStation. It's written for brands that are already selling domestically and want to expand, or those looking to improve the user experience and conversion on cross-border sales without rebuilding everything from scratch.

CHAPTER 1:

Platform layer — Localize your storefronts with WooCommerce

Localization is a systems choice, not a translation task

75% of consumers prefer to buy in their native language, and one-third will abandon checkout entirely if they only see prices in USD.

Meaningful localization goes beyond translation. Every touchpoint — pricing, product availability, checkout logic, confirmation email, return policy — acts as a trust signal for international shoppers. When a Canadian customer sees prices in USD and no indication of what import duties might apply, they're gone.

Building the right setup means less operational overhead for new markets, and avoiding separate systems for currency, translation, and regional policies.

WooCommerce's extension model lets you choose the specific tools your markets require and configure them to work together.

How to localize your storefront

Add multiple currencies

International shoppers need to see prices in currencies they recognize. WooCommerce offers a couple of paths depending on your payment setup:

If you're already using [WooPayments](#), multi-currency is built in. Navigate to WooPayments → Settings → Multi-Currency to enable it. You add the currencies your target markets require, and WooPayments handles conversion automatically at checkout.

If you use a different payment gateway, or need more granular control over currency display, the [Multi-Currency Switcher](#) extension gives you a standalone currency management layer. This also allows you to set fixed pricing per market to protect margins, and display multiple currencies on product pages before checkout.

One note on exchange rates: automatic rates are convenient, but they fluctuate. If you're selling into a market where your margins are tight, consider setting manual rates and reviewing them at a regular cadence. This prevents a currency swing from quietly eroding your profitability on every international order.

Localize content

Your product descriptions, checkout flow, order confirmation emails, legal pages, and even error messages all need to work in each target language.

[MultilingualPress for WooCommerce](#) handles this through WordPress Multisite. Each language gets its own site within your multisite network, with full control over every piece of content, SEO, and theme customization. So, you can have product descriptions, policies, and marketing copy written specifically for regional audiences.

Tailor product offerings and promotions by market

You can't sell every product everywhere. Regulatory restrictions, shipping limitations, and market strategy all create reasons to control what shoppers see based on where they are.

For example, if a US-based wellness brand starts selling in Canada, the brand needs to hide supplements that don't meet Health Canada requirements from Canadian shoppers. The brand also needs to offer CAD pricing, Canadian tax rates, and a "free shipping over \$75 CAD" promotion that doesn't apply to US orders.

Two extensions handle this together:

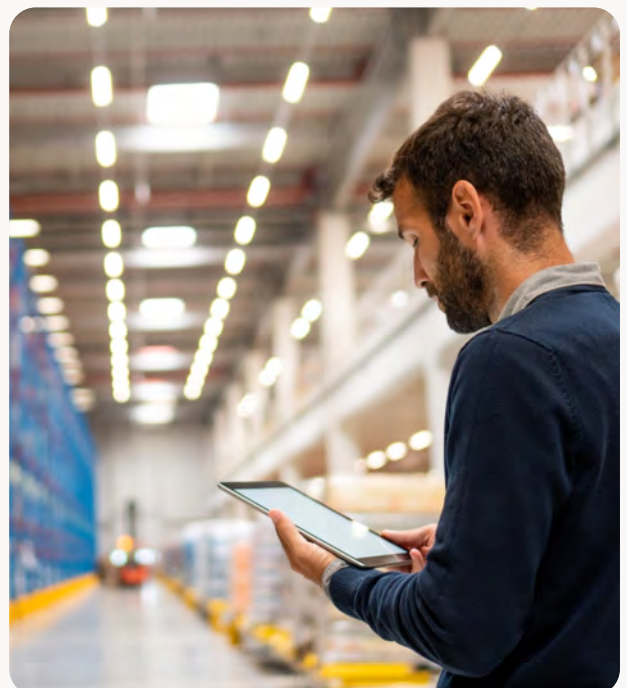
- [Country Restrictions for WooCommerce](#) auto-detects shopper location and lets you hide specific products, disable purchasing, or display market-specific messaging.
- [Smart Coupons for WooCommerce](#) handles market-specific promotions like discount codes that only work for Canadian shoppers, free-shipping thresholds tailored to UK pricing, and so on.

Country Restrictions handles product visibility, while Smart Coupons handles promotion targeting. Together, they let you run a different storefront experience per market without maintaining separate stores.

Customize store policies by region

Return windows, privacy requirements, and terms of service vary by market. Applying a universal policy to Canadian or European markets isn't just a poor experience — in some jurisdictions, it's a compliance gap.

[Additional Terms Pro for WooCommerce](#) surfaces the right policy at checkout based on the shopper's locale. A customer in Quebec sees French-language return terms that comply with provincial consumer protection rules. A UK customer sees GDPR-compliant privacy terms. These all display dynamically.



CHAPTER 2:

Tax layer — Build predictable landed costs with Avalara

Surprise fees are the fastest way to lose a cross-border customer

58% of consumers have experienced surprise customs charges on delivery

75% say they'd reconsider shopping with that business again. Nearly half will outright refuse delivery.

Customers don't think in terms of taxes, duties, or brokerage fees. They think in totals. And if the total they're charged at the door doesn't match the total they saw at checkout, you've lost their trust — and probably lost them as a customer.

[Avalara](#) automates real-time tax and duty calculation for cross-border transactions, integrating directly with WooCommerce so customers see accurate totals at checkout.

The decision that shapes everything: DDP vs. DAP

Before you touch any settings, you need to make one strategic decision that determines how the rest of your tax and shipping configuration works.

DDP (Delivered Duty Paid) means duties and taxes are calculated and collected at checkout. The customer pays a single, all-inclusive total.

DAP (Delivered at Place) means the customer is responsible for paying duties and taxes on delivery.

If you sell directly to consumers, DDP should be your default. With DAP, the customer finds out what the order actually costs when a courier is standing at their door. With DDP, they know the full cost before they buy.

That one difference drives everything downstream: fewer refused deliveries, fewer chargebacks, fewer one-star reviews about "hidden fees." Your displayed price will be higher than a DAP competitor's, but you're the brand that doesn't surprise people.

Choose DAP when you sell wholesale or B2B, where the buyer typically handles customs clearance or has their own customs brokerage infrastructure.



COMPARE THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

	Delivered Duty Paid (DDP)	Delivered At Place (DAP)
Shopping Cart	The customer sees all charges, including product price, sales tax, delivery fee, and duty rates. They know exactly how much they'll have to pay to get the product delivered to their door and can make an informed purchasing decision.	The customer sees the product price, and delivery fee. They may assume the total includes customs duty and import charges, and may make the purchase without realizing they'll be responsible for those additional fees.
At Customs	Import officials verify all taxes and duties have been paid and release the package for delivery.	Import officials assess import taxes and duties, then the carrier notifies the customer their shipment is available upon payment. This may be the first time a customer learns they're responsible for the import charges. If they opt not to pay them, they can reject the shipment, which is then returned at the seller's expense or disposed of by the carrier.
Delivery	The customer is excited about their new product, and likely won't think about the import costs again.	If the customer accepts the package, they'll have to arrange payment (and possibly pickup) with the carrier. Their satisfaction is diminished by the surprise fees they had to pay.
Repurchase	The customer remembers the smooth, transparent process and makes another purchase.	The customer finds a seller with a better customer experience.

How to configure Avalara for cross-border

Set up Avalara with cross-border enabled

First, [contact Avalara](#) to purchase a cross-border subscription. This is important: **cross-border duties and import tax calculation require Avalara to enable this feature on your account.** If you install the extension and skip this step, customers won't see duties at checkout.

Once your cross-border subscription is active:

- Install the [Avalara for WooCommerce](#) extension from the WooCommerce Marketplace.
- Navigate to **WooCommerce → Settings → Tax** and confirm that taxes are enabled.
- Enter your [Avalara](#) Account ID and License Key to connect the extension to your account.
- Verify that cross-border calculation is active by testing checkout with an international shipping address.

Configure Seller Importer of Record

The [Seller Importer of Record setting](#) determines who is responsible for importing goods into the destination country. For consumer-facing sales, set this to Yes — that means you act as the importer of record.

For B2B or wholesale transactions where the buyer has their own customs brokerage, the [Buyer's Agent setting](#) lets you configure the buyer as the responsible party.

Set delivery terms to DDP

In Avalara's settings panel, set your delivery terms to DDP (Delivered Duty Paid) to ensure duties and taxes are calculated and collected at checkout.

Verify product classification

Every physical product that crosses a border gets classified with a Harmonized System (HS) code — a number that tells customs authorities what it is and what duties apply. It's the single input that determines your landed cost calculation accuracy and helps move shipments through customs.

[Avalara's Automated Tariff Code Classification](#) uses AI and machine learning to analyze product descriptions, attributes, and images, then assigns the appropriate HS code for each destination country.

For any merchant entering new markets or adding new SKUs, verifying product classification should be part of your go-live checklist. Incorrect HS codes create a systemic issue that compounds with every order.

[Contact Avalara's ecommerce team](#) to get started with cross-border duty and tax calculation.

CHAPTER 3:

Shipping layer — Build reliable global fulfillment with ShipStation

Fulfillment is a trust mechanism

55%

of consumers cite expensive shipping as their top reason for abandoning a cross-border cart

48%

say delivery options directly influence their buying decisions

For merchants selling between the US and Canada, customers have high expectations around delivery speed and cost. For Mexico, reliability and clarity often matter more than speed. In both cases, fulfillment is key to building trust and driving repeat business.

ShipStation integrates directly with WooCommerce to manage international shipping — from carrier selection and DDP fulfillment to branded tracking and returns.



How to build cross-border fulfillment

Set up ShipStation

Install the [ShipStation for WooCommerce](#) extension and connect it to your ShipStation account.

During setup, configure these key settings on the **WooCommerce → Settings → Integration → ShipStation** page:

- **Order status sync:** Decide which WooCommerce order statuses trigger a sync to ShipStation. Most merchants sync "Processing" orders, but if you have a custom fulfillment workflow (e.g., a quality check step), you may want to sync at a different stage.
- **Sync frequency:** For high-volume stores, a shorter interval keeps your fulfillment queue current. For lower volume, the default works fine.
- **Notification preferences:** Configure whether ShipStation sends tracking information back to WooCommerce and to the customer. For international orders, it's especially important to enable notifications.

Configure shipping regions and delivery windows

International shoppers need to know when their order will arrive before they buy. "International shipping times vary" isn't good enough. Standardize delivery estimates by region and communicate them clearly at checkout so customers have clear expectations and don't fill up your support queue asking for updates.

When shipping from the US to Canada, Mexico, and the EU/UK, we recommend 7-21 business days for economy, and 3-5 business days for express, based on typical carrier performance.

Set these up in ShipStation by [creating shipping presets for each destination region](#). Map each preset to the carrier service that consistently delivers within your quoted window.

Enable DDP shipping

If you configured Avalara for DDP checkout (so the customer pays duties upfront) your shipping configuration needs to match — otherwise, the customer gets charged again at delivery.

ShipStation offers DDP through [GlobalPost Plus — Duties & Taxes Included](#). Duties and taxes are calculated and charged at label creation, so there are no adjustments or surprise fees after shipping. It also eliminates the need to print customs forms — GlobalPost handles HS code assignment and documentation at their facility.

GlobalPost Plus currently covers [shipments from the U.S. to 30+ countries](#), including Canada, Mexico, Australia, the UK, and much of the EU.

Enable DDP shipping (continued)

To enable in ShipStation: select GlobalPost Plus as your service when configuring a shipment, or for Canada-bound USPS shipments, select the "Prepay Duties and Taxes" option in the Duties/Taxes dropdown. You can also set this as the default for all international orders or create automation rules that apply DDP based on the destination country.

Keep customers informed after the sale

An international order in transit for 10 days generates five or six tracking checks — and each one is a moment where the customer either feels reassured or alarmed. If you're sending customers to a generic carrier page, they'll see a wall of unfamiliar scan events and might conclude their package is lost.

[ShipStation's branded tracking](#) replaces that experience with a clean, branded status page that includes your logo, your colors, and status updates in plain language. Configure it under **Account Settings → Branded Tracking**.

Returns are the other post-purchase pressure point that are more complex for cross-border orders. [ShipStation's self-service returns portal](#) lets customers initiate returns without contacting your support team. You can configure return policies by market (longer windows for EU customers per local consumer protection rules); offer prepaid return labels so customers don't have to figure out customs documentation; and include international-specific return reasons like sizing differences by market, product damage from longer shipping, and duties-related refusals.

Automate shipping workflows

Once you're processing international orders regularly, manual carrier assignment and customs documentation become bottlenecks. [ShipStation's automation rules](#) eliminate the repetitive work:

- "All orders shipping to Canada under 4 lbs → Assign GlobalPost with Canada DDP → generate customs declaration automatically."
- "Orders over \$100 USD shipping to the EU → Assign GlobalPost Plus DDP."
- "All international orders → Enable Bill Duties to Payor."

You can also batch-process labels for all international orders in your queue, with customs documentation created automatically from product data synced from WooCommerce.

The goal is to make an international order require the same amount of manual effort as a domestic one.

Cross-border pre-launch checklist

Before going live in a new market, confirm:

- ☐ Local currency enabled and displayed correctly at every touchpoint (product page, cart, checkout, confirmation email).
- ☐ Avalara connected with cross-border subscription active and DDP delivery terms configured.
- ☐ HS codes verified for all products in the new market's catalog.
- ☐ ShipStation shipping preset created for the destination region with DDP enabled.
- ☐ Localized content displays the correct language without layout issues.
- ☐ Region-specific return and privacy policies displayed at checkout.
- ☐ Payment methods verified for the target currency.
- ☐ Full test transaction completed end-to-end for each locale. Here's [how to do it in WooPayments](#).
- ☐ Branded tracking configured with clear status language.
- ☐ Automation rules set for the new destination country.

Next steps

Configure your storefronts

[Connect with the WooCommerce Growth Team](#) for expert advice on international expansion, like selecting extensions for your target markets or optimizing your WooCommerce installation.



Connect with WooCommerce

Set up real-time duty and tax calculation

[Contact Avalara's ecommerce specialists](#) to find the right cross-border subscription for your business and get cross-border duties enabled on your account.



Contact Avalara

Streamline international shipping

[Start a free 30-day ShipStation trial](#) and connect it to your WooCommerce store to start shipping internationally.



Start your free trial

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