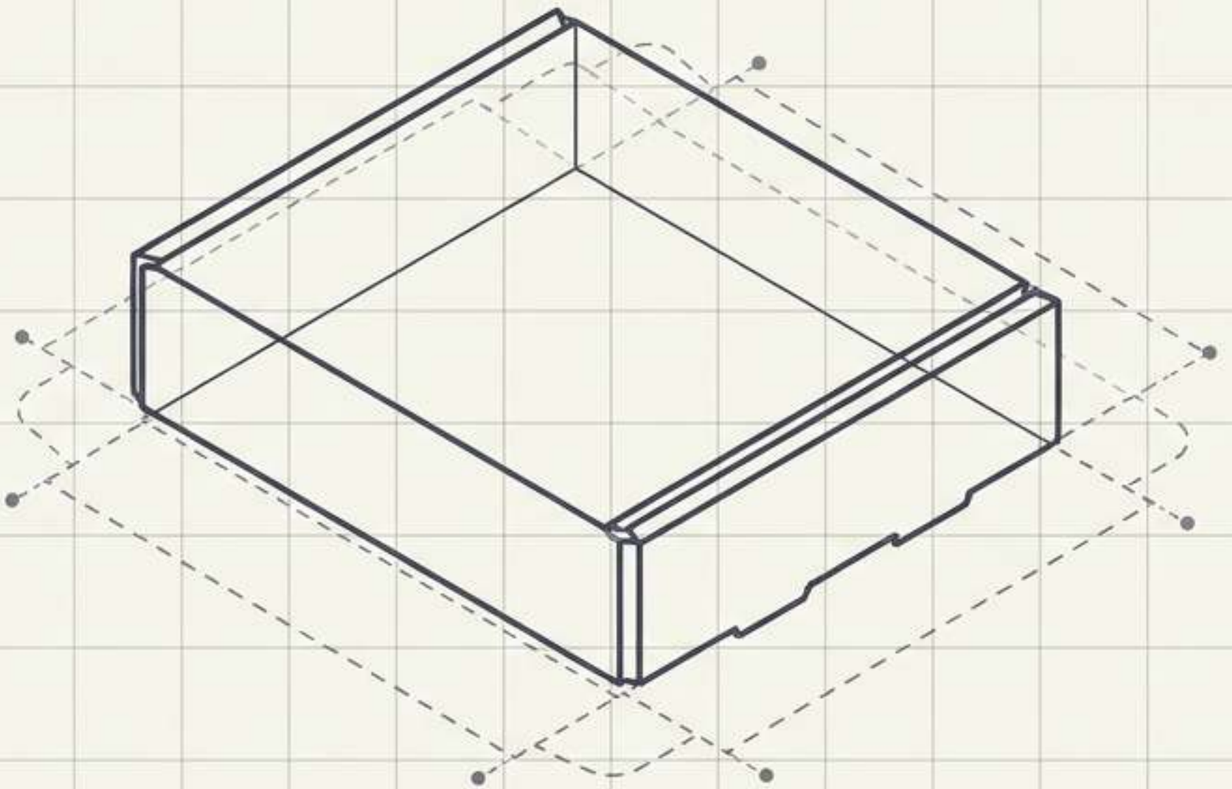


REGISTRATION

Zigpac Consultative Playbook | SKU ZPCB0011

Custom Printed Mailer Boxes (Low Minimum Order)

A Buyer’s Guide to Flute, Print Method, and Unit Cost

ZIGPAC

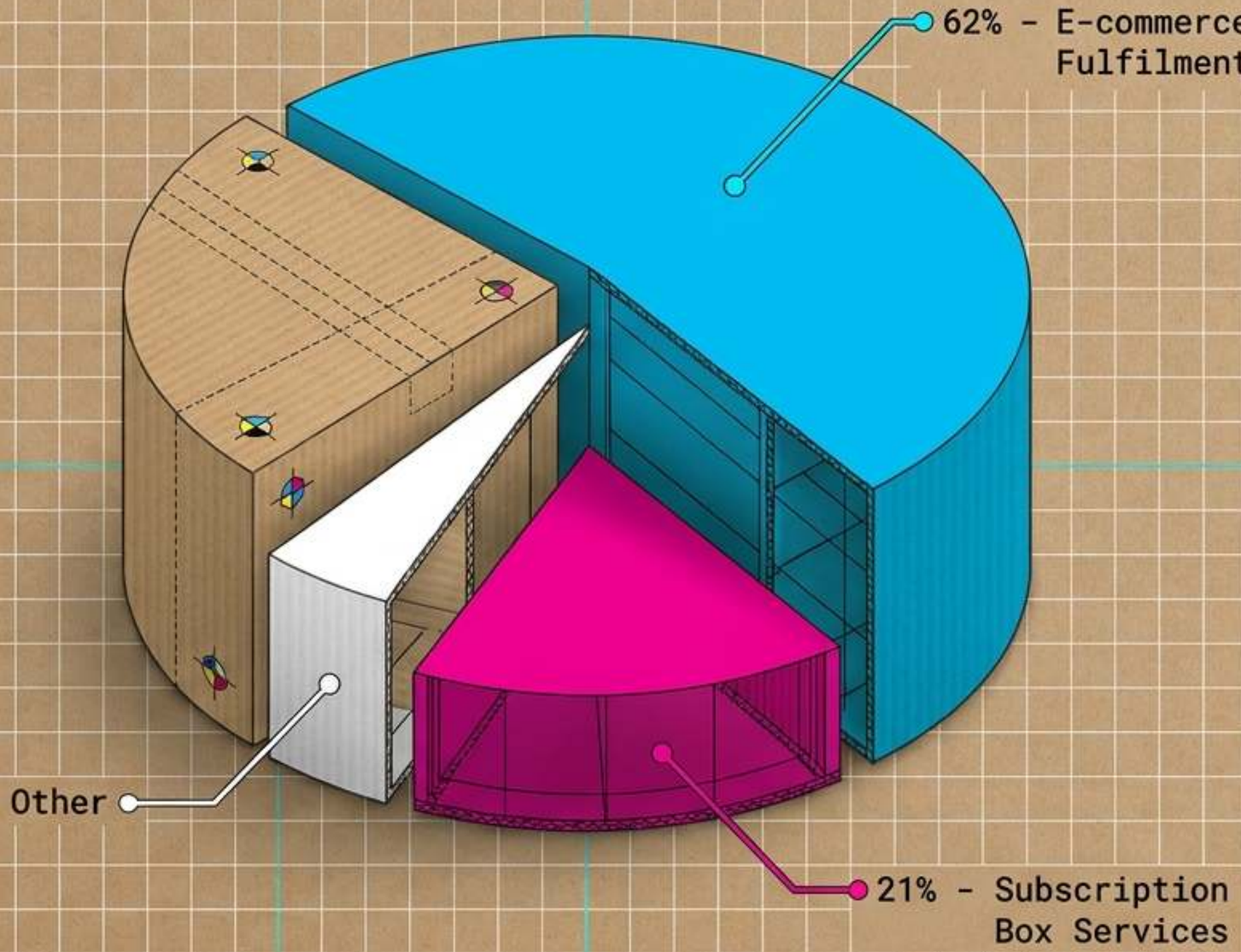
The E-Commerce Packaging Reality

Over 62% of mailer box volume demand in 2025 comes directly from e-commerce fulfilment.

Thousands of small brands are requesting short runs simultaneously.

Takeaway

Short runs are industry standard, but suppliers package these runs very differently, making blind quote comparisons dangerous.



Demystifying the Low-MOQ Trap

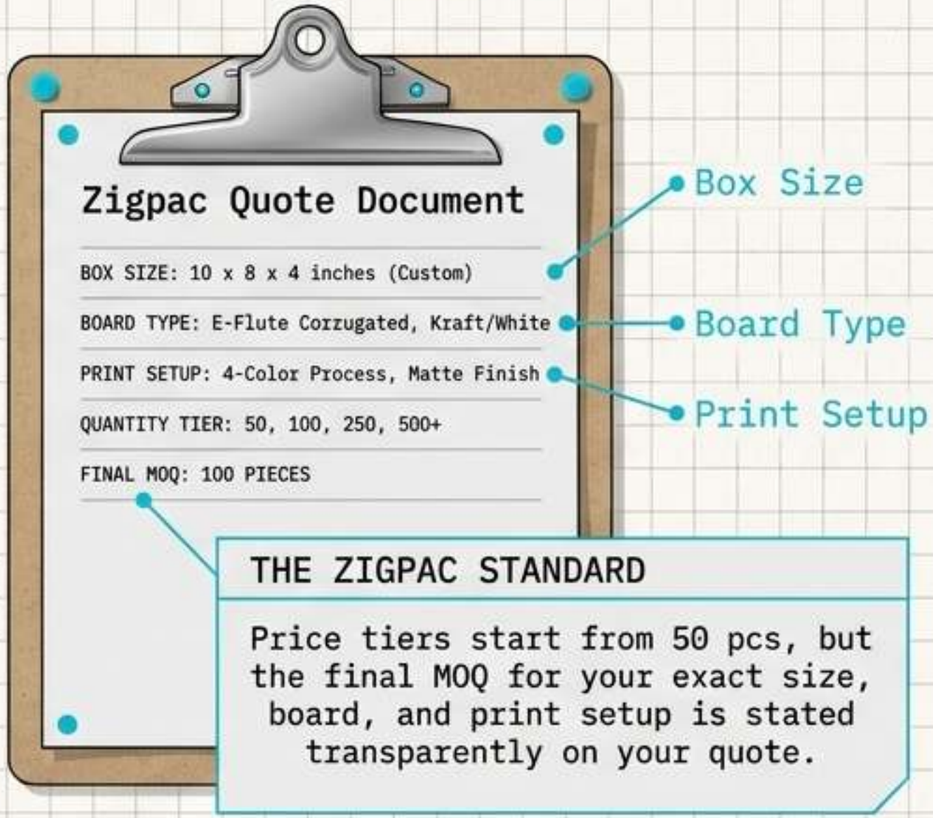
A Minimum Order Quantity (MOQ) is the smallest run for one specific box size and artwork. A Price Tier is just a breakpoint where unit prices drop.

THE TRAP

~~MOQ: 50 Pieces~~

A headline of 50 pieces usually describes where a generic price list starts, not a guaranteed minimum for every custom box.

THE REALITY



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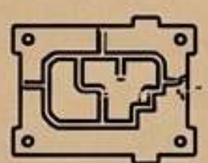
The Math of Custom Packaging

Unit Cost ≈ (Setup Cost ÷ Quantity) + Variable Cost Per Box

Fixed Cost



Artwork Prep

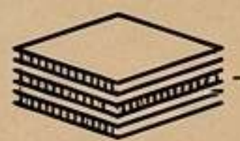


New Sizes



Flexo Makeready

Scales with Volume



Board Sheets



Ink Volume



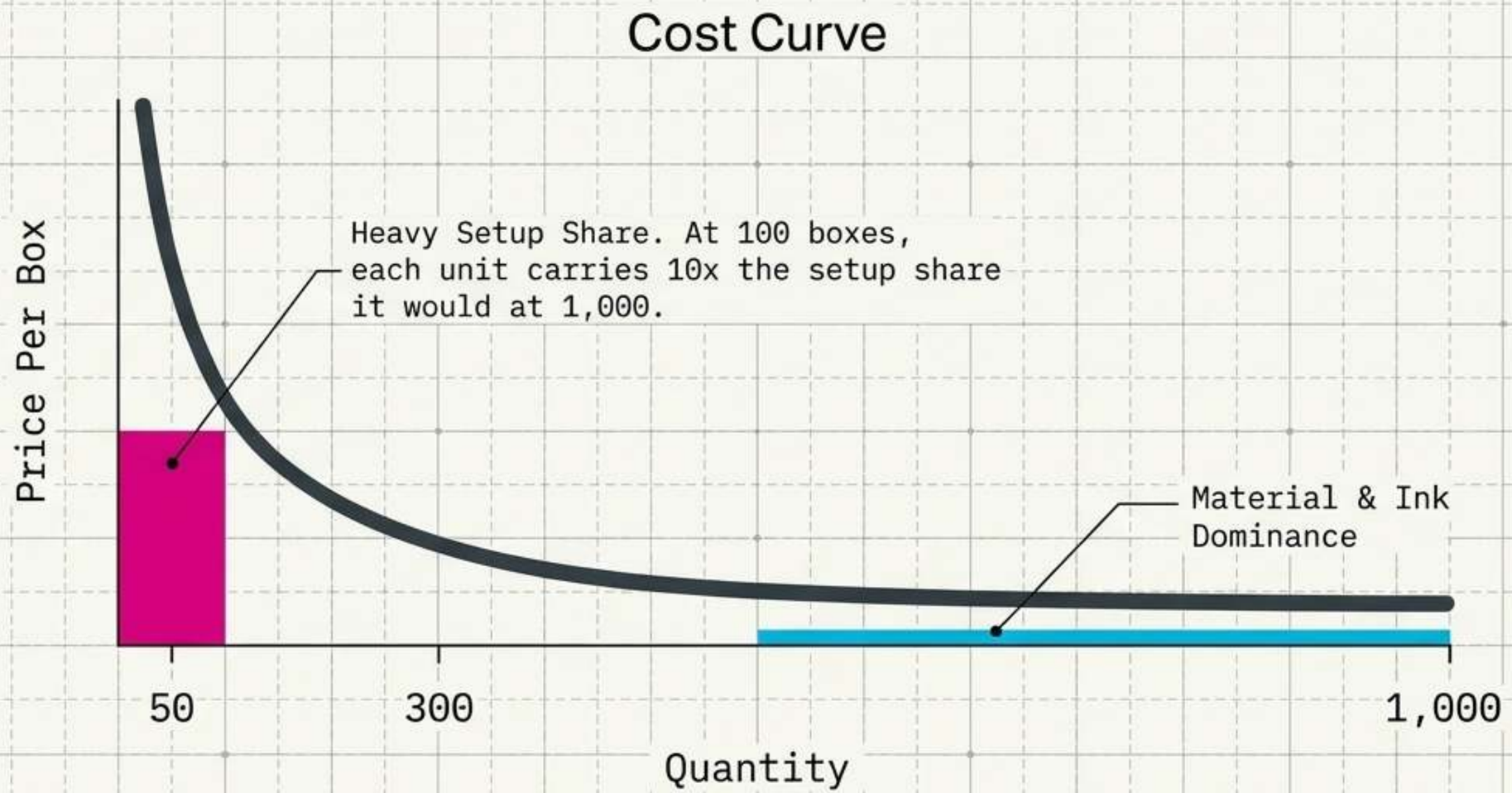
Print Passes



Shipping Freight

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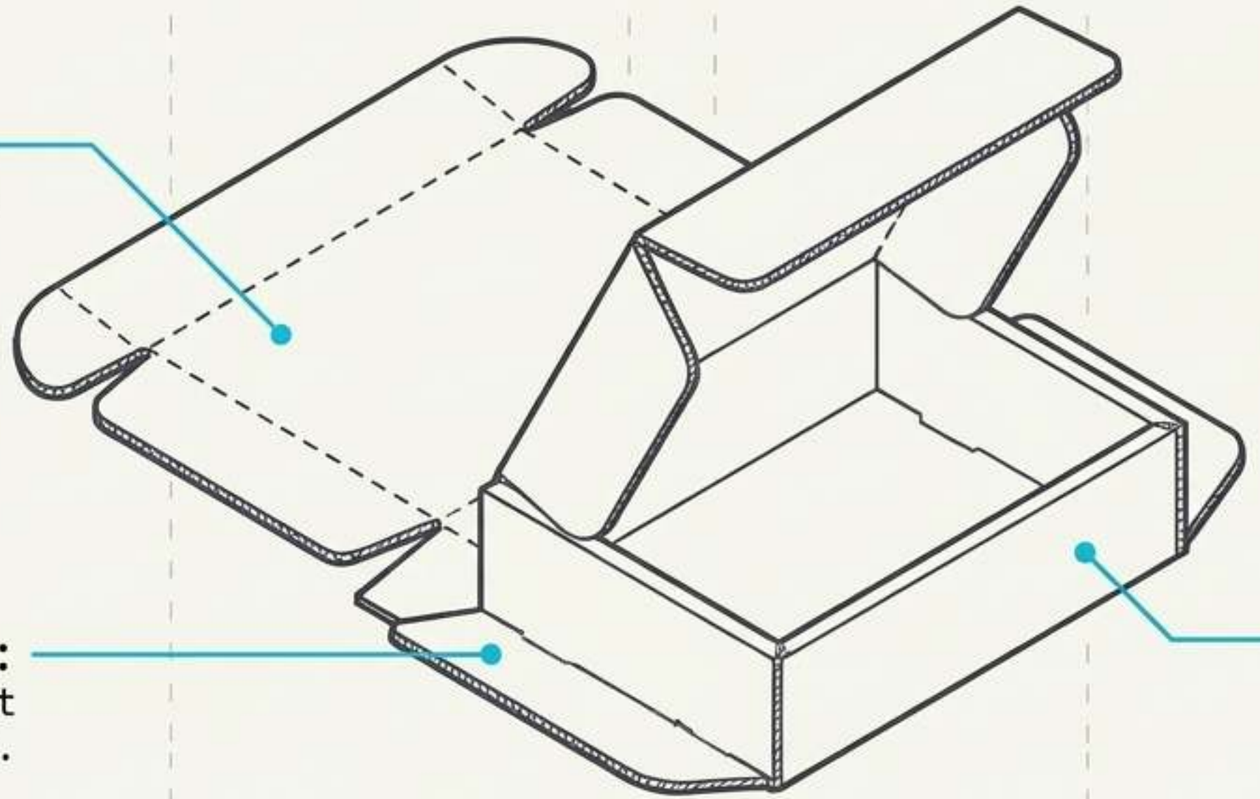
Diluting the Setup Cost



The Standard Mailer Anatomy: FEFCO 0427

The most common e-commerce mailer is the roll-end tuck-top. Because it utilizes a single blank that folds into a self-locking box without tape, short runs are driven by board and print setup rather than complex assembly.

Corrugated Blank:
A single die-cut sheet. Ideal for short runs.



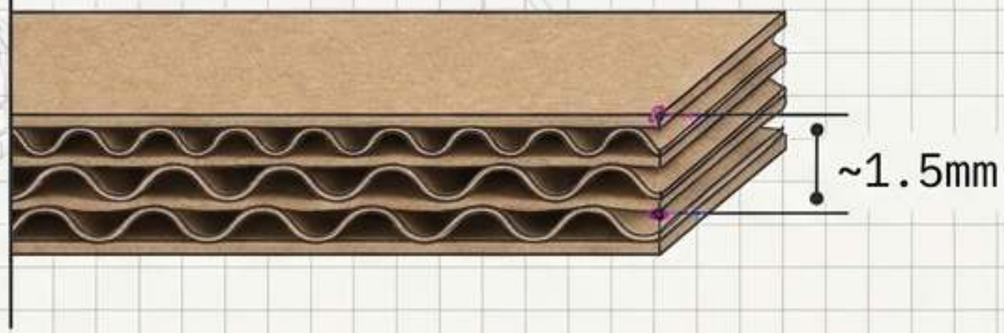
Dust Flaps:
Side wings that prevent debris entry.

Tuck Depth:
The front flap that self-locks the box without tape.

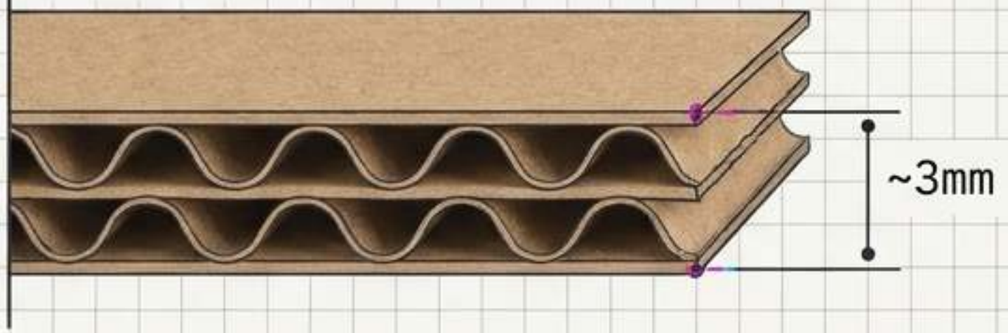
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The Flute Showdown

E-Flute



B-Flute

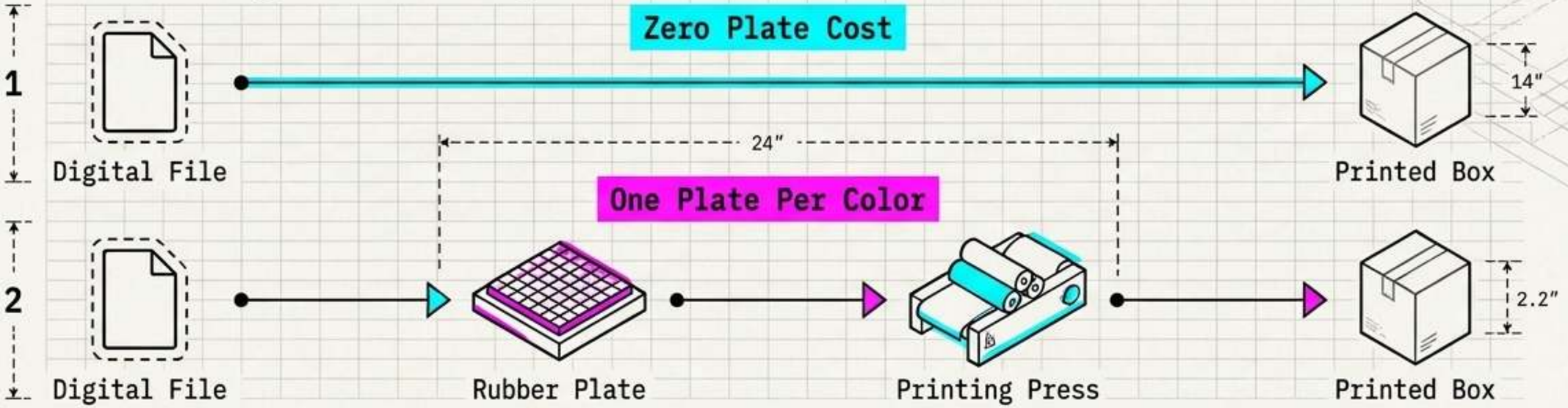


Factor	E-Flute	B-Flute
Caliper	~1.5mm	~3mm
Print Surface	Smoother; holds fine lines well	Coarser; can show through large solids
Cushioning	Lighter	More protection
Stacking	Light parcels	Higher strength
Storage	Thinner stack	Takes more shelf space
Best Fit	Apparel, cosmetics, gift sets	Heavy products, glass jars

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The Print Engine Face-Off

The Printing Plate Paradigm



The Print Engine Face-Off Table

	Factor	Digital	Flexographic
1	Setup at 100-300 boxes	Low; practical choice	High; spread over few boxes
2	Around 300-1,000	Common for full-color	Repeat Orders (Highly competitive)
3	Artwork Agility	Easy; just a file	Changes require new plates
4	Best For	Full-color gradients	Solid brand colors

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The Branding Canvas

Exterior Only



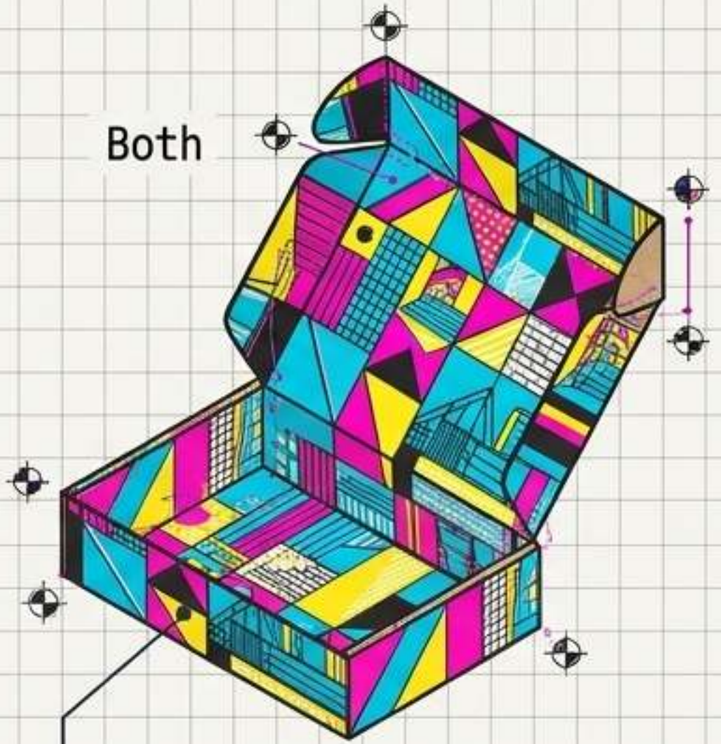
Brand visible in transit. Scuffs from sorting are visible.
1 Print Pass.

Interior Only



Discreet in transit. Artwork stays protected for unboxing reveal.
1 Print Pass.

Both



Maximum brand impact. Highest cost. Requires proofing tuck flap overlaps.
2 Print Passes.

For a first small run, a single printed side is the most efficient way to achieve a branded result.
Interior-only printing is highly recommended for premium, scuff-free unboxing.

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The Ultimate 100-Unit Starter Spec

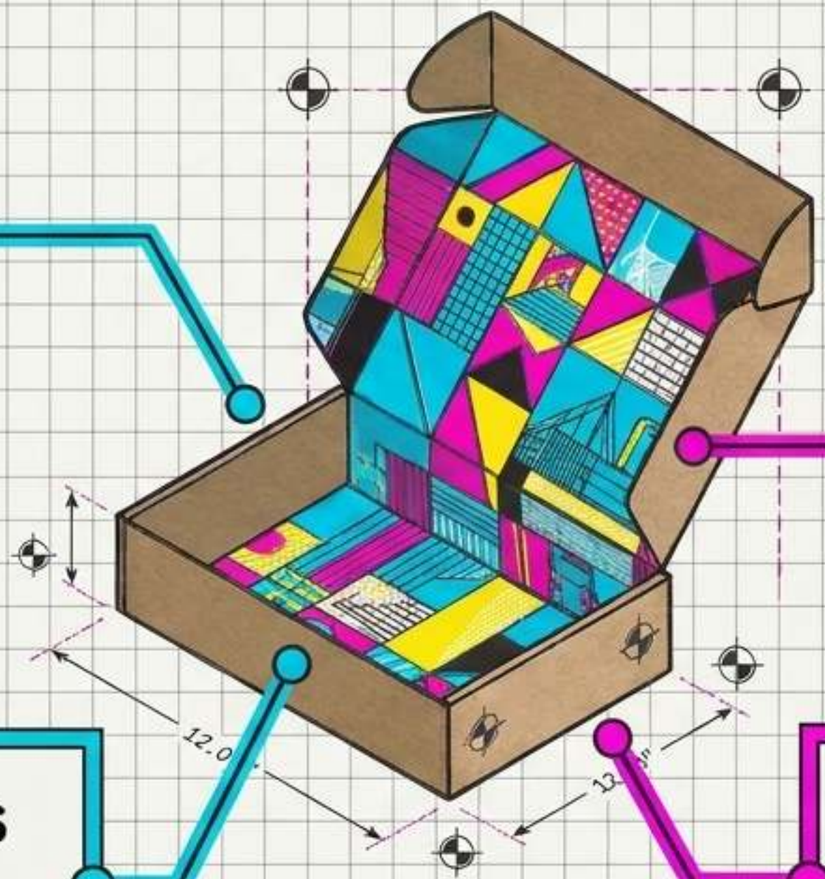
How to engineer the optimal first-order strategy without overpaying for setup.

E-Flute Board

(For flat-pack storage efficiency and sharp print resolution).

Digital Print

(Zero plate costs for new, unproven artwork).



Interior-Only Canvas

(Protects graphics from transit scuffs; delivers a premium unboxing reveal on a 1-pass budget).

Right-Sized Dimensions

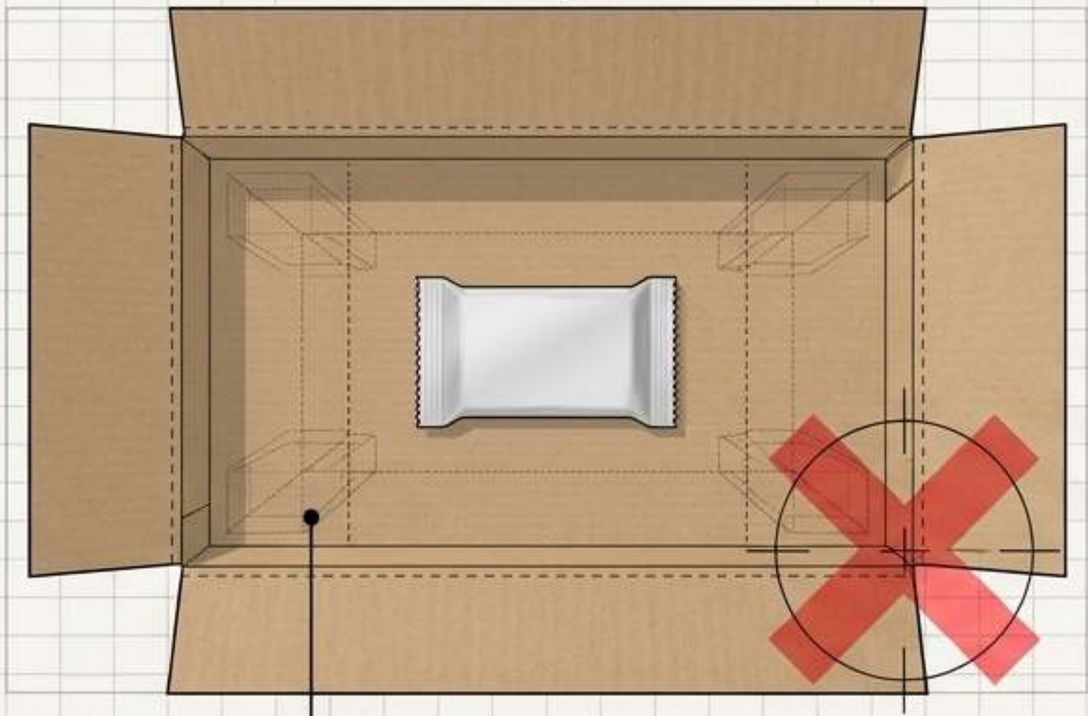
(Lowers material cost per unit and ensures compliance).

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The Right-Size Mandate

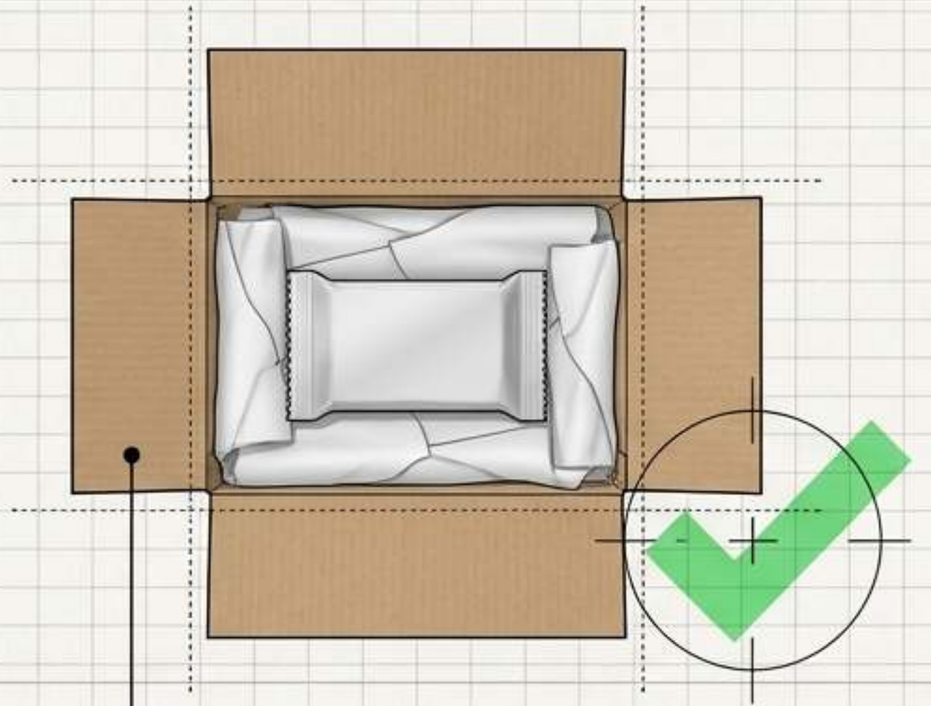
Regulatory Note: If you ship into the EU, the Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation (PPWR), applicable since August 2026, legally caps e-commerce empty space at 50%. A right-sized inner dimension is a compliance mandate, not just a cost saving.

Non-Compliant



60% Empty Space.
Wasted board cost, higher freight.

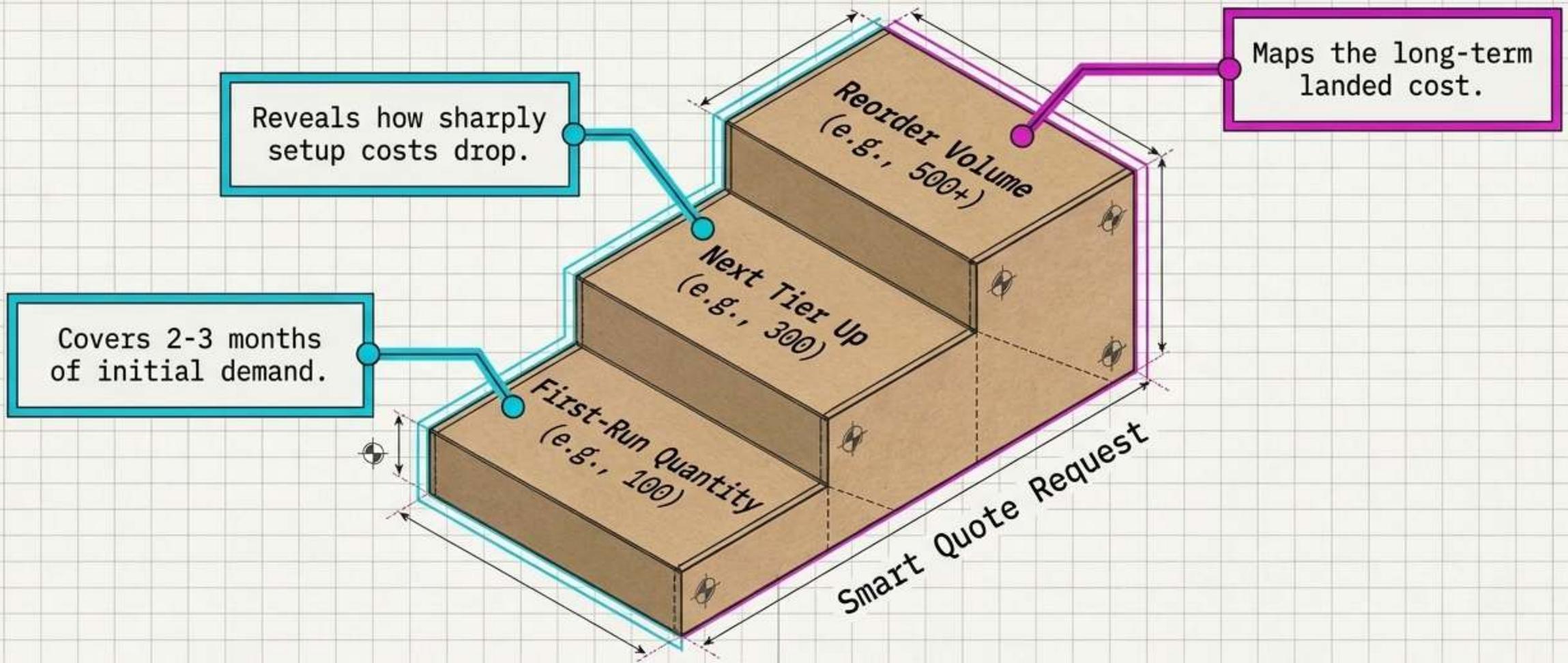
Compliant



<50% Empty Space.
Optimized cost.

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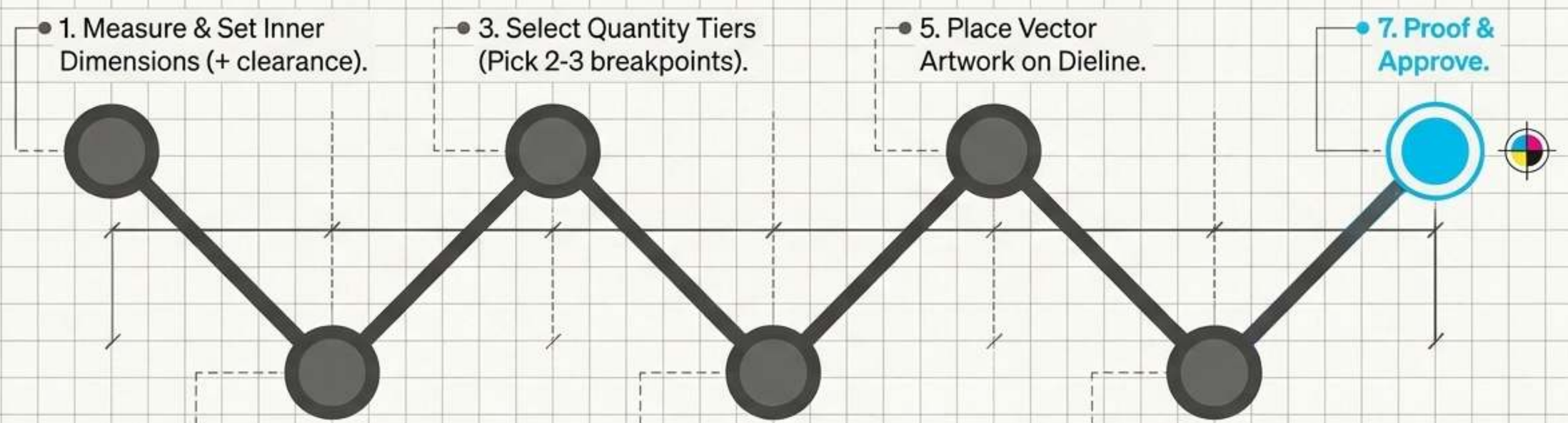
The Tiered Quote Strategy



Takeaway: Never request a single quantity. Comparing the landed cost per box across tiers reveals whether buying a slightly larger first run is cheaper than reordering immediately.

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The 7-Step Launch Blueprint

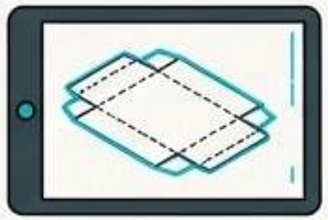


Subway Map

Note: Standard production schedule at Zigpac is 7-10 days following final approval.

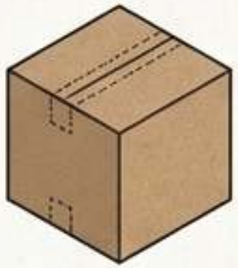
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Proofing & Testing



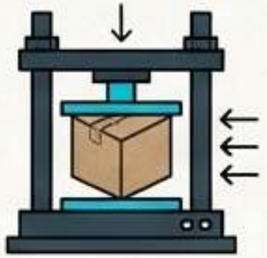
Level 1: The eProof (Free)

Checks artwork placement on the exact dieline. Standard for every Zigpac order.



Level 2: Physical Sample ($5-$30)

Allows physical fill-testing with your actual product. Highly recommended if size or board is new.



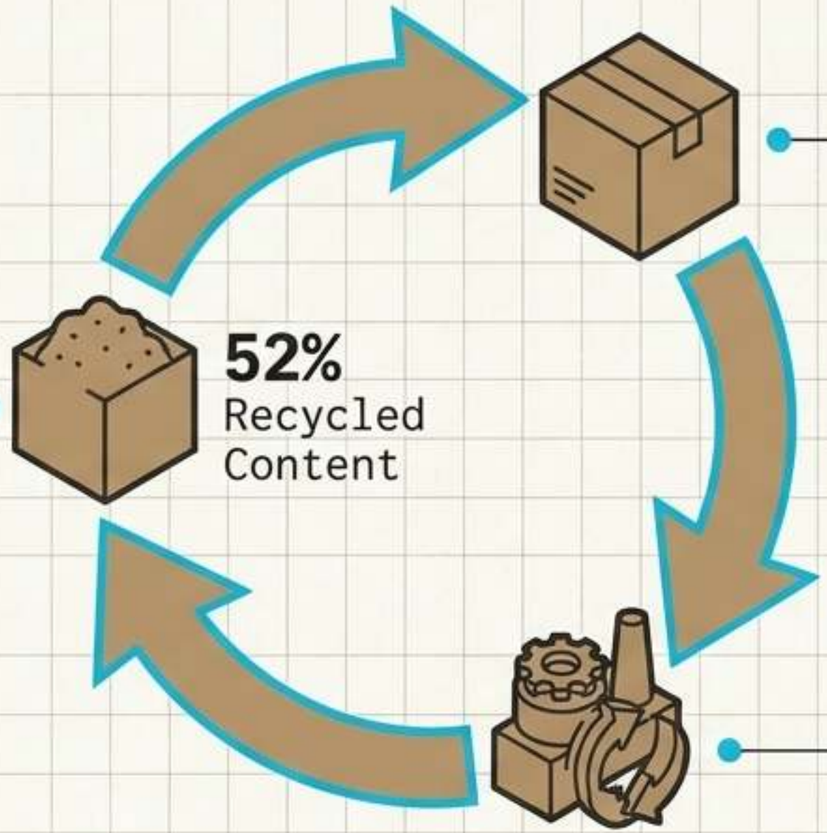
Level 3: Lab Testing (ASTM D4169)

Simulates drops, vibration, and compression. Necessary for highly fragile or high-value goods.

The Recyclability Reality

96.5%

U.S. EPA reported recycling rate for corrugated boxes (2018).



52%

Average recycled content in a standard corrugated box (Fibre Box Association).

Closing Insight: Corrugated mailers inherently support a credible sustainability story. To maintain repulpability standards, limit heavy chemical coatings or laminates in your design brief. Simple finishes ensure the box re-enters the supply chain.

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