



Catalog Distributor Meets Rising Volumes, Improves Customer Service with a new Pick to Light and Container Routing System

Features and Benefits

Doubled productivity.

Shortened order cycle times.

Improved customer service.

Reduced labor costs.

Improved order accuracy.

Industry Group: Order Fulfillment Solutions (OFS)



The Challenge

Rapid growth presented a cataloger of paper products, gifts and home decorating items with a major challenge. How could they process more orders than ever before, and do it with higher levels of speed, accuracy and cost efficiency to provide their customers with the best service possible?

The Solution

In 2000, the direct-mail marketer installed a new Pick to Light system in over 1,700 fast moving product locations on their flow rack system to improve pick rate productivity and order quality. . The new Pick to Light solution was also utilized in the bin shelving area used to pick slow moving items.

In a high volume picking operation, how the cartons or totes get to the pick areas can be just as important as the pick process itself. To streamline flow in their distribution center the cataloger also installed a faster, more intelligent Container Routing system. The new system uses data within the Pick to Light database to understand the routing requirements. Fully integrated with conveyor programmable logic controllers (PLCs) and connected through an Ethernet network the container routing system utilizes bar code readers mounted on the conveyor to identify and divert containers into required pick areas.

The Benefits

The company's order fulfillment team has collectively accomplished impressive productivity and accuracy results since the initial installation. Average carton per hour throughout increased from 400-500 cartons per hour to peak hour rates approaching 1600 cartons per hour. QC rates have fallen from 13.6% to nearly 1.5%.

Overall the company significantly exceeded its targeted ROI goal for the large capital investment warehouse project by doubling productivity, reducing costs and dramatically compressing order cycle times. They were now able to process twice as many orders in half the time, and with faster turnaround times which produced the desired effect on maintaining a high standard of customer service.

Since the initial installation the company's managers, supervisors and associates have worked closely together to continuously improve their order fulfillment process by fully leveraging the new order picking systems. The cataloger's team managed its own 1,000 light module hardware expansion of the Pick to Light solution. As a prime example of the projects' benefits, in 2004 the company recognized the outstanding achievement of one particular associate. During a four month tracking period, this individual picked nearly one million consecutive orders without an error.



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