

UNEX CASE STUDY



“Pickers can clearly see the SKUs, which supports our goal of having a 0% mispick rate. And we’re getting products out the door faster and into customers’ hands.”

– Thomas Brown, Thermo Fisher

customer: THERMO FISHER SCIENTIFIC

operation: Global biotechnology company

goal: Improve pick efficiencies in cold box and freezer areas

solution: SpanTrack Bed from UNEX



Deli Doors + Span-Track® Bed Deliver 45% Increase in Pick Efficiency at Maryland Plant

Pickers at Thermo Fisher Scientific get out of the cold and heat up productivity with SpanTrack Bed from UNEX.

Thermo Fisher is the world leader in serving science, whose mission is to enable our customers to make the world healthier, cleaner and safer. It helps its customers accelerate life sciences research, solve complex analytical challenges, improve patient diagnostics and increase laboratory productivity. At one of the company’s manufacturing and distribution centers located in Maryland, workers fulfill customers’ orders by picking from thousands of unique SKUs, including many that must be kept in cooler or freezer areas to preserve the product.

A Sluggish Scenario

In 2012, engineers from Thermo Fisher set out to dramatically improve pick efficiencies in two areas at the Maryland plant: the 13,000-square-foot cold box space and the 9,000-square-foot freezer area. About 35 pickers worked inside these areas, wearing cold suits because of the extreme temperatures and picking from pallets containing anywhere from three to 10 boxes, each with different SKUs.

“Pickers had to go through all the boxes on a pallet to find the right SKU, which was very time-consuming,” says Thomas Brown, Systems Engineer, Thermo Fisher. “We needed a new way to pick more efficiently and accurately and get products out the door faster.”



Bringing the Pick Zone out of the Cold

Brown and his team decided to redesign the cooler and freezer areas to create an ideal carton flow and order picking scenario at the plant. The redesign included the installation of 94 deli doors, similar to the doors in grocery store freezers and convenience stores.

“The goal was to move as much of the order picking process as possible outside the cold and freezer boxes,” says Bill Costa, Vice President of Sales for Werres, a partnered UNEX Distributor. “Inside the doors, we installed SpanTrack Bed, which created an efficient way for pickers to reach in and find the right SKUs to fulfill each order.”

The team installed about 1,600 linear feet of SpanTrack Bed to house 2,000 of the plant’s fastest moving temperature sensitive SKU’s, representing 70% of the daily picks in the operation.

“We chose the SpanTrack Beds because they provided maximum flexibility for slotting SKUs of different sizes, from vials that may be an inch high to 10 milliliter bottles,” explains Brown. “Now, we can get 20 to 30 bins of SKUs inside each deli door on four to five levels of SpanTrack Bed.”

The condensed, organized storage has allowed the plant to improve pick efficiency by more than 45%. “We’ve cut back considerably on the time spent replenishing SKUs. Pickers can clearly see the SKUs, which supports our goal of having a 0% misspick rate. And we’re getting products out the door faster and into customers’ hands.”

Off the Ladder and out of the Suits

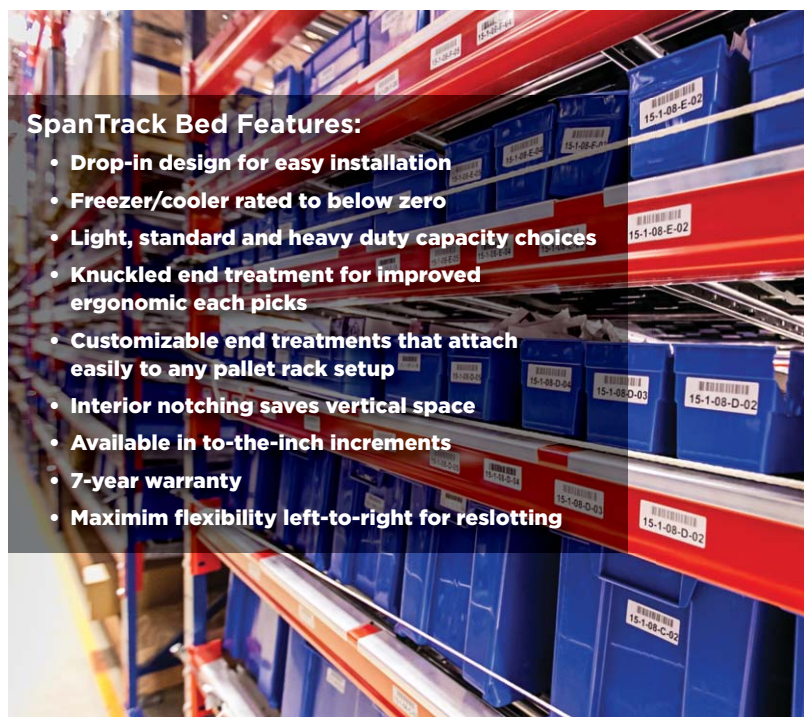
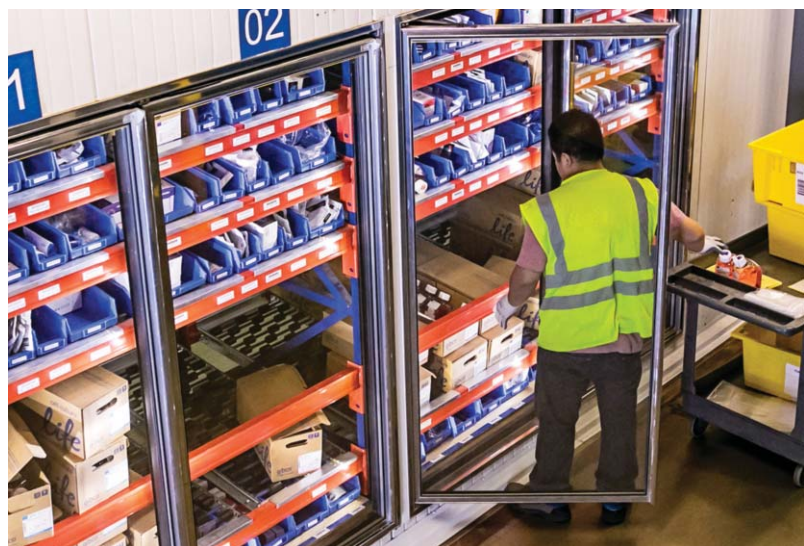
Before SpanTrack Bed and the deli doors, workers had to wear cold suits all day. They had to climb up and down ladders to pick SKUs, and they had to work around forklifts and push carts. “Now, we have a safer and more comfortable environment for our pickers,” says Brown.

The plant has also significantly reduced costs. Fewer pickers are needed at the plant because of productivity improvements, and plant hours have been reduced from 12-hour to 8-hour shifts.

Ready for the Future

Brown says the redesign of the Maryland plant was a major undertaking. “SpanTrack Bed was just one piece of a huge transformation for the plant. But it was the piece that brought everything together.”

Costa adds that the redesign sets the stage for future growth. “Thermo Fisher is known for its innovative solutions. The Maryland plant must have built-in flexibility to accommodate the company’s ever-growing product mix. SpanTrack Bed offers that flexibility.”



SpanTrack Bed Features:

- Drop-in design for easy installation
- Freezer/cooler rated to below zero
- Light, standard and heavy duty capacity choices
- Knuckled end treatment for improved ergonomic each picks
- Customizable end treatments that attach easily to any pallet rack setup
- Interior notching saves vertical space
- Available in to-the-inch increments
- 7-year warranty
- Maximim flexibility left-to-right for reslotting

UNEX® Engineered Space Optimization

UNEX MANUFACTURING, INC.

