

WHY INVEST IN A **WIRELESS WAREHOUSE MANAGEMENT SOLUTION**



With skyrocketing labor and logistics costs and constant pressure on margins, warehouse efficiency is a must. Distributors searching for a way to control overhead while improving accuracy and integrity in their warehouses should consider investing in a wireless warehouse management solution. Designed to streamline and organize processes, a wireless warehouse can help you improve picking, packing, put-away, and receiving processes through directed activities.

HOW IT BENEFITS YOU

When your pickers move through the warehouse to prepare orders for shipment, do they know exactly where to go to choose products in a logical manner? Or do they move from aisle A to N, and then back to J for the next item on the list? Can they choose orders for more than one customer at a time? And, as they work, do they carry messy stacks of paperwork through your warehouse and mark products off with a pencil as they pick them? Wireless warehouse functionality allows you to modernize all of these processes. In addition to electronically guiding your employees through the warehouse, a wireless warehouse management solution automates tasks and makes everything paperless – allowing your people to focus on choosing the proper products in a timely manner.

Best of all, a true wireless warehouse management solution makes your employees incredibly productive by allowing them to pick a single order, multiple orders for different customers, and transfer orders in a single pass through the warehouse. You can also use a wireless warehouse management solution to assign employees specific areas of responsibility in the warehouse. The solution will allow multiple employees to pick the same order at the same time within their respective zones or areas of responsibility. Because they do not have to traverse the entire warehouse for each order, this leads to greater efficiency.

Also, how often are your clerks backlogged because only one person can receive each shipment as it reaches your loading dock? Because it pulls dynamic information from your enterprise software solution – instead of static data from a list on a clipboard – a wireless warehouse management solution streamlines receiving processes by allowing more than one user to receive against the same purchase order or warehouse transfer at the exact same time.

Because wireless warehouse management tools automate a lot of the tasks many distributors still do with a pencil and clipboard, they can reallocate resources to service-oriented tasks. Distributors who have implemented this technology have added more SKUs to their warehouses and customers to their databases without hiring extra employees.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

A wireless warehouse management solution works by linking your warehouse workers to your enterprise software solution via a wireless handheld device. The device tells your employees where to go to pick, put away, count, or move product within your facility. When they arrive at the correct item, they scan it with the device. This scan interacts directly with your enterprise software solution about the activity; ensuring inventory levels are always recorded properly. Plus, because each movement is recorded, your employees are more accountable for everything that moves out of your warehouse – improving service levels.

Of course, just because the system is fully automated doesn't mean that it is unforgiving. If your order picker accidentally scans in an extra piece, the handheld device should allow them to manually adjust levels – so your system can update inventory counts.

LEVERAGING CONSISTENCY FOR A COST-EFFECTIVE SOLUTION

Many wireless warehouse management solutions now available enable you to access the software in your office from your warehouse. For example, a Windows-based solution – complete with GUI-interfaced scanning “guns” – should enable you to log onto most of the applications in your office – from Microsoft Outlook and Word to your enterprise software solution. This means that your warehouse manager can easily access his desktop to retrieve information about rush shipments without interrupting his normal routine. Some new solutions even allow distributors to extend the wireless network capabilities installed in their offices to their stockrooms. Because these warehouse management solutions combine front- and back-office technology, you save on system administration costs because there is no need to hire two experts to maintain each solution. Plus, it greatly diminishes the learning curve – as it eliminates the need for your employees to learn two completely different solutions. And, because a Windows-based wireless warehouse management solution retrieves and stores information in the same database as your enterprise software solution, it cuts the risk of data synchronization errors and eliminates any time you might need to spend on maintaining two different solutions.

A wireless warehouse management solution can streamline your processes, improve order accuracy, and make your employees more productive – making your customers happier and you more profitable.

WIRELESS WAREHOUSE MANAGEMENT SOLUTION

Developed for Activant Prophet 21™, the Wireless Warehouse Management Solution (WWMS) brings unprecedented levels of accuracy and integrity to distributors' warehouses. A fully integrated warehouse management solution, the WWMS uses wireless hand-held devices to facilitate and perform warehousing functions like receiving, picking, put-away, cycle counting, and inventory operations and adjustments.

WWMS increases the accuracy, control, precision, and monitoring capability for each order processed, and reduces the time and costs associated with traditional warehouse management by eliminating the need to add a separate database, run multiple updates, synchronize with another system, or handle stacks of paper. Additionally, WWMS improves inventory accuracy by automatically monitoring, updating, and reporting all inventory actions in Prophet 21. Because the Wireless Warehouse Management Solution is fully integrated with Prophet 21, you can implement one technology solution for all of your corporate needs.

ACCURATE INVENTORY

To put inventory control in the palm of your hand, the WWMS utilizes hand-held scanners that communicate with your Prophet 21 solution via a secure wireless connection to coordinate all of the necessary inventory activities, in real-time, for greater accuracy, control, and efficiency. Each wireless scanner interfaces directly with Prophet 21 to display and update information specific to the particular duties of each warehouse worker. You can perform inventory adjustments on the fly, anytime an issue occurs, with fully integrated audit trail tracking.

The WWMS offers both self- and system-directed methods for inventory management. The system-directed method automatically suggests up to six bins, which gives you the flexibility to choose a bin location that best fits your needs. To help you make this decision, the solution also includes a ranking system based on the number of hits an item receives. The solution takes this ranking, along with primary bin, weight, and volume capacities of bins and items to calculate the most efficient bin placement throughout your warehouse.

RECEIVING AND PUTAWAY

To keep orders moving from your receiving dock to your shelves, the WWMS allows one or more employees to receive against the same purchase order or warehouse transfer, and automatically tracks and confirms the receipt line quantities as each employee processes the transaction. Additionally, employees can identify serial, lot, and lot attributes during the receiving process, and this is saved directly into Prophet 21's database. Any mandatory item notes contained in Prophet 21 will display on the wireless scanner, ensuring that the proper information about each item is available.

If you have multiple package sizes for an item or operate a warehouse where more than one item or lot is in the same bin location, you can elect to use the tagging function to improve inventory definition below the item and lot level. Each tag holds the lot and bin information. Lot traceable factors can be created on the fly throughout the receiving process.

Once product has been received into the warehouse, you need to put it into a bin. WWMS improves the putaway process by directing you to bins with available space, while also allowing you to override the suggested bins and put product into a bin of your choice. Additionally, the WWMS makes the putaway process more accurate by preventing you from putting an item in a bin or zone that is locked or prohibited, and allowing you to track inventory at the item/bin level and include a maximum number of items per bin in your bin record. Additionally, a putaway attribute allows you to group items with similar characteristics together throughout the warehouse.

PICKING

The WWMS helps you save time by allowing you to pick a single order, multiple orders for different customers, and transfer orders in a single pass through the warehouse. The solution directs each order picker to the correct bin locations and ensures the correct bin is scanned, the correct item is scanned, and the lot and serial numbers are correct. When filling orders, your employees have the option to pick by zone or fill the entire pick ticket. This enables multiple pickers to pick the same ticket at the same time or by a pick-and-pass method.

If you are filling orders from a picking bin, the WWMS allows you to designate a dedicated stock bin to refill your picking bins, which facilitates the picking process by keeping your forward picking or primary bins full. Enhanced bin functionality allows you to associate picking sequences to bin locations. Each picker has a “what’s left” function that indicates the lines of the order left to pick, and the ability to add multiple pick tickets to a “group ticket” and then pick either by zone or for the entire ticket. In addition, Prophet 21 can display mandatory order line notes on the wireless scanner to ensure your order pickers have the most updated order line information in the palm of their hands.

COUNT ON IT

To simplify the cycle counting process, the WWMS allows you to create a count in Prophet 21 and directly count on the wireless device. This cuts down on the paper costs of your counting process, and gives the counters a system-guided structure to their work and continual system feedback during the process. Because the scanner assisted counting process has several checks built into it that allow the system to verify the counter’s location and information, it also reduces errors, making your counts more accurate. Additionally, the Found Items Report allows any employee performing a count to record items not on the count but in the bin they are counting.

The WWMS can consolidate item/lot quantities and individual tags onto other tags or into other bins if needed. Similarly, item/lot quantities in large pack sizes can be broken down to smaller quantities and identified with individual tags before being distributed throughout your warehouse. To provide you with a high level of control, all of these inventory movements within the warehouse are updated in real time within Prophet 21.

To keep you on top of your warehouse activities, the WWMS offers a host of reports that allow you to track the efficiency of your receiving and putaway processes, so you can reduce operating costs and improve warehouse efficiency, and increase sales for years to come.

ABOUT ACTIVANT’S WHOLESALE DISTRIBUTION SOLUTIONS

Activant provides technology solutions and services to more than 3,800 wholesale distributors throughout North America. A leading technology provider for the distribution industry, Activant develops comprehensive enterprise software solutions to help distributors improve customer service and maximize the return on their technology investment. In addition, the company offers an Internet trading network that expedites sourcing, expands geographic reach, and streamlines transactions between distributors and manufacturers. Activant solutions are backed by a host of professional services, including support, consulting, and educational programs.

Activant Solutions Inc. (“Activant”) is a leading technology provider of business management solutions serving small and medium-sized retail and wholesale distribution businesses in three primary vertical markets: hardlines and lumber; wholesale distribution; and the automotive parts aftermarket. Founded in 1972, Activant provides customers with tailored proprietary software, professional services, content, supply chain connectivity, and analytics. More than 30,000 customer locations use an Activant solution to manage their day-to-day operations. Activant has operations in California, Colorado, Connecticut, Illinois, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Canada, France, Ireland, and the United Kingdom.

For more information about Activant® and its solutions and services, please call 1-800-776-7438, press 1, e-mail distribution@activant.com, or visit www.activant.com