



7 Ways to Increase Pick Slots & Save Space With Carton Flow

By Brad Emerson



Surviving and Thriving In The SKU Tsunami



Buyers want choices and retailers have no choice but to deliver; lots of variety, a myriad of brands, every color of the rainbow and flavor under the sun. This is the best case scenario for the finicky consumer, but a major headache at the distribution center. DC managers are forced to handle ever-rising SKUs, both fast and slow moving products, in the same amount of storage space while keeping costs down to remain competitive. It means they have to be very strategic about how they use every inch of storage.

We have some simple, affordable options to help alleviate the burden of SKU management – Start by converting lower level pallet rack locations to rack-mounted carton flow for the slow to medium moving SKUs. It’s an excellent way to stretch your current warehouse space to accommodate more SKUs. Areas best suited for this type of conversion can be identified with a review of your current warehouse layout and product cycle demands. With better productivity, cycle time and accuracy you will see an immediate positive ROI. A modification like this can be done with little to no downtime.

Let’s look at some additional benefits to strategically adding carton flow to your warehouse operations.

7 Ways Carton Flow Will Increase Pick Spots and Save Space

1 Create 35 Pick Slots per Bay –

By converting lower level selective pallet rack to carton flow rack you will create up to 35 additional pick slots within an 8’ wide pallet rack bay. This will free up full pallet locations for faster moving SKUs that will be more efficiently processed via carton flow. This conversion serves to also condense and organize the SKUs to increase pick rate and reduce travel time. We recommend leaving a few pick spots open for quick processing of new items.



2 Consolidate Slower Picks –

A standard carton flow shelf designed with 8’ deep lanes will accommodate items that move 8-10 cases in a 1 to 2 weeks. We suggest a frequent, even monthly, review of carton flow SKU fulfillment to keep only the fast movers in that golden spot. Slower movers can be relocated to the less expensive static shelving.

7 Ways Carton Flow Will Increase Pick Spots and Save Space continued...

3 Improve Inventory Rotation –

Carton flow's First-In/First-Out (FIFO) inventory rotation is ideal for dated or perishable products, freeing full pallet slots for more organized, consolidated picks. This system design also minimizes out-of-stock issues that can eat up profit margin.

4 Increase Productivity –

Carton flow, added anywhere along the normal pick path and placed strategically at the beginning of rows will concentrate picks closer to the dock and decrease travel time to boost productivity. Travel time can be reduced 40-80%. An added benefit is that the product is easily visible for picking and restocking.

5 Decrease Labor Costs – up to 50%

Labor cost per pick is dramatically reduced by consolidating inventory within a condensed footprint and by separating the picking and replenishment activities in opposite aisles. Savings can also be found in lower worker injury claims and downtime by eliminating overreaching, dragging and lifting of products that will now be placed in easy to access flow rack.



6 Gain Needed Flexibility –

Carton flow provides picking flexibility with numerous shelf beds, roller and pick trays, for both full case and broken case selection. Cartons or individual items are picked to either conveyor or pallet jack. A carton flow system can be added to any climate controlled area of your warehouse from ambient, cold store and freezer. The system is designed to provide quick and easy lane size adjustments to especially accommodate rotating seasonal stock.

7 Benefit from the Latest Technologies & Expertise –

Today's carton flow options offer greater durability and capacity, up to 45 lbs. per sq. ft., vs. older lightweight track systems. Full wheel bed designs, roller track options, lane dividers and a variety of picking accessories provide consistent product flow with flexible product slotting. These systems operate for years with little to no maintenance downtime.

7 Ways Carton Flow Will Increase Pick Spots and Save Space continued...



Meeting Growing Demand —

Today's expectation of same day shipping in many industry segments puts an added challenge into the mix of quickly, accurately and efficiently fulfilling customer order requests. The warehouse pick and ship process now faces a greater emphasis of reducing process times from hours to minutes. It may not take a large overhaul of your warehouse system to meet these growing demands. Simple, strategic manipulations may be all you need to stay ahead of the increasing demand.

E-Distribution can help you implement these productivity improvements starting with a preliminary inventory analysis. We'll develop storage mix and layout recommendations based upon your SKU and velocity reports. Call or email today - info@e-dist.com or (866) 690-4585.

E-Distribution is a national storage and conveyor systems integrator with extensive experience helping distributors develop efficient, cost-effective solutions using both new and like-new equipment; all expertly designed and seamlessly integrated for the most productive results.



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