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SMARTER DISTRIBUTION | COMPLETE SOLUTIONS

Pick Module Conversion Boosts Productivity & Reduces Labor Costs at Martin Bros. Distributing

CASE STUDY

Martin Bros. Distributing, Inc. in Cedar Falls, IA is one of the largest food distribution and restaurant supply companies in Iowa and is continuing to grow throughout the Midwest. After completing a number of successful rack expansion and renovation projects together, Martin Bros. turned to E-Distribution to expand storage capacity in their freezer, cooler and dry goods areas and to help redesign their existing slow pick systems.

Martin Bros. DISTRIBUTING CO INC



An Industry-Wide Cost & Productivity Challenge

Like many foodservice and grocery distributors, Martin Bros. struggled with inefficient and labor intensive order selection of a large volume of slower moving SKUs; orders were picked within a PIR System (Planned Inventory Management System) with random selection of cases throughout all vertical racking levels using a man-up order picker. Not only was the picking process slow, but it also required double handling of cases as they were merged back into their order routes.



New pick module helped Martin Bros. achieve far greater item density in a small facility footprint; 40 slots per 5-high, 8-wide carton flow bay and up to 196 slots within the tote section, resulting in a dramatic increase in pick rates.

System Highlights

- **45,000 sq. ft. Facility Expansion**
  - Dry Goods, Cool & Freezer
- **Plus 21,000 sq. ft. Teardown & Remodel**
  - Of Slow Pick Conventional Rack System
- **Integration of Quality Used Components**
  - Saving $500,000 in Equipment Costs
- **New 3-Level Pick Module for Slow Pick Items**
  - Resulting in 15% Labor Savings in 3 Months

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The Solution – A Multi-Level Case Pick Module

Martin Bros. and E-Distribution developed a solution to consolidate the extremely slow moving SKUs in gravity fed case flow shelving and bin storage units within a 3-Level Walk-Pick Module. Travel time is kept to a minimum.

- Items are picked from case flow shelves using hand carts that roll on the Resindek® mezzanine flooring.
- Picked items are placed on the conveyor system, designed and integrated by E-Distribution for routing to the palletizing area.
- Based on the number of items picked by route, orders are merged or palletized and sent to shipping.
- A man-up forklift and dedicated forklift battery charger is installed in the replenishment aisles for floor to ceiling product restocking on case flow shelves.
- A unique plastic tote system is integrated on one of the mezzanine levels for the storage and selection of smallwares (tableware, utensils, small appliances, flatware etc.); small totes are stacked together, (3 wide x 6 high) and screwed down to the floor and racking. Tote dividers allow the flexibility to store between 60 and 196 slots per bay, typically on the higher side.
- Bulky products are also consolidated and separated from the core items in the module.



Use Of Existing And Pre-Owned Materials Saves Close To $500,000

E-Distribution handled the teardown of the existing PIR system, salvaging all quality, good condition components for integration into the new pick module and selective/case flow systems. Some additional pre-owned materials and new components were used to complete the project.

One System Does Not Fit All

A different solution was needed to meet the order demands of the slightly faster moving SKUs; E-Distribution and the Martin Bros. Project Team designed case flow racking on the floor level of several selective rack rows, allowing the order selector to travel the pick path and select some of the slow items in the aisle on the ground with 4 to 5 shelves per bay. These items are picked and placed directly on the picked pallet going to the truck with no merging required.

A Seamless (But Cold) Installation

Despite some major challenges wrought by extreme cold temperature and bad weather conditions, E-Distribution's Field Service teams, along with the general contractor, managed to coordinate a very successful installation. The project was completed with changes in a timely fashion allowing construction to move forward without any major delays. E-Distribution and Martin Bros. worked through all challenges as a team bringing the project to successful completion.

Corporate Headquarters
E-Distribution
2525 S Shiloh Road, Suite 200
Garland, TX 75041
(866) 690-4585
info@e-dist.com
info@e-dist.com www.e-dist.com