

Best Practices in Replenishment of Forward Pick Locations

Executive Briefing Synopsis

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The replenishment of forward picking locations is a thorn in the side of many warehouses. It contributes nothing directly to warehouse performance, but is nevertheless indispensable. When too much attention is paid to it, other important work suffers. When too little is paid, picking locations run dry and people waste hours dashing about the warehouse trying to find product. The proper management of forward picking locations and their replenishment can have significant impact and, therefore, deserves attention.

Experience in many warehouses has led us to believe that few warehouse managers think about the theory of replenishment and even fewer consider the right tradeoffs when deciding how to handle new items and velocity changes in existing items.

When a new item arrives in the warehouse, there is a strong tendency in many businesses to simply assign it a forward picking location without detailed consideration of how it should be handled. The fact is that not all items should be picked from forward locations and that many replenishment moves are simply wasted effort. Forward pick locations in many warehouses are incorrectly sized, resulting in a costly and error prone replenishment operation.

Further, the advanced warehouses that regularly reslot and adapt their layout to changing demand patterns often miss the mark because most commercially-available slotting systems simply assume that every item should have a forward picking location. In most businesses, that is certainly not the case.

This executive briefing reviews the theory of replenishment. It discusses when items should be replenished and when they should be picked directly from reserve stock. It further discusses the handling and management of multiple reserve locations and of multiple forward locations. The use of cascading replenishment and the practice of wave replenishment to one-time locations are both covered. The result is a comprehensive review of the replenishment function that has the potential of both simplifying your operation and, at the same time, improving productivity.