Rawlings Sporting Goods

dcLINK® Fits Rawlings’ Warehouse Operations Like a Glove

The start of baseball season brings joy and hope to thousands of fans and players across the country. But for the warehouse staff at Rawlings, a leading marketer and manufacturer of baseball equipment and other sporting goods and the official ball supplier to Major League Baseball®, preparing for the season brought a lot of stress.

“If you’re a customer and you order 15 jerseys and you only get 13, you’re not happy. You have 15 players on your team and they all need jerseys,” said Mike Campbell, Rawlings’ Director of Distribution. “Our customer service depends on what happens in our warehouse.”

Rawlings provides hundreds of SKUs to teams, sporting goods stores, and other retailers. They ship full pallets to national retailers, but many customers require mixed pallet or individual case shipments. These were difficult to fill quickly and accurately with the company’s manual, paper-based warehouse processes.

Challenge

“Eliminate product handling delays caused by manual, paper-based warehouse operations”

“Improve labor efficiency and reduce warehouse costs”

“Improve inventory data accuracy”

“Reduce shipping errors and improve customer service”

Solution

“dcLINK to support barcode data collection and real-time communication with JD Edwards World and JD Edwards Warehouse Management System”

“Motorola 9090-G handheld computers with integrated barcode readers”

Results

“Cost-per-carton reduced from $1.16 to 61¢”

“Reduced headcount at warehouse labor, clerical, and supervisory levels”

“50% reduction in inventory write downs”

“More than 75% reduction in back orders”

“Improved customer service”

For operations and customer service, we’ve been able to hit back-to-back homeruns with the implementation of dcLINK, Motorola, and Oracle’s JD Edwards WMS.”

Mike Campbell
Director of Distribution
Rawlings

dcLINK provides validated integration between JD Edwards and the mobile computers used on the warehouse floor, and has standard transaction sets to automate essential warehouse functions including receiving, putaway, cycle counting, picking, and shipping. dcLINK also provides a powerful tool that allows businesses to easily tailor standard transaction sets to fit their processes.

At Rawlings, dcLINK is used starting from when goods are received at the dock, where workers with Motorola 9090-G wireless handheld computers identify incoming shipments with a barcode scan. Using real-time integration with JD Edwards World and the powerful WMS, the warehouse staff at Rawlings can now work more efficiently, increase productivity, and maintain higher levels of customer service.
Edwards, dcLINK matches the shipment to a purchase order or an EDI Advance Ship Notification (ASN). Workers are then directed to take the pallet for quality control inspection or to a putaway location. All product movements are recorded by barcode scanning and updated in JD Edwards as the activity occurs. Rawlings relies on dcLINK and JD Edwards to manage up to 19,000 warehouse transactions a day at their Washington facility.

“Before, just to begin putaway you had to fill out a piece of paper, give it to somebody, and have them process it, which could take anywhere from 15 minutes to a few hours,” said Josh Kasper, a worker in the warehouse. “It wasn’t instant, and things got lost, misread, and misinterpreted. Now that we use mobile computers linked to our warehouse system, we don’t have to rely on people in other departments to process our work.”

Service and efficiency rose almost immediately. The results prompted the company to investigate whether manual processes at other company warehouses would also benefit from the automation. Because the JD Edwards infrastructure is in place across Rawlings’ operations, it was easy to expand the dcLINK deployment.

“I don’t think porting applications to other locations could be any smoother or faster than it’s been,” said Claude Tougas, Rawlings’ Systems Analyst. “It was a one or two day job, and the thing was done.”

Results

One of Rawlings’ most important warehouse performance metrics is its cost-per-carton, which includes all the variable labor costs incurred while preparing a carton for shipment to the customer. Since implementing dcLINK and JD Edwards WMS, Rawlings has reduced its cost-per-carton from $1.16 to 61¢, a 47 percent reduction. The cost-per-carton has decreased for four consecutive years, showing how dcLINK provides sustainable benefits by giving users the flexibility to make continuous improvements. See table documenting Rawlings’ savings.

Administrative expenses are not included in the cost-per-carton metric. However, Rawlings has reduced its warehouse clerical staff, seasonal labor, training time, and supervisory personnel since it began using dcLINK and WMS, even though the business has expanded by new product line introductions and acquisitions over the same time period.

“We’re turning out more product than we were three or four years ago, and we’re doing it with about 25 percent less people,” said Campbell. “Plus, our inventory accuracy has improved and picking errors have gone down considerably.”

“Before there was a lot of writing – I’d say an hour or more per container. We were constantly doing paperwork and not getting real work done,” said Jeff Nichols, a worker in the Washington warehouse. “Now you get more work done with a lot less error, and it makes the whole day a lot smoother. With the Motorola mobile unit, you can go anywhere in the building and do your work without having to find someone to ask questions.”

As inventory accuracy has improved, Rawlings has reduced the value of its inventory write downs by 50 percent. Back orders have been reduced more than 75 percent, and the company no longer routinely sends out search parties to track down missing inventory.

There’s also the benefit of knowing Little Leaguers will have their uniforms come opening day. Today Rawlings meets its on-time shipping commitments even during its busy season.

“We’ve been able to go from being a good performer to a top performer,” said Campbell. “I’ve got e-mails from customers stating that we’re ‘the best’ at delivering sporting goods. For operations and customer service, we’ve been able to hit back-to-back homeruns with the implementation of dcLINK, Motorola, and Oracle’s JD Edwards WMS.”

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<th>Year</th>
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