



# The Distribution Factor

Helpful Information and Ideas for the Distribution Professional

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Feature Story: World Class Order Selection



Sam Flanders, President WMC

This month we look at how to save serious money in your order selection operation without spending the same.

Next, we look at methods you can use to increase the number of pallets you can store inside your building.

This month's video covers small item sortation

Finally, we look at 3 different types of equipment to facilitate vertical storage of materials.



Saving Money in Order Selection!

You don't always have to spend a lot of money on a new piece of automaton or software to save significantly in your order selection operation. In fact, many costly systems rely on one or more of the very same process changes that will be described in this month's feature story. By deploying one or more of these ideas, you can sometimes dramatically increase your labor efficiency (by 50% or more) and do it without any substantial risk or expense.

This month's feature article will give you some tips for turbo charging your order picking operation without dishing out a lot of cash.

- **Make Order Selection as Easy as Possible for your People** - If you are not picking by location, consider doing this. Picking by location makes picking faster, more accurate, and is easier for non-English speaking employees to learn. Items get mis-picked less often, when the location, rather than the description is used.

If you are already picking by location, be certain that location and the quantity are very easy to see and read on your paperwork. If they aren't,

Mark your Calendar!

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**Chicago - April 28-30, 2007**

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**Free Material Handling Resources!**



Click the icon above to be taken to our White Paper page. This page has 4 different white papers of general interest to those who manage order picking operations. There are two white papers on general order selection: strategies and equipment, and there are also papers on carousels and voice directed picking.



Click on the icon above to be taken to our material handling resource locator guide. This guide is interactive, easy to use, and driven with an icon-based interface. Using it, you can

consider moving these items to be right next to each other and printed in bold type on your pick documents or on your display device. Similarly for location labels, make sure that they are in good condition, and replace old or worn labels with labels that have the location printed in large bold type.

- **Group Your Orders Together to save Footsteps** - Walking is traditionally the largest time component of most order selection operations. Grouping orders together can significantly reduce walking. The key is that you need a simple way for the picker to process a batch of orders. Single line orders can be sorted by location, prior to picking. Another way to support batch picking by paper is to create a master pick sheet that has all of the picks for all of the orders in the batch sorted in walk sequence. This insures that you will make only one trip per batch, rather than one trip per order. The larger the batch size, the fewer footsteps you will end up taking between picks. The only other thing you need to do is to identify which order the pick goes to. This can be done by labeling the item at the time of the pick or it can be done by placing the item directly into the proper order container. In both cases, the "put to" location must be added to your pick document.
- **Arrange your Stock Intelligently to Minimize Travel** - You can dramatically reduce footsteps by putting your faster moving items together. If your orders tend to be small (low line count), doing this will help you to "kill off" many orders in the fast pick area, and avoid having to even travel to the slower moving areas of the warehouse. Your fastest items should be closest to your docks and your shipping area. Medium items can be a little farther away, and the slow items can be the farthest away.
- **Create a Dynamic "Hot Zone" for Seasonal or Spike Movers** - If you have a business that tends to have seasonal or spike movers that become fast for a limited period of time during the year, you may want to consider setting up a dynamic "Hot Zone" where items can be placed only while they are fast moving. Slotting can take place in advance of a sale or promotion, or based on historical or forecasted activity. When the item is no longer a fast mover, you can pick the slot clean, and then allow future picks come from the original pick location. By doing this, you promote your fastest moving items to an area specially designed to support high velocity movement. The area can be closest to your dock and configured to be easy to replenish (for example pallet flow or flow rack).

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**Video of the Month: Small Item Sorter**

A small item sorter can dramatically increase your pick rates by allowing you to select requirements for many orders all at the same time. If you have items that are common to many orders, a sorter has tremendous benefits, since you only need to visit a stock location once, and then can bring as much material as you need to the sorter to be distributed, rather than visiting the same location 100's of times for individual orders. Even if you have only onese-y-twosey items, the sorter can help because it allows you to select materials for a batch of orders at once, and the sorter takes care of sorting out the requirements to individual orders for you.

Many different types of products can be sorted, but a small item sorter is commonly used to sort packaged goods, books, apparel, sunglasses, jewelry, and other smaller items. If you are sorting onese-y-twosey items, it is important that the items be able to be identified easily via a bar code. It is also important that the items you sort be able to be accumulated or stacked easily once they are sorted. Manufacturers have a large variety of order accumulation methods and chute designs.



quickly locate information on systems, software, and equipment. Each area provides links to vendors as well as a brief description of each technology. Try it out and bookmark it for future reference!

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At WMC, we are experts in helping our clients save money. We do this by helping clients select solutions that meet their specific requirements. Unlike many systems and equipment providers, including some who call themselves consultants, WMC has nothing to sell you other than our experience. We work exclusively for you and represent no other system or equipment provider.

We evaluate low or no cost solutions first, and then show you what you can do before you invest in capital solutions. We then show you the true value of those capital solutions by evaluating only the additional savings that they may provide - a step often skipped over by salespeople.

We understand all types of order selection systems, including voice directed picking, pick to light, carousels, AS/RS systems, sorters, A-Frames, and RF scanner based systems. We can help you figure out which solutions are best for your operation. Give us a call today (603) 868-6767.

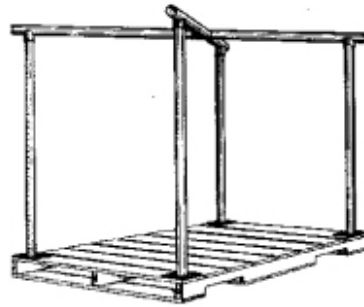


**Above: Sorter Induction Stations for a Bomb Bay Style Sorter - Euorsort**

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[Operations Spotlight: Squeezing More Pallets into your DC](#)

Are you running out of Space to store pallets or do you have peak times when you simply don't have a place to put all your skids. This story will give you a few ideas that you may be able to use to lessen the problem.



**Above: (left) Stacking Frame (right) Floor Stack**

- **Think in 3 Dimensions - Stack your Pallets** - Stacked pallets on the floor provide some of the densest storage available in a distribution center. To achieve the best density, however, pallets must be stacked so that they take advantage of ceiling height. If you can, stack your pallets multiple levels high. Not all pallets are stackable and some pallets cannot be stacked because of box integrity problems. A way around this is to use something called a "Stacking Frame". A stacking frame is a portable storage unit that can be quickly set up on any floor area, and can allow you to stack pallets right up to your available ceiling height. The structure provides both sides and a top support "shelf" so that additional frames can be stacked one atop the other. Stacking frames can store flat and be assembled only when needed. They can even be stored outside if necessary when not in use.
- **Narrow your Truck Aisles** - Many warehouses have 12 or 13 foot aisles to permit access of locations by a traditional counterbalanced fork truck. You can cut the space taken up by aisles by 25-30 to create room for more rack runs with no loss of pallet handling efficiency if you convert from a traditional site down truck to a narrow aisle reach truck. These trucks use outriggers in front, rather than a weight in the back of the vehicle to balance the pallet load. Because of this they are shorter and can turn in an 8 to 9 foot aisle with a 48x40 pallet.
- **Consider Double Deep Pallet Rack** - If you need still more room and you have a number of SKUs with an on-hand pallet quantity of 5 or

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more, consider "doubling up" your selective rack. Instead of having just two racks back to back, configure two sets of two racks. A special vehicle called a double deep reach truck can be used to reach to the inner pallet storage location, permitting you to store pallets two deep everywhere. These trucks can turn in an aisle just slightly greater than a single reach truck (about 9').

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## Technologies of the Month: Storage - Thinking Vertically

If you are out of space for your smaller items (vendor boxes, parts, or totes), this story can give you some ideas on how to store them more compactly using vertical storage solutions. I cover three common, and relatively lower cost options in this article.

### A Look Ahead to Next Month

**Feature Story:**

World-class Order Selection: Simple Ideas that Don't Cost a Lot

**Video of the Month:**

Small Item Sorter

**Operations Spotlight:**

Making the Most of Pallet Storage

**Technology of the Month:**

Vertical Storage Options

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### Use a Stock Picker

Normally, the least expensive of the solutions is to store your loose items higher up off the floor. You may be doing this already and using a ladder for access. A stock picker can do the job of a ladder in a much faster and safer manner, and can be used to both pick and replenish items located in the air. Although I normally recommend that only medium to slower moving items be selected with a stock picker. If you are really out space and don't want to invest in more costly AS/RS systems, a stock picker will work, at some cost in picking speed.



**Photo Left: Courtesy Raymond**



### Vertical Storage Tower

If you'd rather keep your people on the floor, there are several options available to you. The first of these is a vertical storage tower. This device is an enclosed box that has storage shelves that can extend as high as 40 feet from the floor. An elevator inside the device goes up and retrieves a shelf or tote and brings it down to deliver to a pick window located at a perfect ergonomic height. These systems can deliver anything from small totes to things as pick as 2-ton assemblies.

**Photo Left: Courtesy Remstar**

### Vertical Carousel

Another type of vertical storage device is called a vertical carousel. This device has a series of rotating shelves that moves around a horse-track shaped path vertically from floor to ceiling. The advantage of a vertical carousel is that many picks can be batched together and then the items selected in sequence as the carousel rotates, much in the same way that a Ferris wheel can be loaded and unloaded. The vertical carousel again can deliver all the picks at a perfect ergonomic height. These systems are great for small parts, jewelry, or electronics.



**Photo Right: Courtesy White**

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