

What's the Opportunity for Automating Case Picking in Distribution?

New Report and Survey from SCDigest to Analyze Opportunity and Solutions; One Bottler Uses New Technology to Build Store-Ready Pallets, Reduce Picking from Side Loaded Trucks

SCDigest Editorial Staff

Case picking in distribution remains one of the last areas to see many opportunities for automation – but that is changing.

While **mechanized** solutions, such as pick-to-belt with downstream sortation, have been around for two decades or more and seen widespread adoption, most companies continue to pick cases manually – even as the percent, costs and headaches of case picking continue to increase for most companies.

As SCDigest has been reporting, over the last few years a number of viable case picking automation systems have come to market and been deployed.

What is exciting is that these solutions come from a number of different technology approaches and costs, with their own strengths and weaknesses for specific applications.

To better understand these technologies and opportunities for distribution operations, SCDigest is developing a major report on case picking technologies.

To support this important new piece of research, SCDigest is conducting a shipper survey on case picking. The survey includes just 10 quick questions, and can literally be answered in just a couple of minutes.

Those completing the survey will receive a copy of the aggregate survey results.

To take the brief survey, please go to: [Case Picking](#)

Continued concern about DC labor costs and availability, and even the looming "card check" legislation that would make unionizing DCs, may also make justification easier than in past years.

[in Distribution Survey](#). More than 200 logistics managers and executives have already completed the survey – please add your insight.

Automated case picking can have all manner of benefits. Reducing labor costs is obviously one area, but case picking is also a primary source of inventory errors and over and under shipments. Automating this process may address all those issues.

SCDigest also recently spoke with one bottler in the soft drink industry that is using a recently implemented automated case picking solution to build store-ready pallets that can be directly wheeled into the customer's storage area. This can eliminate the need for drivers to build pallets from "side loaded" trucks at each customer stop, and enable the company to use more efficient traditional trailers rather than the specialized side loaders.

"We want to drive as much of the activity back into the warehouse as we can," a director at the bottler told us.

What's the Opportunity for Automating Case Picking in Distribution? (Con't)

Is There ROI?

Of course, just because new automated solutions exist doesn't mean that there is ROI, and that has been a barrier in some situations as the solutions were first brought to market.

However, the growing number of solution alternatives and resulting different entry point costs gives companies more flexibility to find a solution that delivers the right ROI for its situation. Continued concern about DC labor costs and availability, and even the looming "card check" legislation that would make unionizing DCs, may also make justification easier than in past years.

Look for the full report to be available in May. Please support this valuable research by completing the **Case Picking in Distribution Sur-**

vey.

Case Picking Survey

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*1. (1) About what percent of your total case volumes in an average DC comes from full case picks?

*2. (2) Is that volume increasing or decreasing?

Increasing
 Decreasing
 Flat

Additional Comments

*3. (3) What are your peak case picking volumes per day in a DC?

Under 5,000
 5,000-9,999