

Logistics News: Groundbreaking New Report on New Automated Case Picking Technologies Released

First Comprehensive Categorization of new ACP Technology Landscape; A Major Inflection Point in Distribution Center Automation is Coming

SCDigest Editorial Staff

Supply Chain Digest and its site web site Distribution Digest have released a new, groundbreaking research report on a new generation of technologies to automate case picking processes in distribution.

The new report (**Automated Case Picking 2009 - The Next Frontier in Distribution Center Management**) is available for free download for SCDigest subscribers and web site registrants. The full report can be downloaded here: [2009 Automated Case Picking Report](#).

For many companies, case picking volumes, costs, and challenges have increased over the past decade, due to customer and order profile changes. The need to reduce case picking costs and increase throughput has been the major drivers of investment in materials handling systems in the DC for more than two decades, usually in the form of batch "pick-to-belt" systems with downstream case or carton sortation.

More fully automating the case picking process has been something of a Holy Grail for distribution managers and materials handling vendors alike. In fact, according to research performed as part of the report, 40% of total respondents expressed Very High or Fairly High interest in automated case picking solutions. For companies with DCs doing 20,000 to 40,000 full case picks per day (at peak periods), that number jumps to 57%, and to a remarkable 76% for DCs doing more than 40,000 full case picks per day.

To meet that need and interest, many materials handling vendors have lately stepped up their R&D efforts, many working directly with customers to co-develop solutions. Together, these efforts are combining to create a new class of materials handling

Existing solutions range from big improvements in some existing solution categories to mobile robots, stationary robots that are much more flexible and smart than in the past, systems that dispense cases like vending machines onto conveyors, high speed gantry cranes that rapidly build pallets, a new approach to mini-load AS/RS that increases throughput and lowers cost, and more.

solutions, which we call Automated Case Picking, or **ACP**.

These solutions run from truly automated to semi-automated, and often approach the problem in very new ways than materials handling solutions of the past.

The report features a comprehensive categorization of this new case picking solution landscape for the first time. Existing solutions range from big improvements in some existing solution categories to mobile robots, stationary robots that are much more flexible and smart than in the past, systems that dispense cases like vending machines onto conveyors, high speed gantry cranes that rapidly build pallets, a new approach to mini-load AS/RS that increases throughput and lowers cost, and more.

Logistics News: Groundbreaking New Report on New Automated Case Picking Technologies Released (Con't)

Says SCDigest Materials Handling Editor **Cliff Holste**: "Adoption of this technology won't be for everyone, and won't come on overnight, but there is a lot more happening in the ACP area right now than I think most people realize."

In the US, the epicenter of ACP activity is in the beverage sector, with the food industry not far behind. There are a number of deployments or pilots on-going, and even more activity and deployments in Europe of ACP technologies.

Research for the report, which will be repeated on an annual basis, included a survey of more than 200 logistics professionals, extensive one-on-one interviews, and detailed research with materials handling vendors on available solutions.

