MANUFACTURING / DISTRIBUTION

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

"The first busy season I worked here, you could literally spend half the day looking for product. The system said it was here, but we couldn't find it," said Bob Cole, WMS Manager at Rawlings' main distribution center, a 480,000 square foot facility with 40,000 inventory locations in Washington, Missouri. "We had a dedicated team in inventory that just searched for missing product."

Rawlings knew sending search parties was not a good way to manage inventory, and that it needed to change its processes to handle demand fluctuations, work more efficiently, and raise service levels.

Solution

The company already had Oracle's JD Edwards World in place, and needed to find a way to connect the benefits of its powerful enterprise software to actual operations on the warehouse floor. Rawlings brought in its warehouse workers for extensive discussions about the limitations of current operations and what information they needed to do their jobs better. Then Rawlings brought in the JD Edwards Warehouse Management System (WMS). DSI's dcLINK software brought it all together – by enabling barcode data input into WMS and providing real-time connectivity between the enterprise system and workers on the warehouse floor.

> *"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 gave us the flexibility to enhance the WMS to better meet our needs. It allowed us to complete the project on time and on budget," said Jack Matthews, Rawlings' Director of IT.

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

Rawlings Sporting Goods Company
St. Louis, Missouri, USA

http://www.rawlings.com

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 bar code data collection and real-time communication with JD Edwards World and JD Edwards Warehouse Management System
- Motorola 9090-G handheld computers with integrated bar code 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

DSI
DATA SYSTEMS INTERNATIONAL®

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.

Year	Cost-per-carton
0	$1.16
1	$0.90
2	$0.78
3	$0.68
4	$0.61

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."