



## Order Fulfillment System Supports New Retail Operations

### Features and Benefits

Improved customer service

Increased efficiency

Minimized in-store labor

**Industry Group:** Order Fulfillment  
Solutions (OFS)



A major outdoor apparel and equipment retailer was expanding beyond catalog sales and planned to operate as many as 70 regional retail and factory stores by the year 2012. As a result, an automated order fulfillment system was designed and integrated to support its retail business.

After careful analysis and planning, a system was developed that focused on two primary conveyor sorters. One sorter delivers cartons and totes of merchandise to a series of value-add workstations. Associates pre-prepare the contents of each carton or tote, including placing the proper price label or tag onto each piece of merchandise. When complete, a conveyor delivers the merchandise to a dynamic storage zone. With the aid of hand-held computers, merchandise is randomly stored by merchandise group and later picked for allocation to store orders.

The second conveyor sorter delivers cartons and totes of picked merchandise to several put-to-store modules. Each module houses a defined number of ship-carton locations for filling orders. As shippers are processed and closed, these locations are dynamically loaded to assure high fill rates.

Each location is equipped with a put-to-light display. Merchandise is sorted to the put-modules based on packing criteria for a merchandise group. Maintaining style-SKU integrity reduces store labor because merchandise is department-ready and

shelf-ready. When a carton/tote diverts into a put-to-store module, it accumulates on conveyor to the first put-zone. The carton/tote is scanned and the put-to-light display indicates the ship-carton location and unit quantity to put into each shipper. This process continues from the first put zone to last, or until all units are exhausted.

Associates push completed store-shippers directly onto a takeaway conveyor. Shippers then travel to a series of inline pack stations where associates rearrange the contents of the shipper, if necessary, and generate and apply both ship and content labels. Shippers then pass through a case-sealer and finally to the shipping sorter where they receive an ink-jet store identifier. Using this identifier, associates manually consolidate the shippers onto pallets by store destination and ship date. Lastly, associates shrink-wrap pallets and load them onto trailers for immediate shipment or store them in pallet racks for future shipment. Shippers that contain merchandise that requires hanging are diverted away from the pack stations and shipping sorter to a value-add service area, where they are placed on hanging-racks for delivery to the store.



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