

Rising to the Top

Interlake Mecalux named as one of two companies manufacturing five types of AS/RS, including its revamped Clasimat VLM

For some, reaching the summit can be equally as perilous as the ascent. Once you're on top complacency may ensue, invalidating the merit of success. For the Mecalux Group, to rest on one's laurels means finding solace in past achievements instead of looking forward to conquering bigger and greater mountains. In the quest to provide advanced material handling solutions to the global community, the Mecalux Group is steadily conquering the mountain of automated storage systems.

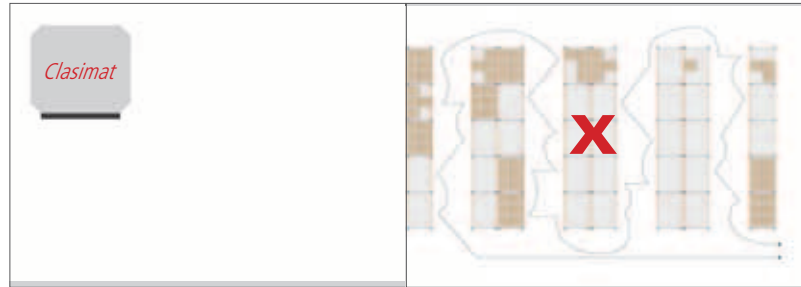
As warehouses continue adopting automation, integrating technology while still providing simplified storage and handling solutions becomes an increasing challenge. With automated storage and retrieval systems (AS/RS) becoming more prevalent in automated warehouses, vertical lift modules (VLM) are incorporated as strategic implements that address specialized storage needs. Although still in its nascent stages of popularity, VLMs are gathering momentum as AS/RS applications that increase throughput, reduce labor costs and optimize warehouse floor space. Needless to say, the growing presence of VLMs has

not gone unnoticed. In its March 2011 issue, Modern Material Handling magazine provided insight into the impact of AS/RS in automated warehouses. Out of the 19 featured companies that currently develop AS/RS applications, Interlake Mecalux stood out as being one of the few to manufacture the five types of AS/RS modules — including VLMs — available in the market. Among the AS/RS modules produced by the Mecalux Group, the Clasimat vertical lift module is climbing to the top as the eminent member of the VLM family.

To comprehend how the Clasimat can become a major asset to any warehouse, a look into what constitutes its internal structure is necessary. The Clasimat is made up of two multi-level sections of racking on opposite sides of a movable lift unit that travels vertically on a middle column. This lift unit acts as a shuttle system that picks and moves trays located on the racks. The shuttle system is operated employing EasyWMS software to locate and retrieve stock items. Using the software, the Clasimat operator locates a desired item from the level on which the tray is located and commands the module to lower it for picking.



The Benefits of Clasimat



Clasimat not only reduces pick times by allowing the user to remain stationary, but it also dramatically increases floor space (illustrated above).

Vertical Relief. The Clasimat takes full advantage of a warehouse's vertical space, freeing up valuable floor area.

Communication at All Levels. As further testament to the versatility EasyWMS demonstrates, the warehouse management software enables the Clasimat to operate on diverse levels of management complexity regardless of software or technological platform. On a basic level, the Clasimat operates independently as a singular warehouse; on a complex level, when several Clasimat units are functioning together, or a Clasimat unit is functioning with other automated warehouses, the EasyWMS integrates them into a network connection with external database servers. By maintaining constant communication with HOST and ERP systems, which house the databases, EasyWMS allows Clasimat units to import and export data more readily.

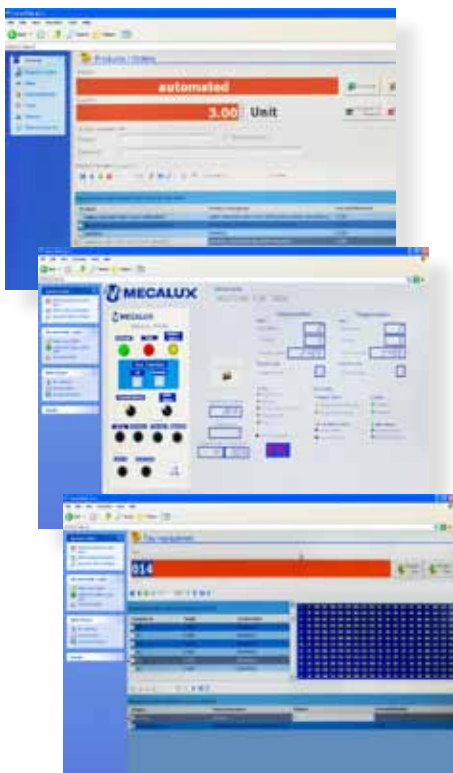
Higher Placement, Lower Cost. By strategically placing a stock item on a higher level, the controlled environment in which it is stored is more self-sustained, minimizing the cost of heating and cooling of the storage environment. Furthermore, since stock items are enclosed in the Clasimat, their risk of damage or tampering is lowered.

EasyWMS + Clasimat = Reduction of personnel footprint. Applying EasyWMS, a user can access order preparations, inventory control, item entrance and exit, and picking assignments at the ergonomic control panel. This, in turn, reduces personnel since all logistics operations can be executed by a single person.

Safety First. As is true for all AS/RS, the level of safety for operating personnel is maximized. Optical security barriers have been installed in the Clasimat to provide a safe distance for machine operators. The Clasimat is also equipped with position sensors, ensuring that the shuttle tray system moves at a reasonable speed during picking operations. Increased security is provided by having operations carried out behind an outer door that opens upon completion. The operator also has access to an emergency stop button.

Clasimat operates independently as a singular warehouse.

“Adopting 'more for less' solutions has become a driving concept for customers in the wake of automated warehouses.”



Upon reaching the picking area, the tray is pushed out to the operator. The sum of the Clasimat's functions provides advantages at all levels:

Adopting “more for less” solutions has become a driving concept for customers in the wake of automated warehouses. The Mecalux Group has adopted a mindset of continuous improvement, built on the foundation that the simplified processes contribute to increased efficiency and productivity. This entails curtailing human production functions in favor of automation with the intent of eliminating redundancy or any detrimental element that would hinder productivity. By relegating human contribution to a supervisory role, intelligent automation focuses on enhancing and aiding human productivity. In this sense, automated applications have been endowed with a “human touch”: the technological capability to optimize tasks and workflow, and recognize abnormal work functions that require human attention. This can be seen in the combination of EasyWMS and Clasimat VLM. The integration of EasyWMS into the Clasimat VLM facilitates

an all-encompassing communication to expedite multi-level warehouse management procedures.

Ultimately, the Mecalux Group not only seeks to excel as the leading manufacturer of AS/RS applications, but to establish itself as a one-stop shop for storage solutions. Understanding the needs of a customer is tantamount to constantly providing tangible solutions by innovate means. The truth of the matter is that the company that doesn't innovate stagnates. The integration of cutting edge technology establishes the Mecalux Group as a centralized service company. By offering a wide array of AS/RS modules supplemented by highly compatible automated management software, in addition to continuing to push its universal line of racking, customers are delivered readily available holistic warehouse solutions. At a time when reducing waste and saving capital is a critical element to maintain a sound business practice, Interlake Mecalux is pleased to help its customers save time looking for storage solutions. 