



Valve Manufacturer Uses VLMs to Eliminate Brick and Mortar Expansion

Features and Benefits

Improved Inventory Control

Increased Efficiency in Picking

Eliminated Need For Bricks and Mortar Expansion

Ergonomic Work Environment for Employees

Industry Group: Order Fulfillment Solutions (OFS)



A valve manufacturer was faced with the need to consolidate two facilities into one, including inventory used in operations. “Why don’t we take advantage of unused overhead space by shifting parts inventory for both existing and transferred manufacturing operations into the plant’s vertical cube at points-of-use on the shop floor? That was the question we asked ourselves,” said the Project Team Leader. The company’s solution was to install 19 Vertical Lift Modules (VLMs) to serve assembly operations on the shop floor.

Improved Inventory Control and Increased Efficiency in Picking

Lack of space was not the only issue that the consolidation of facilities would bring this valve manufacturer. “An analysis of inventory control operations in the existing warehouse indicated that there were areas we could improve on,” commented the Team Leader. The company utilized inventory management software integrated with the VLMs to improve inventory control. This allowed an employee to pick components individually by keying in a part number or pick in volume by keying in a bill-of-material (BOM). The VLMs automatically cycle from tray to tray as parts are retrieved. If parts are in multiple VLMs the employees can key in a single BOM and the software triggers all of the required VLMs to move. Storing parts at the point-of-use in VLMs made the picking process more efficient by eliminating searching for parts on

shelves.

Eliminated Need for Bricks and Mortar Expansion

When faced with plant consolidation the company initially considered an expansion of their warehouse. This would have meant considerable new construction costs. Instead the company chose to try point-of-use storage, installing two VLMs as a test. The VLMs took advantage of unused overhead space thus optimizing the use of critical floor space. The results were so successful the valve manufacturer went on to install 17 more VLMs as well as a vertical carousel. "The greatest savings of the automated, point-of-use VLMs has been the elimination of the need for a plant expansion to accommodate the transferred manufacturing operation."

Ergonomic Work Environment for Employees

As with any manufacturer the need to create an ergonomic work environment for employees is important. The Vertical Lift Modules are designed to deliver parts at waist height to eliminate bending, stretching, and reaching. This has not only improved employee productivity for the valve manufacturer but also reduced the chance for employees' injury. This has made the installation of VLMs the best solution for all areas of the plant consolidation.

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