



ASAP Automation Customer Success Story - Gardner, Inc.

Overview

Customer Profile

Gardner, Inc. is one of the largest parts distributors for the lawn and garden industry and is growing quickly through acquisition of new product lines and a rapidly expanding customer base.

- Over 80,000 SKUs
- Over 5 million line items processed annually

Benefits

- Reduced dock-to-stock average from 3-5 days to 24-48 hours
- Tighter inventory control management
- Streamlined receiving

Solution

- Exacta Warehouse Management System
- RF handheld devices
- Exacta Warehouse Control System - conveyor routing module



Gardner reduces dock-to-stock time by 50%

"We definitely picked up days from dock-to-stock. The turn time for most receipts is within 24-48 hours where before it was a 3-5 day average." Mark Lovett, Warehouse Manager

The Situation

Operations were performed using a paper-based system and relied on manual data entry after the fact to keep things accurate.

"From a receiving side of life, we were looking to streamline operational processes, get faster turn times, and get tighter inventory control management," said Lovett.

Gardner's primary objectives also included reducing operational costs and improving customer service.

"[Gardner] tried to put a WMS into the corporation in the early 2000s and that was not at all successful," said Lovett.

With a bad previous experience, Gardner wanted to be thorough and selective in choosing a provider. Gardner considered multiple warehouse management system (WMS) vendors and narrowed the search down to five contenders. After a lengthy evaluation process, Gardner ultimately selected the Exacta warehouse management system.

Gardner uses CODIS as their host system, so a key concern for the Gardner team was the ability to successfully integrate a WMS with CODIS. Having already created a successful interface to the CODIS system and experience working with the CODIS team, ASAP had a few advantages over the competition.

"I think I looked at probably 100 different systems. I narrowed it down to a top 5 and the ASAP system essentially stood out...it's extremely user friendly." Mark Lovett, Warehouse Manager

The Solution

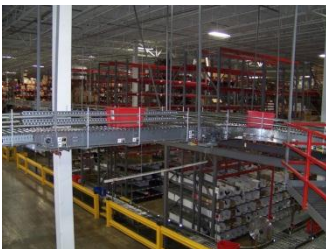
Gardner uses the Exacta warehouse management system to process inventory from receiving through packing. Expected receipts are imported from CODIS into the Exacta WMS prior to receipts being processed at the warehouse.

Exacta controls the movement of inbound product into storage and picking areas. Then RF handheld devices are used to move the product into totes, which are conveyed through the different picking zones and on to pack stations.

Exacta's Automated Order Routing module of the Exacta warehouse control system (WCS) interfaces with the existing PLC-controlled conveyor system to route orders through the picking zones and sorters. A final QC audit is performed using the pack

Exacta Warehouse Management System

The Exacta Warehouse Management System provides functionality to manage all operational aspects in distribution and returns centers. Exacta WMS efficiently manages and balances inbound and outbound material flows while providing operational visibility to all warehouse activities.



module before passing the shipping containers over to Gardner's manifesting system.

Inbound

Trucks of product arrive at the receiving dock and are unloaded. Receiving operators process the receipt using either a PC workstation or handheld RF devices. Items received are sorted into containers for each putaway zone. Once a container is full, a putaway operator scans the container with an RF device and is directed to a sequence of locations to put that container's contents away. Operators may also take a pallet of parts into a picking zone and put them away as they are received in a more fluid process. This process is also accomplished through an RF handheld device.

"Our inventory accuracy itself was basically at 99% the old way, but it was a challenge to keep it that way because everything was manual entries." Mark Lovett, Warehouse Manager

Upon completion of putaway of the product, the Exacta WMS provides an update to CODIS to confirm the receipt and location of inventory into storage in the warehouse.

Outbound

Orders for picking are imported from CODIS into the Exacta WMS. Picking operators use RF mobile handheld devices to scan the order number on the paper pick ticket printed out of CODIS and then scan a tote to associate the order to that tote ID. The operator is then directed to locations and told the item and quantity to pick for the order. Operators can choose to batch a group of orders to pick at the same time to increase picking efficiency.

For the initial phase of the project, Gardner wanted to continue releasing orders in the CODIS system to keep existing invoice paperwork. However, soon operations will move to a completely paperless system, allowing Exacta to release work to the floor as it is requested while balancing order priorities and available throughput.

All main picking zones are linked via a conveyor system that features multiple zone diverts. Exacta's Automated Order Routing module of the warehouse control system only sends totes into zones that require picks, minimizing the time they spend being conveyed through the system. Bulk and non-conveyable picks are processed on order pickers via RF handhelds once a tote has visited the necessary conveyor-fed zones.

To help speed the process of picking small, single item orders, the Exacta warehouse management system batches these up into a single tote so they can be picked faster and processed quicker at the pack stations. Faster-moving products are also slotted toward the end of the conveyor system, close to the pack area, to further reduce order processing time.

After a tote has passed through the picking area and has all picks completed, it is routed to the pack area. A paddle sorter sends totes to different pack stations and the Exacta WCS makes sure multiple totes for the same order are diverted to the same pack station.

As totes enter the pack module, operators scan each tote to get the pack list. Once the tote is scanned, the operator is shown all the items and quantities that should be in the tote. As the items from a tote are packed into the shipping container, the operator confirms the quantities. Pack operators are able to pack the order into as many shipping containers as needed.

Once all items are packed for an order, the operator places the shipping containers onto a takeaway conveyor to be processed in Gardner's manifest

About ASAP Automation

Software and Automation for Supply Chain Logistics

ASAP Automation provides supply chain software and automated material handling solutions. ASAP's systems help customers reduce operating expenses, accurately track and minimize inventory levels, and improve service to their customers.

For more information, please visit our website www.asapauto.com or call us at 800-808-0442.



application and then routed via conveyor to be sorted to outbound dock doors. Empty totes are conveyed overhead back to the picking areas to be reused for new outbound orders.

The Benefits

Picked up days in dock-to-stock

Average turn time for receiving is now 24-48 hours. Prior to installing the Exacta WMS, dock-to-stock time was on average 3-5 days.

Inventory control management

Inventory accuracy was 99% prior to the Exacta WMS, but it was a challenge to keep it at that level with so much manual entry. With Exacta, maintaining and even improving inventory accuracy is much easier.

Streamlined receiving process

With the new process and the faster dock-to-stock turn times, productivity in receiving has improved.

"[The ASAP team was] super responsive. All along it's been a great team to work with. We faced a bunch of different challenges because our system really wasn't built to get down to the level of a WMS. The ASAP team really helped us get information mapped with CODIS. It was a very hard challenge." Mark Lovett, Warehouse Manager

Advice On Selecting a Warehouse Management System

When asked if he had any advice for companies looking to install a warehouse management system, Mark Lovett said, "There are a ton of options out there and as you're walking through the options one of the best things that you can do is not only talk to the sales people, but the support person, as well as who will be working on your project. Also, before you get completely vested in the process, understand there is a lot of groundwork you need to cover before you go live."