

Is Your Warehouse Ready for Snacking?

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The convenience of mobile technology means consumers can order products whenever it's most convenient for them. The Wall Street Journal said the availability and speed of the modern supply chain allows customers to place small orders whenever it occurs to them. Instead of shopping online for multiple items, consumers will partake in a process called "snacking" - placing singular orders for particular products.

As businesses move their products to e-commerce channels, they have to be ready to meet the demands and preferences of online shoppers. A large percentage of future customers could partake in snacking, so it's important warehouse and inventory management is ready.

New order forms

Warehouse operations need to match the speed of consumers. If customers can place an order on the go, it would benefit inventory management employees to have the same capabilities. A move to online sales channels may be an opportunity to prioritize data collection solutions in a warehouse setting.

Most companies have done away with paper order forms in place of digital options, but if inventory employees still use a centralized computer terminal to access order details, the demand for smaller - and more frequent - orders could prompt investment in mobile data collections solutions. Finding an electronic form that works with touchscreen functionality provides a source of information employees can reference while moving about a space.

Mobile warehouse workers can send real-time confirmations every time they pick and prepare a singular order for delivery. This give supply chain logistics management leaders a chance to observe timely information about new warehouse strategy success.

New inventory layouts

Any time a business adds a new sales channel, it should consider what the new audience will expect and how existing operations may fall short. A company may consider segmenting a warehouse for different markets or reorganizing the whole space to respond to the primary needs of consumers.

When snacking becomes a popular trend with a consumer audience, businesses should study information from data collection systems to see what products customers buy one at a time. PracticalEcommerce suggested moving inventory with rapid turnover to more convenient locations, closer to the shipping dock.

Warehouse managers shouldn't forget about reach. Popular items shouldn't be kept on high shelves and when products are bought in singular orders, its important they're stacked for easy picking.

New picking plans

A lot of time can be wasted by employees walking back and forth picking one item and then returning minutes later. Inventory Operation Consulting LLC said there are a variety of picking strategies companies can deploy to shorten picking paths or otherwise increase productivity.

Organizing a warehouse by zone means a company can assign certain employees to particular regions and decrease their range of travel. Warehouse management decision-makers may want to implement major changes like

centralized conveyor belts or other automated equipment that can move singular orders to centralized locations.

If employees do have to travel, there are other ways to simplify their inventory tasks. Voice picking and other mobile data collection devices can provide workers with simple ways to report success, check orders and plan activities.

New delivery routes

At a certain time a truck or other vehicle will have to leave a warehouse with merchandise to deliver. If consumers are just snacking, businesses may fear they're sending out smaller orders and wasting gas or other distribution resources.

To avoid empty trucks, warehouses may have to extend their decision-making processes to include data provided by delivery drivers and other fulfillment partners. If a business has complete visibility of its supply chain through internal data collection solutions and proper outside communication, it will know when shifts in consumer markets are substantial enough to call for new ideas. Examples include launching additional distribution centers and different delivery routes.