Turning a Corner with Technology: Case Picking System More Efficiently Packs Pallets of Beer Cases

In 2011, Straub Distribution Company, one of the nation's top Anheuser Busch distributors, implemented a new case picking system in its facility in Anaheim, California. The system was designed to reduce labor cost in the warehouse and on the road. The system is a mix of both semi-automated and automated technology.

The Vertique system features storage towers which are hand loaded by Straub's case pickers. Before, case pickers had to actually move around the warehouse, locate appropriate cases, and then stack product on the pallet. Today, the sorting of products is done automatically in the system's "mixing center." Once released into the mixing center, products are merged and mixed into the proper order for the proper pallet to be placed on the proper truck. The mixing center is powered by an industry-leading VPS pallet building software. Products are placed on the pallet by the system's fully-automated high level palletizer. The palletizer utilizes robotics to form the layers of product and then places the layers on the pallet. The pallets are then stretch wrapped and loaded onto trucks. By only wrapping pallets that are stacked over 3 layers high, the company saves time and money in shrink wrap cost. Finally, all of these smaller pallets go onto side load trucks.

Before the installation of the Vertique system, only 30% of Straub's orders were "picked to order." Today, almost 100% of the company's orders are. Prior to the implementation of the Vertique system, loads were difficult to have ready-picked for drivers and overtime costs sky rocketed in the warehouse. With the installation of the Vertique system…overtime decreased from an average of 160 hours a week to less than 10. Saving money and time with a new automated system has been a big success for Straub.

<u>Source:</u>
"The Vertique System at Straub." *ITW Warehouse Automation Customer Testimonial*. ITW Warehouse Automation, n.d. Web. 11 June 2014.