

Körber Supply Chain

Delivering flexibility in an ever-moving market

WMS: Enhancing adaptability and integration



Introduction

When market opportunity arrives, you have to seize it. This is why a warehouse management system (WMS) is crucial. But not any “one-size-fits-all” WMS will do. To handle the demands of today’s ever-changing, multichannel environment, you need a solution with the flexibility to move with the market, move with your budget and move with your objectives.

Evolution of enterprise WMS

Warehouse management systems have come a long way in the last few decades. Starting in the late eighties and early nineties as template-based, customer-coded systems, they evolved into table- and parameter-driven systems, centered on common “best practices.”

In the early 2000s, companies like Körber took concepts originally developed to support mobile data collection and process dispatching for ERP systems, and created a more flexible enterprise WMS solution, grounded on exposed and adaptable business processes, rather than table- and parameter-driven “best practice-based” switches.

Enterprise WMS suite is a complete warehouse management software solution, bringing all elements of supply chain execution (WMS, YMS, LMS, slotting, etc.) into one user experience, on one data model, to give you full visibility and control of your operations. Rather than building the business around the software, this approach wraps the solution around the unique benefits of the business, making it fundamentally and philosophically different.



“Before I worked for Körber, I was a customer, and in our litany of supply chain systems (of which we had 52 of them) there were situations where we had gaps in our business processes and/or our visibility inside our supply chain. Of those 52 applications the only one I could count on to adapt and fill the white space in my supply chain was Körber’s technology stack.”

Jon Kuerschner

VP, Supply Chain Consulting, Körber

Diverse applications



Proven in the most complex and regulated industries around the world, an enterprise WMS offers a flexible solution for:

- Receiving, put-away/flow-through
- Wave planning
- Task management
- Replenishment and kitting
- Pick/pack, loading and shipping
- Visibility to people, process and inventory

The challenges

With the growing dominance of eCommerce and the demands on businesses to sell through different channels, supply chains have become increasingly complex and expensive to manage. Now, an omnichannel retail model is not only preferred, it is expected.

Meanwhile, companies still have to streamline processes, reduce overheads, cut expenses, resolve labor shortages, manage change and meet growth targets.

So, how can you cope with these challenges, while dealing with the ongoing pressures of fluctuating customer demand and regulatory change? This is where a flexible, process-driven enterprise WMS solution gives you the ability to redefine processes that are not adding value, helping to improve the overall efficiency of your business.

“Businesses have changed significantly over the course of the last 10 years ... the typical direct selling channels are still there, but organizations are selling on behalf of other organizations. It’s the concept of endless aisles, taking an order for some other company who is going to execute on your behalf. This is where complexity grows.”

Jon Kuerschner
VP, Supply Chain Consulting, Körber

The solutions

Seamless integration

In an omnichannel world, integration is essential. A sophisticated WMS should coordinate and process disparate and fragmented data streams, providing flexibility to communicate with a variety of solutions, across a wide range of protocols. It publishes and shares huge amounts of data in every scenario, whether it's receiving purchase orders or executing shipments.

A robust and integrated enterprise WMS can define the optimal solution to each interface challenge, based on a variety of flexible business rules. This means it can send the right payloads to the right endpoints, whether that's updating an ERP on receipt or notifying the eCommerce solution that a shipment is on its way to the end customer.

With its ability to adapt the integration layer with existing business systems, such as ERP and online eCommerce solutions, an enterprise WMS also significantly reduces the need to change current systems. It focuses effort on the new, while supporting the existing business.

Boundless adaptability

Every business is different, which means every supply chain solution should be tailored to the needs of the customer, and their customers. This is why an effective WMS should adapt to the business requirements, rather than adapting the business to the software.

If you introduce a solution that is identical to that of your competitors, you're in danger of diluting your differentiation in the market. A good WMS should work around your business and maintain the attributes that set you apart from the competition.

“Adaptability is king, because every integration is going to be slightly different. Even canned integrations are going to have additional fields that are specific to a customer and specific behaviors that are going to be keyed off of those fields, so adaptability is very, very important to actually getting that last 10–20% localized to the customer solution.”

Richard Stewart

SVP of Professional Services, Körber

Not only do you need a bespoke solution that conforms and adapts to industry standards and best practices, it must also be sensitive to the pitfalls in your processes. If your current system is functioning poorly due to bad business processes, a “one-size-fits-all” solution will only automate and replicate those issues.

An enterprise WMS is built on consultation. You iron out the issues before they happen, helping you deliver your objectives while creating opportunities to scale your business in future.

“I think the biggest drawback that we see in the marketplace is that sometimes customers wish to automate bad business practices. We consult our clients and adapt their processes to be efficient now and into the future as things change. With great adaptability comes great responsibility. You need to examine each of the requirements and determine if you should do it, not just if you can do it.”

Richard Stewart

SVP of Professional Services, Körber

Feeling the benefits of flexibility



An enterprise WMS gives you the flexibility to respond to change yourself, independent of a technology provider. It's also agile, helping you grow your business while reacting to new market demands.

Since it's not bound to your existing systems, any necessary changes can be made quickly and effortlessly, free from the need to modify source code. This significantly cuts the total cost of ownership when compared to traditional systems.

Benefits of enterprise WMS

At a glance

- Agile, scalable and future-proof
- Simple and intuitive configuration
- Integration with all major ERPs
- Deployable globally
- Zero source code modification
- Upgradable
- Reduced total cost of ownership
- Mobile-enabled execution

Adaptability in regulatory environments

Adaptability is more important than ever, especially when it comes to working in heavily regulated sectors.

Products with a high level of regulatory requirements often have specific compliance steps in their processes. Specific data elements need to be captured within these processes. With enterprise WMS adaptability tools, this can be actioned without making source code changes. These help you manage regulatory requirements, while avoiding source code changes that could invalidate a support contract with less process-driven solutions.

“We encourage our clients to make changes, and because they’re being made at a business logic layer, rather than a table and parameter layer level, our support infrastructure stays in place, and can successfully resolve issues regardless of whether we made the change or a customer made the change.”

Jon Kuerschner

VP, Supply Chain Consulting, Körber

Adaptability in action

A typical enterprise WMS implementation looks like this:

- **Define** – initial capture of the business requirements
- **Adapt** – an opportunity to create a differentiated, process-driven solution
- **Deploy** – the implementation, including any necessary customer training
- **Sustain** – a review phase to drive further improvements

Once it's applied, the customer is given full access to the adaptability and governance tools.

Example: Deckers

Despite the challenge of picking from multiple zones and using equipment to convey products for consolidation, the fashion retailer did not want to invest in additional automation hardware to pull the customer's order together for shipping.

Instead, they defined a unique process in their adaptable WMS to anchor the first item of an order to a consolidation location, color-coding the web page to match the process state (e.g., yellow for the first item anchored). As additional order components accumulate from different zones to the consolidation location(s), the color changes. Once the order is complete, the display turns green, indicating to the person responsible that the order is ready for packing, automating the entire system via simple queues: creative and effective without capital investment.

Conclusion

Before settling on an enterprise WMS, be sure that it can be adapted and integrated to fit your business needs, both now and in the future. If the system forces you in any way to standardize your value-added processes in order to meet specific goals, then think twice. In today's competitive landscape, it's more important than ever to preserve what makes your business unique.

“You can call it best practices, you can call it whatever you want, but the truth is that there is some uniqueness in each one of our customers, and the ability to quickly and uniquely adapt the solution to the practices that should stay in place, is what differentiates us in the market.”

Richard Stewart

SVP of Professional Services, Körber

For more information

With Körber's enterprise WMS you never have to compromise your unique proposition to upgrade your warehouse operations. Visit:

[koerber-supplychain.com](https://www.koerber-supplychain.com)

