

Körber Supply Chain

The journey to automation, one step at a time

How Layer Picker Solutions are the right starting point to automate your FMCG warehouses



Introduction

Warehouse automation is one of the most talked about topics in the world of supply chain logistics. From automated storage systems to material handling equipment and automated picking solutions, these technologies are often considered the most effective choices for improving warehouse efficiency.

However, because of its ever-growing nature and complexity, automation can feel overwhelming for logistics and warehouse managers. Half of supply chain

professionals find it hard to integrate new software and technology, with fewer than a third using fully automated processes for picking and shipping.¹ There are various routes that could be taken – many of them complex – but the benefits they bring to warehouse operations make it worth the journey.

Why automation?

No matter how big or small the project, automation is a significant investment that must be made with knowledge. It should respond to a warehouse's specific needs, which are often about achieving more efficiency, greater productivity, and seamless operations.

Worker turnover, for example, is one of the most common reasons why a warehouse may introduce automation. High turnover rates can

have many causes, including unsuitable low temperature for workers, pallets and stock relocation causing injuries, or complex and time-consuming training. Automation may solve some of these issues, reducing dependency on labor availability, and many others.



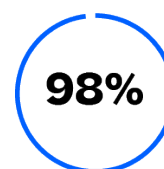
Introducing Layer Picker Solutions

When orders and volume are increasing, but there's a lack of workers to process it quickly and efficiently, a Layer Picker Solution can help. This form of automation strikes a balance between a measurable result and the investment. It's a scalable starting point – just the right size to allow for confidence building in the technology, step by step. And, as experience grows, so do returns. It delivers a solid return on investment (ROI), registering a pay-off in a relatively short time.

Layer picking without automation involves a large number of people. This means, for operations to be seamless, they must rely on a robust workforce. But that's not always possible. Layer Picker Solutions can support the management of complex operations, by:

- **Creating more floorspace**
Workers need space to pick stock and walk around the pallets. In turn, these must be easy to reach and move with human hands. When tasks such as picking from the pallets are given to a machine, there is no need for people to walk around the aisles, or for the pallets to be within reach. This frees up space for more stock.
- **Reducing errors and damages**
Manual labor is prone to error. Stock damages and processing mistakes can lead to significant cost increases. These are far less likely to occur if there's a machine sorting and moving pallets.
- **Speeding up processes**
The higher the volume of stock-keeping units (SKUs), the more complex and time consuming the picking process becomes. An automated machine reduces the need for as many people on the job, making many processes faster and more efficient.
- **Managing expenses**
Alongside its many benefits, automation on a large scale also adds a considerable expense to your processes. A smaller project can often be the best place to invest and see a quick return. It means knowing exactly where the money goes and when it'll come back. It's also easier to build upon a smaller solution, only investing further once confidence grows.

When approaching automation for the first time, the best thing to do is start small. Progress is happening fast in the automation industry. New and upgraded technology is regularly introduced into the market, and its complexity can vary substantially. But a smaller automation project means more time to understand it, before it is built upon. Focusing on one aspect of it, like Layer Picker Solutions, means knowing exactly what automation can do to help supply chain operations.



Food retail products picked

Getting businesses the support they need

For automation to be successful, the solutions must make sense from the very beginning. Whatever its size, any business can benefit from starting with smaller solutions that meet expectations and help move toward future automation projects.

There is no denying it can seem like a complicated, overwhelming process. But it doesn't have to be that way. Starting with a manageable expense and a quick ROI – such as Layer Picker Solutions in an FMCG warehouse – is often the best choice. We support businesses on this journey, and, ultimately, prepare them for what comes next.

This year, we've supported AG Logistics Services in the Netherlands through the automation of its new distribution center, by introducing a Layer Picker Solution.

“This solution fits perfectly with my desire to innovate our logistics processes. The main feature is its large capacity and adaptability: it allows us to pick product layers from large numbers of pallets simultaneously and to mix several orders together. This was a decisive factor for us, because it enables us to achieve the further growth we are aiming for, while maintaining the quality of our service.”

Arie Thomassen
Director, AG Logistics Services

Conclusion

At Körber, we give you the support you need to understand automation and the confidence to integrate it. Through a step-by-step approach, we include you in every part of the process. It starts from addressing the specific pain points and success criteria, as well as finding the right solution and agreeing on the business case.

We partner with you to tailor the journey towards warehouse automation. By analyzing the data of your production levels and existing processes, we get an understanding of what solution can best answer your needs. Using the insights from that data, we build a model to show you how the solutions would work, and the benefits they could bring.

With Layer Picker Solutions specifically, we make that the focus of the automation process. Instead of being part of a bigger and more complex system, layer picking is the main element upon which future automation can be built. As a partner, we help you gain trust and confidence, one step at a time, walking you to the future of warehouse automation.

Find out more
Learn more on how our Layer Picker Solutions could benefit your warehouse operations:

Read more →

References

1. Anon., Five insights: what supply chain complexity looks like in 2020, Körber

