



Five Steps to Successfully Implement Your WMS

Understand – Minimize – Develop – Test – Train
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Researching, selecting, implementing and supporting your Warehouse Management System (WMS) is no small task. With everything that is involved, it's easy to skip a step or make a wrong decision that will have you retracing your steps, wondering where the whole thing went wrong. Instead of second-guessing your decision later, take a look at these five ways to help your WMS implementation be a success:



STEP 1: UNDERSTAND YOUR REQUIREMENTS

Develop a detailed map of your current business processes. Process flow diagrams are an excellent tool for understanding operations. Make sure that the WMS can satisfy those business processes. You need to protect processes that are “tribal knowledge” and core competitive differentiators in your business. Be open to using existing WMS functions and features that satisfy your business process needs, even if the steps in your process have to change. Remember, it's the end results that matter: meeting customer service requirements, achieving productivity targets while maintaining high levels of inventory accuracy.



STEP 2: MINIMIZE SOFTWARE MODIFICATION

'No modifications' should be your mantra. Today's highly configurable WMS will suit most business requirements. Generally, the top tier WMS applications utilize about 60-70% of available functionality within a specific implementation. Actual functionality used across implementations will vary, but generally remains in the 60-70% of available range.

Be prepared to look at changes in your current steps in order to achieve your business goals using existing WMS functionality and avoid customizations or modifications.

Software modifications are significant contributors to failed projects due to software bugs, upgrade problems, and the negative effects on project schedules and costs.

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STEP 3: DEVELOP A DETAILED IMPLEMENTATION, STARTUP AND TRANSITION PLAN

Plan to succeed and follow your plan. An old philosopher said, “If you don’t know where you are going, any road will get you there.” This is especially true with WMS implementations. There are a large number of details that must be planned and managed. Multiple business organizations (Customer Service, Order Management, Information Technology, etc.) will be affected with the implementation and need to be included in planning. Spend the time up front to define a detailed plan, then manage your project through the plan, and don’t short change the time allotted to training.

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STEP 4: TEST YOUR CONFIGURATION

After determining which WMS features you will implement, you will spend a significant amount of time entering parameters and configuration data. Test your business processes using test scenarios. Testing should be both at the unit level and integrated system level. Verify that your training material is accurate. Resolve all configuration processes prior to system startup and transition. Starting up and testing with a small set of items or a piece of your business can be very helpful.

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STEP 5: TRAIN EFFECTIVELY

Spend the time to develop training material and then train your users. If you only do on-the-job training and do not have a formal training program, you’ll be sorry. People come

and go over time; this is another area where a formal repeatable training program pays off. Manage expectations at startup, as with any new system or process, it will not be fully operational immediately. Make provisions for extended ramp up of the system before achieving full performance.

These five steps are not designed to give you a 100% guarantee that your WMS implementation will be a success. They are to provide you with the methodology and the tools to help you define your WMS needs, evaluate and select the proper WMS for your needs, and facilitate the implementation process to make your WMS implementation experience successful.


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Why FORTE

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Single-Source Accountability

Whether we're helping you develop a strategic plan, design and build a distribution facility, or optimize a distribution operation through performance metrics and analytics, FORTE provides a true single point of contact responsible for the complete performance of your distribution network. No finger pointing. No fragmentation of responsibility. No multiple suppliers for technical support. You have performance goals, and it's our job to make sure they're met on an ongoing basis.




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Total Objectivity

We don't manufacture equipment. We don't develop WMS software. We don't have commercial arrangements with any suppliers for expected volumes of business. We're simply interested in delivering the most efficient distribution solutions at the lowest total cost. Our client-side service approach means our only allegiance is to our customers. So with every engagement, you know we'll choose the most appropriate level and blend of technologies integrated into an effective operational system.

Expertise

Our team is deeply rooted in the hands-on implementation of distribution center design and warehouse automation. FORTE's engineers and technicians integrate today's best practices in supply chain management and distribution center operations while developing next-generation technologies. As a result, our solutions employ the best combination of practical advice, data-driven analysis and technology-enabled systems. With FORTE, you get:

-  More accountability than a consultant
-  More experience than a systems integrator
-  More objectivity than a manufacturer

That's why the world's fastest-growing companies are making distribution their FORTE.

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