



PRESS INFORMATION

AAH CHOOSES LIVE CURE FOR EXPANSION HEADACHE

Pharmaceutical wholesale giant AAH is proof that there is a cure for every ailment.

Faced with a capacity headache brought about by increasing levels of business and customer service, the Weedon Distribution Centre has made investment to cater for current and future requirements.

“Our improvements have come through doing different things, not just doing the same things differently,” says Vince Hannawin, AAH Weedon branch manager.

Automation has been introduced to the warehouse, which has been on the site for many years, and major improvements have been made in efficiency and customer service capability by implementing a dynamic live storage installation from Bito Storage Systems.

“Stock used to go into pallet racking and order picking faces were replenished several times per day,” Mr Hannawin adds.

“At peak times, there could sometimes be too many people down the aisles, which hampered our work.”

Those peak times are crucial to a business which supplies retail pharmacies, hospitals and dispensing doctors across Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Northamptonshire, and even as far afield as Norwich. Guaranteeing same day delivery for orders placed before the cut off time, the main warehouse peak is 11am to 2pm, a three-hour window responsible for 50% of throughput.

A major innovation has been a move to Bito Carton Live Storage for the majority of lines. Stock that arrives at the warehouse is now placed directly into the live storage lanes and is immediately available to replenish the new automated A Frame picking system.

“Our Gospel is now that stock goes directly to its’ final resting place,” explains Mr Hannawin.

The result is better stock availability and vastly increased efficiency. “Warehouse staff need to make half the use of fork lifts and we now have the same stock, better placed, with less labour and less handling. In fact we’ve reduced the amount of times products are handled by over two thirds.”

Pallet racking is still used for bulk stock, but the amount has been reduced as the focus for storage has moved to the dynamic Bito live storage system. The new live storage itself provides gravity feed flow laned 3.2 and 5 metres deep, delivering around 2,500 picking locations in a relatively small space.

Picking of the most popular 65% of lines is fully automated, with A Frame picking machines feeding totes on a conveyor system.

Mr Hannawin comments: “Sixty five percent of the stock is in just twenty percent of the warehouse.”

Totes are check weighed and their bar code read automatically on the new conveyor system.

Slower moving lines are picked manually from Bito shelving. This provides space for a large product range, spread across over 4 kilometres of shelving.

Manual picking and replenishment is directed by wrist scanner, with bar code reading to check accuracy at every stage of the operation. As steps in the process have been reduced and wrist scanners introduced, training in warehouse operations are easier.

“We can train evening shift staff in minutes to operate straight away at full performance,” claims Mr Hannawin.

Completed order totes are also check weighed and discrepancies are examined manually. Correct order totes are automatically lidded and labelled in the despatch area.

Mr Hannawin is very complimentary about the live storage system, which is the focal point of increased storage efficiency.

“We have a much more effective operation and have taken unnecessary labour out. The Bito engineers were also spot on and the installation came in ahead of schedule.”

“The new operation increases our capacity and accuracy, especially in the crucial lunchtime peak,” states Hannawin.

“We now have the ability to deliver improved service to all our customers and the capability to expand and meet additional demand. That’s a win-win situation for everyone.”

Note to editors: BITO, based in Germany, market a comprehensive range of storage systems for use with anything from very small parts through to palletised and long loads throughout Europe, through a network of subsidiaries and distributors. Products are designed to FEM requirements and manufactured to ISO 9001 quality standards in 57,000 square metres of production facilities in Meisenheim. The full range includes pallet live storage systems, carton live storage systems, pallet racking, boltless shelving, plastic bins and containers, wide span and heavy load shelving, cantilever racking, and multi-tier shelving systems.

Photographs available:

An electronic colour separation form can be found at
www.marketingman.co.uk

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Highly efficient picking in a very short time window ensures market leading customer service for AAH Pharmaceuticals, Weedon, using Bito live storage.

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Goods arriving are placed straight into Bito's carton live storage at AAH Pharmaceuticals, Weedon. As a result the company have halved fork truck movements, increased efficiency and stock availability.

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