

Don't buy a new WMS until you've read this

You are dissatisfied with the performance of your long established WMS and would like to replace it. But In this current economic environment, capital is hard to come by and there is stiff competition for the limited capital available.

So have you thought about a different approach; working hard to get the best out of your existing WMS?

You should do, and here are some of the places you should start looking for that performance enhancement you so desperately need.

Business change

It may be ten years or more since you installed your WMS, think about the changes the business has experienced in that time. Has your use of the WMS kept pace with the changes in your business which may include:-

- New business added to existing facilities
- Warehouse extensions
- Network changes
- New sales channels
- More outlets to service
- New processes
- Customer demographics
- Reduced order cycles

Hardware

Look at the massive leaps in technology over the last ten years. Has your hardware kept pace with that? Would you (could you!) buy the same hardware now to use in your warehouse? Think about what new hardware could do to enhance your performance for example:-

- Printers
- Hand held /fixed terminals
- Voice technology
- Touch screens
- Smart systems (eg Kiva)

Your WMS

Which version of software are you using, is it up to date? Does it support your business as it is now? You could do worse than ask your WMS vendor to show

you what the latest version of their system can do. It will probably have been enhanced to include:-

- E fulfilment
- E commerce
- Far East supply
- Inventory growth
- Reverse logistics
- Parcel carriers

People

You probably trained your users thoroughly at go live but how much time have you invested in keeping that training up to date? Your users will only know what they know and will only use the bits of the WMS they are familiar with. You may be failing to use the full potential of what you've got simply because your people don't know how to use it properly.

- Staff turnover may mean that less than a quarter of your users were working for you at go live are still with you
- Job roles change, has your training kept pace
- Processes change, are you matching WMS functionality to the new processes
- Have you checked to see if all the functionality you asked for at the beginning is actually being used
- Is some of the functionality now obsolete – are people doing things that are covered elsewhere
- Who trains the trainers; are you satisfied that your super users are as super as they should be
- You may have changed shift patterns, introduced a small twilight shift perhaps. Are you satisfied they know how to use the WMS
- Can your WMS integrate effectively with any other business units to add greater value?