Berkshire Grey Breaks Down Automated Warehousing Solutions

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Berkshire Grey is providing context on automated warehousing solutions as retailers, distributors, and fulfillment operations continue to evaluate ways to improve the movement of goods within warehouses and distribution centers. Growing order volumes, changing labor requirements, expanding product assortments, and tighter fulfillment schedules have placed greater attention on technologies that can reduce repetitive handling while keeping products moving through receiving, storage, picking, sorting, packing, and outbound workflows.

Warehouse automation encompasses a broad range of equipment and software rather than a single system type. Common applications include robotic picking, sortation, conveyors, automated storage equipment, scanning systems, material-handling technology, and software for coordinating tasks. Different facilities may use only a few automated functions, while larger operations may connect several technologies across multiple areas of a building.

One of the main reasons for adopting warehouse automation is the amount of repetitive physical work involved in fulfillment. Traditional warehouse processes can require employees to walk long distances, move containers, pick individual products, sort items into destinations, and transfer goods between workstations. Those activities can consume substantial time, particularly in facilities that handle thousands of stock-keeping units or a large number of daily orders.

Picking is often one of the most labor-intensive parts of warehouse operations. Automated picking systems can handle certain repetitive item movements, allowing employees to spend more time on exceptions, quality checks, replenishment, and tasks requiring judgment. Product size, shape, packaging, weight, and presentation can affect whether a particular item is suitable for robotic handling, making product mix an important consideration during system planning.

Sortation is another area where automation can influence warehouse performance. Products may need to be directed toward store locations, customer orders, shipping lanes, packing stations, or other destinations.

Manual sortation can become difficult to scale as volumes increase. Automated sortation equipment can help route merchandise through defined paths while reducing repeated handling between processing stages.

The role of software has also become increasingly important. Physical automation depends on information about orders, inventory, destinations, priorities, and equipment status. Warehouse management systems and related software platforms can provide instructions that help automated equipment complete tasks in the correct sequence. Integration between physical equipment and existing operational systems is, therefore, a major part of planning an automated facility.

In the middle of that discussion, automated warehousing solutions are often evaluated based on practical operational problems rather than on technology alone. A facility experiencing picking delays may require a different approach from a building struggling with parcel sortation or store replenishment. Identifying the specific point at which products slow down can help determine whether automation is appropriate and which type of equipment may provide the most useful support.

Labor conditions also influence automation decisions. Warehouses frequently experience seasonal hiring pressure, turnover, and difficulty staffing repetitive roles during peak periods. Automation can reduce reliance on manual work for certain tasks, although human involvement remains important in maintenance, supervision, exception handling, inventory control, problem-solving, and many other responsibilities.

Space is another factor. Adding more workers or equipment does not always solve a throughput problem when aisles, staging areas, or workstations are already crowded. Certain automation systems can help make better use of available floor space by organizing product movement more efficiently. Space planning remains closely connected to throughput because additional handling areas can create congestion if product flow is not considered carefully.

Warehouse automation can also affect consistency. Manual processes naturally vary based on staffing levels, experience, fatigue, and changing workloads. Automated processes generally follow defined operating rules, making recurring tasks more predictable. Greater consistency can help managers understand capacity, identify bottlenecks, and plan around expected processing levels during normal and high-volume periods.

Accuracy remains equally important. Fast processing has limited value when products are directed to the wrong destination or orders require correction. Scanning, identification, software checks, and controlled routing can help support accuracy across automated workflows. System design still requires attention to exception cases, damaged packaging, unreadable labels, unusual products, and other conditions that may fall outside standard processes.

Retail fulfillment adds another layer of complexity because distribution centers may support multiple channels

at once. A single facility can handle ecommerce orders, store replenishment, wholesale shipments, returns, and parcel processing. Shared labor and equipment can become strained when several channels experience higher-than-usual volume simultaneously. Automation can help create more predictable capacity across recurring tasks without removing the need for careful operational planning.

Implementation generally requires more than installing equipment. Facility layout, product characteristics, workflow design, software integration, employee training, maintenance procedures, safety requirements, and expected volume all influence performance. Successful automation projects usually begin with a clear understanding of current processes and measurable operating constraints.

Scalability is another consideration. Retailers and distribution operations may experience significant changes in volume due to seasonal demand, promotions, business growth, or shifting order patterns. Automation designed around current requirements should also be evaluated for future capacity needs. Modular approaches can allow additional capability to be introduced without redesigning an entire facility at once.

Data generated by automated equipment can provide added operational visibility. Processing rates, equipment utilization, exception frequency, downtime, and routing activity can help managers understand how work moves through a facility. Reliable operational data can support decisions about staffing, maintenance, process changes, and future investments.

Automated warehouses are unlikely to eliminate the need for human workers or operational judgment, according to Berkshire Grey. Instead, many facilities are using automation to handle repetitive, high-volume tasks while employees focus on exceptions and responsibilities that require flexibility.

As fulfillment networks become more complex, the practical question is becoming less about whether automation has a role and more about where automation can address clearly defined operational constraints without adding unnecessary complexity.

About Berkshire Grey:

Berkshire Grey, a SoftBank Group wholly owned subsidiary, is an AI-driven robotics warehouse automation that transforms warehouse and fulfillment operations for parcels and logistics providers, 3PLs, retailers, and e-commerce customers. The company provides end-to-end automation solutions at scale across critical, high-volume workflows, from picking and sortation through dock automation.

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