

How InfoPlus Warehouse Management Software Streamlines Exactly What's Slowing You Down

10 Critical Problems You Need to Solve Before Reaching Peak Efficiency

If you are concerned about chronic warehouse inefficiencies that are driving up costs, lowering customer service, burning out workers, and holding your business back rather than driving it forward -- then be assured that you are not the exception or an outlier.

Indeed, despite the fact that shipping is the number one cost related to fulfilment, and that in most multichannel businesses, inventory is the largest balance sheet asset, researchers at the University of Georgia [\[.pdf\]](#) nevertheless found that a staggering 70% of warehouses across the country operate inefficiently. Further, when the focus shifts away from large enterprises to small and mid-size businesses, the proportion of inefficient warehouse operations surges even higher.

What is behind this epidemic of inefficiency? Typically, it is because many businesses that cannot afford massive enterprise-grade warehouse management systems (WMS) -- which is virtually all small and mid-sized companies -- are forced to use less-than-optimal tools, such as spreadsheets, manual forms, standalone shipping systems, and an ad hoc mix of home-grown software solutions.

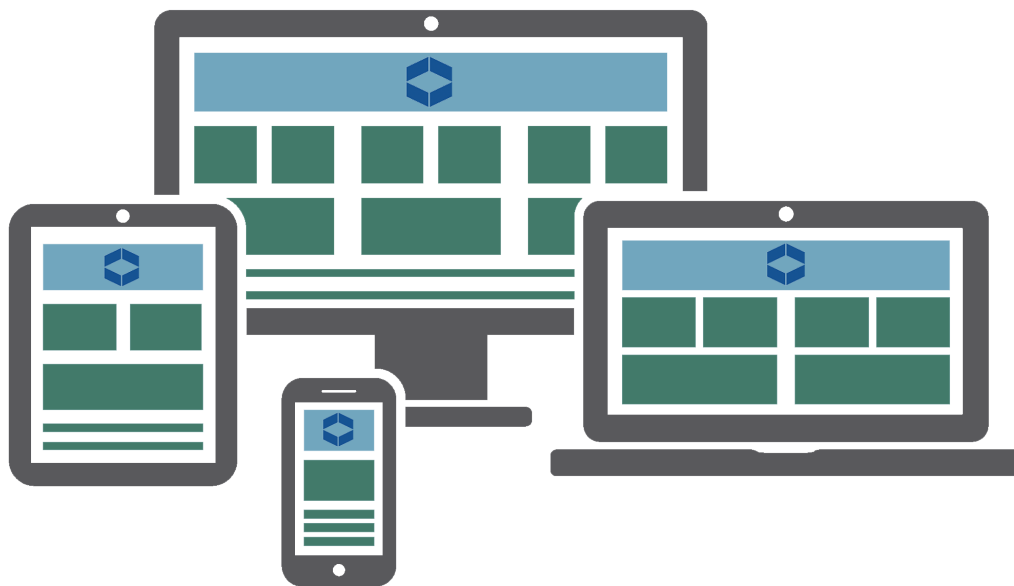


82% of customers will terminate a relationship with a business after a single negative experience

At best, these tools are short-term workarounds that might be suitable in a pinch. Much like a spare tire to temporarily replace a flat one, they are neither a substitute nor an alternative for a robust and integrated warehouse management solution. This is especially true on today's business landscape, where rapid shipping, real-time tracking, online return management and other advanced fulfilment-related features have become basic customer expectations. Small and mid-sized businesses do not get a free pass because of their size or scope. As noted by the [Customer Experience Impact Report](#), 82% of customers will terminate a relationship with a business after a single negative experience.

What's more, many small and mid-sized businesses that implemented a WMS a few years ago have outgrown it, and are past the point of just needing to “put labels on boxes”. After all, as [Inbound Logistics](#) points out, warehouse operations is a complex and multifaceted function that is linked to worker engagement, productivity and safety, customer satisfaction, customer retention and repeat business. A limited and restricted WMS will not just drive up costs and unleash inefficiencies; it will impede growth and, in the long-term, threaten competitive advantage, profitability and organizational survival.

Fortunately, there is a smarter, safer and more strategic solution that ideally blends power and performance, with affordability and flexibility: the InfoPlus' Warehouse Management System.



In this eBook, we highlight 10 costly warehouse operation challenges that your business might be struggling with now or that your business may experience in near future as you scale, grow and adjust in a competitive marketplace. Further, we'll explain how the InfoPlus WMS effectively and efficiently solves them.

Problem #1: Inefficient Order Picking Due to Similar-Looking SKUs

Inefficient order picking occurs for many reasons, but among the most common is due to similar-looking SKUs. In a busy warehouse environment, it is infeasible to expect workers to visibly inspect and pick inventory with a consistent degree of accuracy. While well-labeled bins and shelves can somewhat mitigate this problem, it cannot solve it. As such, if you have similar-looking SKUs in your environment, the valid question is not “why are we struggling with inefficient order picking?”, but rather “without the right WMS, how can we demand and expect truly efficient order picking in the first place?”

The InfoPlus WMS Solution: Equip Workers with a Modern Barcode Reader

The InfoPlus Warehouse Management Solution integrates with a low-cost, advanced barcode reader system that can leverage existing devices in your ecosystem (e.g. smart-phones, tablets, specialty devices, etc.). With virtually no learning curve or ramp-up, your workers will be able to instantly, consistently and accurately distinguish SKUs, regardless of how similar they may look. After all, barcode reader technology does not rely on “best guesses” made at a glance – and neither should your workers!



By using iOS and Android mobile devices on the floor, the InfoPlus mobile app can:

- Look up orders, items and locations
- Scan work tickets and item barcodes
- Find orders
- Move inventory
- Change status

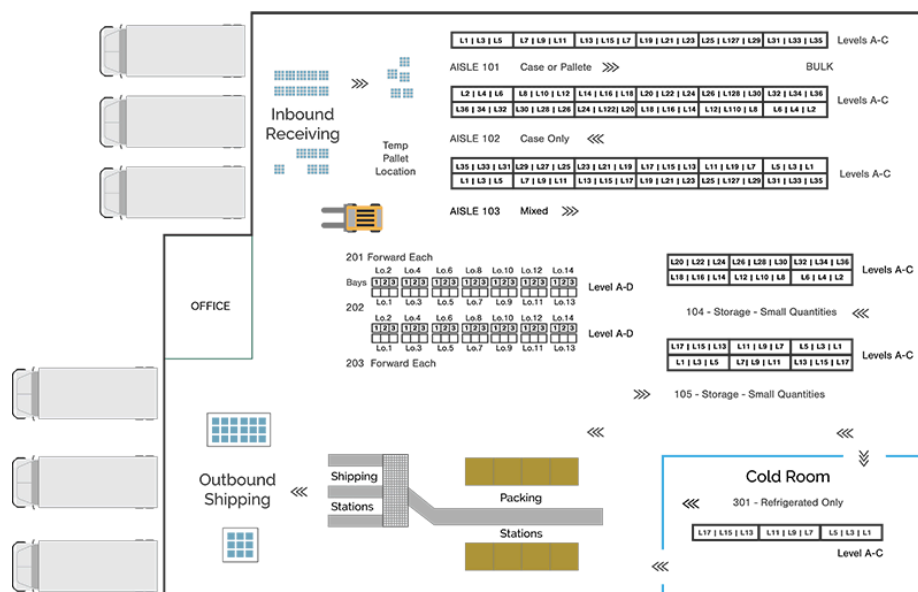
Problem #2: Inefficient Return Handling

Returns – a.k.a. “dead stock” – are unavoidable, and result from recalls, expired products, customer unhappiness, the annual crush of post-holiday returns, and the list goes on. However, if your warehouse lacks an optimal and clearly-defined section for returns, then these items will get lost or mixed in with other products. Or at the very least, they will take up valuable warehouse space that should be used for other purposes, such as forward staging (which we will explore further in this ebook).

The InfoPlus WMS Solution: Optimize Your Warehouse Layout

The InfoPlus Warehouse Management Solution analyzes your current and anticipated inventory levels, and crunches the data to suggest optimized layouts. The end result is that your inventory – including but not limited to returns – are stored in an optimal arrangement, racking systems are aligned to anticipated products, pallets are stored efficiently, and so on.

What’s more, if your current and/or anticipated inventory levels change – either as part of a significant one-time event (e.g. product recall) or a long-term shift (e.g. new product launch), you can clearly and objectively determine if revising your layout would make sense in terms of efficiency, productivity, and the bottom-line.



Problem #3: Ineffective Pick Paths

If you deal with in-demand, high-velocity SKUs that are constantly moving – either on an ongoing basis, or due to seasonal spikes -- then there is a good chance that without forward staging, your pick paths are inefficient at best, and an outright impediment at worst. Either way, it is a costly problem that must be solved in order to drive efficiency, optimize operations and support both fulfilment and customer service standards.

The InfoPlus WMS Solution: Identify and Apply Forward Staging

The InfoPlus Warehouse Management Solution highlights your optimal pick paths, so that you can manage storage efficiency and forward staging. Indeed, sending workers on the most efficient routes for popular or high-volume items is not just a massive time saver, but it also improves accuracy. Furthermore, the InfoPlus WMS constantly updates and analyzes data to help you make optimal layout decisions as your needs and strategies change.



Optimize your layout for pick paths by:

- Storing items Items that are often purchased together near each other
- Fulfill orders by picking all items in one area before moving on
- Create a linear picking order where warehouse employees complete their picking run at a location close to the final shipping area.

Problem #4: Inability to Predict Variations in Demand

Carrying inventory involves a set of demands that compete for resources and priority, including: changing customer expectations, marketplace shifts, compliance issues, and rising costs. Yet despite this complex situation, your business cannot afford to be caught off guard when demand surges; just as it cannot afford to have a glut of inventory taking up valuable space when demand flattens. Knowing when demand will spike, when it will slow, and what items are most likely to be impacted is essential for efficient, sustainable and profitable operations.

The InfoPlus WMS Solution: Track and Report in Real-Time

The InfoPlus Warehouse Management Solution enables you to predict and manage demand variations (including seasonal) by:

- Establishing and enforcing strict lot controls, such as those required by a FIFO approach.
- Accessing a real-time view of stock levels and movements.
- Generating customized reports that can be pushed to multiple platforms, so the correct managers or workers are notified when there is a problem, change or issue.
- Getting recommendations for appropriate packing, which means less cost and fewer orders that are damaged or spoiled.
- Auto-routing orders that meet customer expectations and product requirements in light of business rules and constraints, such as promised delivery date, carrier time in transit rules, transit exceptions, cost, and so on.

Ultimately, your business can use these insights and integrated features to remain efficient and profitable as demand fluctuates; either by design or unexpectedly.



Problem #5:

Packing and Shipping Triggering Excessive Time Loss

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The InfoPlus WMS Solution:

Integrate Your Shipping and Ordering Systems

The InfoPlus Warehouse Management System seamlessly integrates your inventory management system with your shipping and ordering systems, such as Magento, Shopify, Woo Commerce, FoxyCart, and many others. It also uses custom connections, such as SOAP and JSON APIs. As a result, you can automatically generate correct labels and cross check package contents to eliminate time loss, reduce errors, and improve customer experience.



Problem #6: Inaccurate or Unreliable Accounting Data

You need accurate accounting data to run an efficient warehouse. However, this accuracy is impossible to achieve if you are manually updating your accounting system with data from your sales and inventory systems. Not only is this process excessively time consuming, but it is rife with human error.

In the same light, exporting data through a common format (e.g. Excel spreadsheet) and manually importing it to your accounting system is not an effective alternative. Errors can easily creep into the process if the exported file is not properly setup, and workflow bottlenecks are inevitable as data waits to be loaded.

Before leaving the problem-side of the equation, the fairly common process of running an FTP on schedule is not an optimal solution. Yes, this does typically eliminate some of the human error of manual input methods. However, the process does not yield anything close to real-time data, which means that decisions cannot be made using the best, most accurate information possible.

The InfoPlus WMS Solution: Integrate Your Accounting System

The InfoPlus Warehouse Management Solution seamlessly integrates with your accounting system (e.g. QuickBooks, Xero, General GL Systems, and many others). This eliminates human involvement – and hence potential human error – in the data syncing and updating process, while it also measurably improves efficiency and eliminates bottlenecks. The end result is that your warehouse managers and other executives can:

- Get reliable inventory reports for various stakeholder groups (e.g. executives, purchasing, HR, etc.), based on accurate, complete up-to-the-moment data.
- Calculate the true costs of goods, which as you know is far greater than what you pay for them on the invoice.
- Automate (with appropriate checks) specific functions, such as generating purchase orders when inventory items reach a minimum threshold (note: this can result in dramatic efficiency improvements if you utilize forward staging, as discussed above).
- Get a more accurate picture of your tax liability and the performance of your vendors thanks to automatically-generated audit trails.



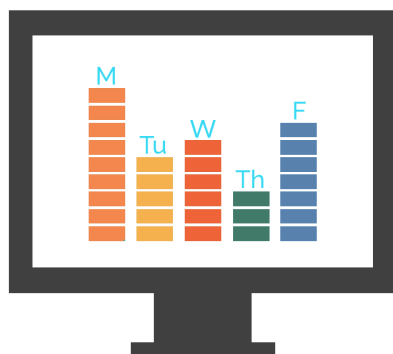
At the same time -- and just as importantly -- the InfoPlus WMS does not force your accounting team to make an uncomfortable (or unacceptable) trade-off between efficiency and autonomy. On the contrary, they will substantially increase their overall cost management capability, and be empowered to make faster and smarter decisions. Instead of less control, they will have far more.

Problem #7: Excessive Labor Costs

Labor is a major cost category in warehouse operations. As such, attempting to reduce costs by extending operational hours is not the answer. Instead of enhancing profit margins, you will shrink or possibly eliminate them. At the same time, indiscriminately cutting hours or reducing staffing levels is not strategic. Yes, overall labor costs will fall accordingly. But so will productivity and customer experience; both of which will adversely impact the bottom-line.

The InfoPlus WMS Solution: Analyze Data to Efficiently Allocate Labor

The InfoPlus Warehouse Management Solution comprehensively analyzes your specific data sets -- including staffing rosters, activity levels, current and predicted demand variations, and other variables -- to help you efficiently allocate labor. For example, you will know ahead of time when it makes sense to ramp up available workers or recruit additional staff, as well as how to find new efficiencies during slower times. Since the actionable insights are generated in real-time, you are assured that all recommendations are based on what is happening now and will happen in the future; not on what may have worked in the past, yet might no longer be applicable.



In the fulfillment business,
orders fluctuate.

Your warehouse can handle
heavy demand & slow days
with the predictive InfoPlus
labor allocation.



Problem #8: Inefficient Receiving

Good fulfillment starts with great receiving. However, manually entering information for received goods invariably leads to discrepancies, and forces your workers to cross-reference data – which wastes a great deal of time, and triggers order picking delays. What's more, it is likely that returned and inbound items are getting mixed up, which not only forces workers to hunt down products and confirm that they were actually returned, but it leads to order errors (i.e. a returned item is accidentally picked and shipped instead of new one).

The InfoPlus WMS Solution: Use Technology to Optimize Receiving

Just as your labor and shipping can be optimized to cut costs, the InfoPlus Warehouse Management Solution uses advanced technology to optimize your receiving function, and create more efficiencies in downstream operations. Your decision-makers will have the actionable business intelligence required to anticipate shipments, ensure inbound order accuracy, perform the right quality control steps, and both identify and implement the most efficient storage options possible.



Starting receiving off correctly can set the tone for the rest of your fulfillment process.

InfoPlus can help you optimize receiving and create more efficiencies for downstream operations.

Problem #9: Warehouse Managers are Constantly “Putting Out Fires”

There are times when unforeseen events, such as natural disasters or emergencies, put a temporary dent in warehouse operation uptime. However, if your managers are constantly “putting out fires” then this dent is not temporary; it is systemic, and must be addressed -- and not just to improve efficiency. You risk burning your managers out and forcing them to resign or take extended sick leave; which can cost tens or hundreds of thousands of dollars per year. As noted by [Forbes](#): “The cost of turnover can equal anywhere from one month’s to several years’ salary for a departing employee. The more complex the job and the higher level of the job, the greater the cost.”

The InfoPlus WMS Solution: Improve Training and Enable Automation

The InfoPlus Warehouse Management Solution allows you to implement a more robust training program and implement customizable automations to handle (among other functions) manual updates and tasks. As a result, your managers will no longer be bogged down, held back and stressed out by an ongoing stream of everyday – and avoidable – problems related to order errors, misplaced inventory and certain labor issues. They will have more time to focus on key priorities, and engage in strategic priorities and activities needed to grow your business.



A warehouse automation project, if properly handled, can boost operations efficiency and drive a company toward increased profitability.

Let managers focus on strategy instead of manual updates and tasks.

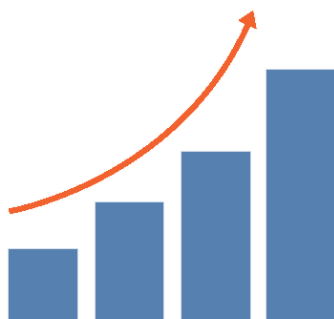
Problem #10: Lack of Team Buy-In and Tool Adoption

Your warehouse team must know and feel that they are part of the effort to improve efficiency and optimize operations. However, this cannot be achieved if your current mix of tools or software is difficult to understand and use. Instead of fostering adoption and usage, your teams will find ways – and have likely done so already – to minimize their reliance on your technology; not because they are trying to undermine efficiency, but because the system is working against them, rather than for them.

The InfoPlus WMS Solution: Engage and Empower Workers

The InfoPlus Warehouse Management Solution has been specifically designed with an intuitive, user-friendly interface, and the cloud-based architecture supports desktops, laptop and mobile devices (e.g. tablets, smartphones). As such, workers can access the solution on whatever device they are most comfortable with.

At the same time, the InfoPlus WMS drives engagement by simplifying and speeding-up initial and ongoing training; the latter of which is emerging as a key priority and asset. As highlighted by [ReliablePlant.com](https://reliableplant.com): “As job descriptions change over time, each employee should be provided further training to meet the new demands of their respective roles. Training should ultimately equip employees to successfully fulfill their duties without the need for being micromanaged. Employees work at their best when they are equipped and empowered to be responsible and make wise decisions.”



When your team is
educated and empowered,
they will work with you on
achieving goals.

By having a system that
employees love, you're
showing that you're working
for them, not against them.

The InfoPlus Advantage

Without the excessive – and in many cases, prohibitive – capital expense (CapEx) obligations of enterprise-targeted systems, the cloud-based InfoPlus Warehouse Management Solution helps your business affordably and effectively:

- Equip Workers with a Modern Barcode Reader
- Optimize Your Warehouse Layout
- Identify and Apply Forward Staging
- Track and Report in Real-Time
- Seamless Integrate Your Shipping and Ordering Systems
- Integrate Your Accounting System
- Analyze Data to Efficiently Allocate Labor
- Use Technology to Optimize Receiving
- Improve Training and Enable Automation
- Engage and Empower Workers

The end result is that you will find and sustain new efficiencies, reduce operating costs, improve performance and customer experience, and drive your business forward on an increasingly customer-centric and competitive landscape.

Sign Up for a Free Trial

To learn more, [sign-up for your free InfoPlus trial now](#). It is the ideal way to explore whether our solution is the best fit for your warehouse optimization and improvement goals.

There is absolutely no obligation, and no credit card is required.





Infoplus solves real business challenges so companies can better manage their growth. Born from a love of technology and deep experience with the fulfillment world, Infoplus prides itself on software that is affordable, scalable, and secure.

For more information, visit <http://www.infopluscommerce.com/>