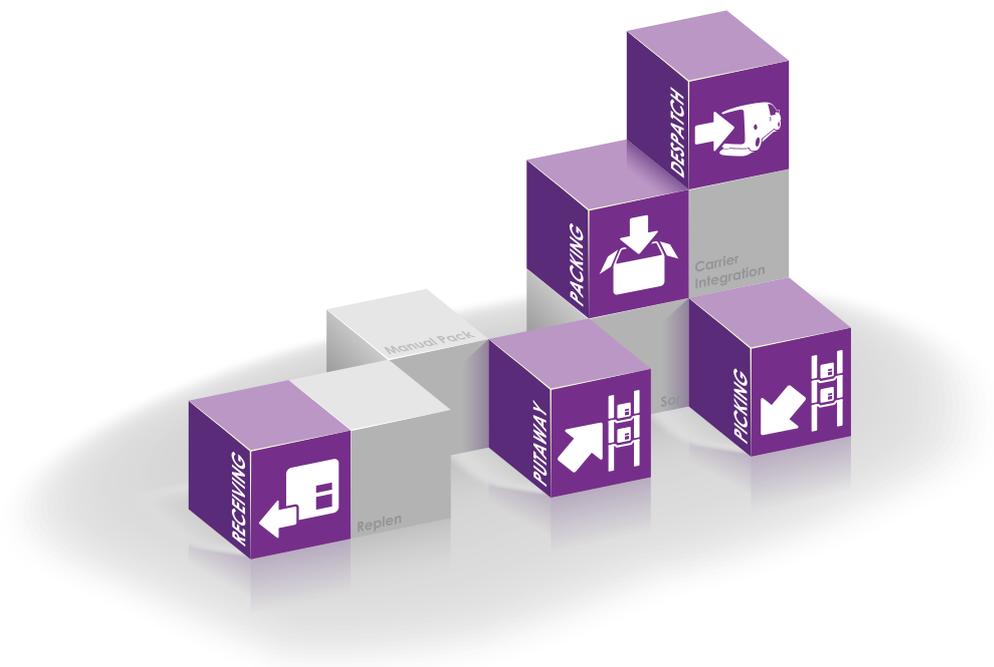# imio
software solutions

Planning for Peak

It's nothing new in the retail calendar, affects all retailers whatever their size and generates a considerable amount of analysis and debate.

Planning for peak begins early in order to manage the pressure on order, fulfilment and delivery operations. This has intensified with the Black Friday peak just before the main Christmas peak. In 2015 Black Friday set several records with Amazon selling over 7.4m items and shoppers spending £3.3 billion from Black Friday through to Cyber Monday.

Online shoppers want convenience matched with the certainty of receiving the product when it is promised, and they also expect an effective returns process. Failure on any one of these impacts reputation and customer loyalty.

So what are the options to improve the warehouse's ability to cope in peak times? It often comes down to employing more people at peak times versus the cost of automating parts of the operation.

People

Taking on extra staff to help meet peak requirements can keep customers happy however there is also the impact of

- Higher labour costs
- The time invested in training new staff, and changing the way your teams work so that an accurate packing and delivery operation still takes place
- The unpredictability of peak means that it is hard to estimate how many extra people will be needed.

Automation

Adding automation to the operation improves efficiency by making effective use of space and manpower. It results in:

- Consistent and predictable material flow
- Improved productivity
- Space savings
- Safer operations
- Less people
- Improved tracking and reporting
- Reduced carbon footprint

Although the ROI for automation is clear it requires an initial capital outlay. Secondly, to work effectively in peak it might not need to run at full capacity during the rest of the year in which case the ROI can take longer.

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Software

If automation is a step too far there are a number of packing and delivery software suites that can have an immediate and less costly impact. In particular software can add a great deal to manual operations, through its ability to join up separate processes, improve security, reduce errors and speed everything up.

For example, the drawn out process of matching a product to an order, designing and printing the correct label and notifying a carrier can be transformed with a simple application to link and automate these processes.

Software also has the advantage that it can be paid for monthly rather than requiring high capital expenditure at the outset.
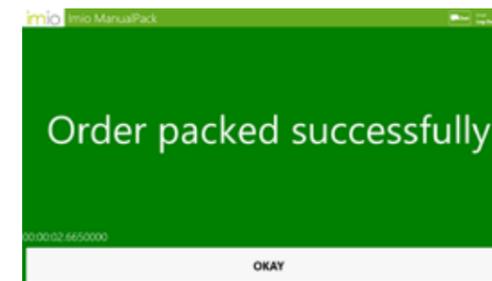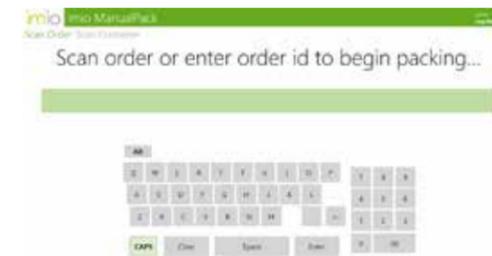
Three benefits are quickly realised:

- Faster clearer processes that improve efficiency and accuracy
- Usability - once installed a good software package will have clear, easily followed operator instructions; with only basic training required before you are up and running.
- Security - all events can be logged real time in a database, which can be queried, to check what happened and when it happened.

Software FAQs

Ease of installation and ongoing support

With a good supplier software doesn't need to be complicated to install and if you take a licensed product you gain protection and peace of mind from:

- Non SLA Support.
- Guaranteed updates and bug fixes which guard against the latest security threats.
- As a minimum, the overall performance requirements are met with a license.
- A good supplier commits to making sure you always have the latest version and features.
- The responsibility lies with the supplier to manage all of these rather than you.

How much training is needed?

Look for a supplier that provides a good, clear graphical user interface (GUI), which will simplify all the complicated activity going on with warehouse data.

Task based processes work well at operator level as they limit the options at each stage minimizing the opportunity to do something wrong. A strong visual element e.g. use of colour to indicate success/problems helps reinforce this and improve user acceptance and performance.

What happens when you need to make changes to support your growth?

Ideally look for a software suite with a scalable modular structure as this will let you add on what you need at the right time for your business.

Check out your supplier - experienced suppliers will have warehouse operations experience and will understand your likely growth pattern. They should help you think about what's going to add the most value.

What business insight is provided with software?

Your software set up should automatically log all actions. The real benefit of this is that the raw data can be used to create relevant reports for your business. These can range from year on year comparisons to real time analytics where the data is up to the second providing accurate information there and then.

Why is real time communication beneficial?

By gathering and sending real time data to internal and external interfaces software enables real time communication from the warehouse to various parties and speeds up a variety of tasks which ultimately creates better customer service. E.g. to stores and customers so that they know when to expect deliveries and to carriers so they can schedule capacity accordingly.

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Planning for Peak

imio software

Conveyor Networks imio one software provides labelling, print management and packing functions that are perfect for supporting retail and ecommerce manual operations. imio one is part of our imio warehouse software suite.

A licensed modular software package that is wholly owned and developed by Conveyor Networks and is in use by customers such as WH Smith, QVC, Debenhams and Gameseek.

For further information about imio software visit our website at:
imiosoftware.co.uk/imio-one

or contact the team on
01925 742888 or info@imiosoftware.co.uk

WHSmith

QVC

DEBENHAMS

GAMESEEK

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