

# UNEX CASE STUDY



**"This is a high-volume plant. Every minute counts, and every inch of workspace does too."**

- Todd Emmons, Engineer, Automotive Business Unit, Adient, LLC

**customer:** ADIENT, LLC

**operation:** A global, diversified company serving the building and automotive industries

**goal:** Flexible, durable and efficient technology that supports high-volume demands

**solution:** FlowCell systems from UNEX



## Line Side Flexibility Takes the Wheel at Automotive Production Facility

*Adient's multiple facilities include a 125,000-square-foot plant in West Point, Georgia, where seats, door panels and other interior parts are assembled for the Kia® Sorento.*

In the automotive industry, things can change at a moment's notice. "Customers are always reconfiguring – adding new products and updating standards. To keep up and stay competitive, our plants must be flexible and efficient," says Todd Emmons, an engineer in the automotive business unit for Adient, LLC.

Flexibility and efficiency were top of mind in 2009 when Adient, LLC began building a new plant in West Point, Georgia. Engineers set out to unveil a state-of-the-art automobile production facility that could accommodate the ever-evolving demands of the automobile industry.

"Our plan was to equip the plant with the most reliable, functional, cost-effective and reusable technology possible," says Emmons. "The FlowCell® workstations helped us deliver on that plan."

### Gearing Up for the Future

At the Georgia plant, employees assemble seats, door panels and other interior parts for the new Kia® Sorento. Nearly 500 cars a day move through the facility. "This is a high-volume plant. We're completing 55 jobs an hour, and the goal is to step that up to 60 jobs an hour," says Emmons. "Every minute counts, and every inch of workspace does too."





In designing the plant, Emmons worked with John Maicki, president of DR Storage, to identify the line-side assembly technology that would best fit current and future production needs. “The Adient team had very specific requirements. They wanted something durable, ergonomically sound and capable of accommodating the various product sizes on the production line,” says Maicki. “Most important, they needed an assembly line product that could be moved, adjusted and reused as production demands changed.”

## Exploring the Options

In the past, tubular pipe structures had been used on assembly lines in some plants, but Emmons and Maicki agreed they would not be effective solutions for the Georgia plant. “Tube and joint structures are highly customized and difficult to move from station to station. So, if the materials change on the assembly line, you have to order completely new racks and install them. This takes time and money,” says Maicki.

A better solution came from UNEX. “We did a thorough analysis of the line-side racks available, got quotes from several vendors and had prototypes developed. Our decision was based on what was best in terms of reliability, cost-effectiveness, functionality and reusability. FlowCell was the obvious choice,” says Emmons.

## Efficiency Takes a Front Seat

Emmons says that Flow Cell units offer huge benefits for the high-volume plant, including:

- **Efficient use of space.** “We only have 84 inches of pick space per workstation. The FlowCells are built in such a way that we never waste an inch of space. And Unex’s Flow Bed carton flow accommodates a variety a variety of materials, whether we are working with seats, door handles, power controls, air bags and the many different types of brackets and buttons. ”
- **Uninterrupted work flow.** “Our Georgia plant is a just-in-time operation. We have to keep things moving without interruption, so that we can deliver product exactly when the nearby Kia facility is ready for it. The FlowCells are configured in such a way that productivity remains high. And if we need to reconfigure the carton flow beds, it’s simple to do. In fact, reconfiguring the FlowCells is three times faster than reconfiguring other types of products.”

- **Reusability.** “This is the biggest benefit. Soon, we’ll be adding new car parts to the line for other types of vehicles. We can simply pick up the FlowCells, move them to another place in the plant or another new location entirely, and reconfigure them. There’s no need to buy new racks.”
- **Added value.** “The more efficient we can make the process, the more value we can offer customers, and that translates into more products for our operations.”

## Navigating Growth with the Right Partner

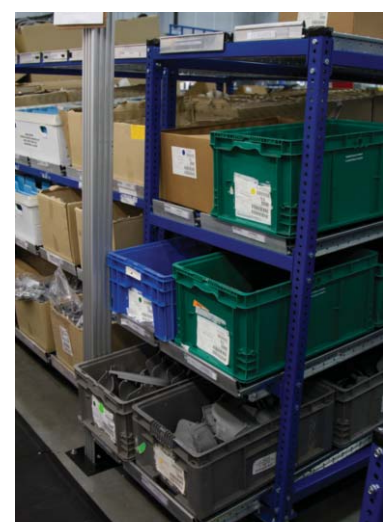
Both Emmons and Maicki have a long history with UNEX solutions. “We’ve used other UNEX solutions in our plants, and UNEX was the clear choice for the Georgia facility,” says Emmons. “Overall, we’ve ordered 41 FlowCells and used the UNEX instructions to assemble them in less than a half an hour each.”

Maicki adds, “I first recommended FlowCell to a customer in 2003, and I’ve been recommending it ever since. The FlowCells have broad application and always provide the quality and durability customers need on the line. It’s always a success story with UNEX.”



**“It’s always a success story with UNEX.”**

– John Maicki, President,  
DR Storage  
UNEX Distributor and systems  
consultant for Adient, LLC



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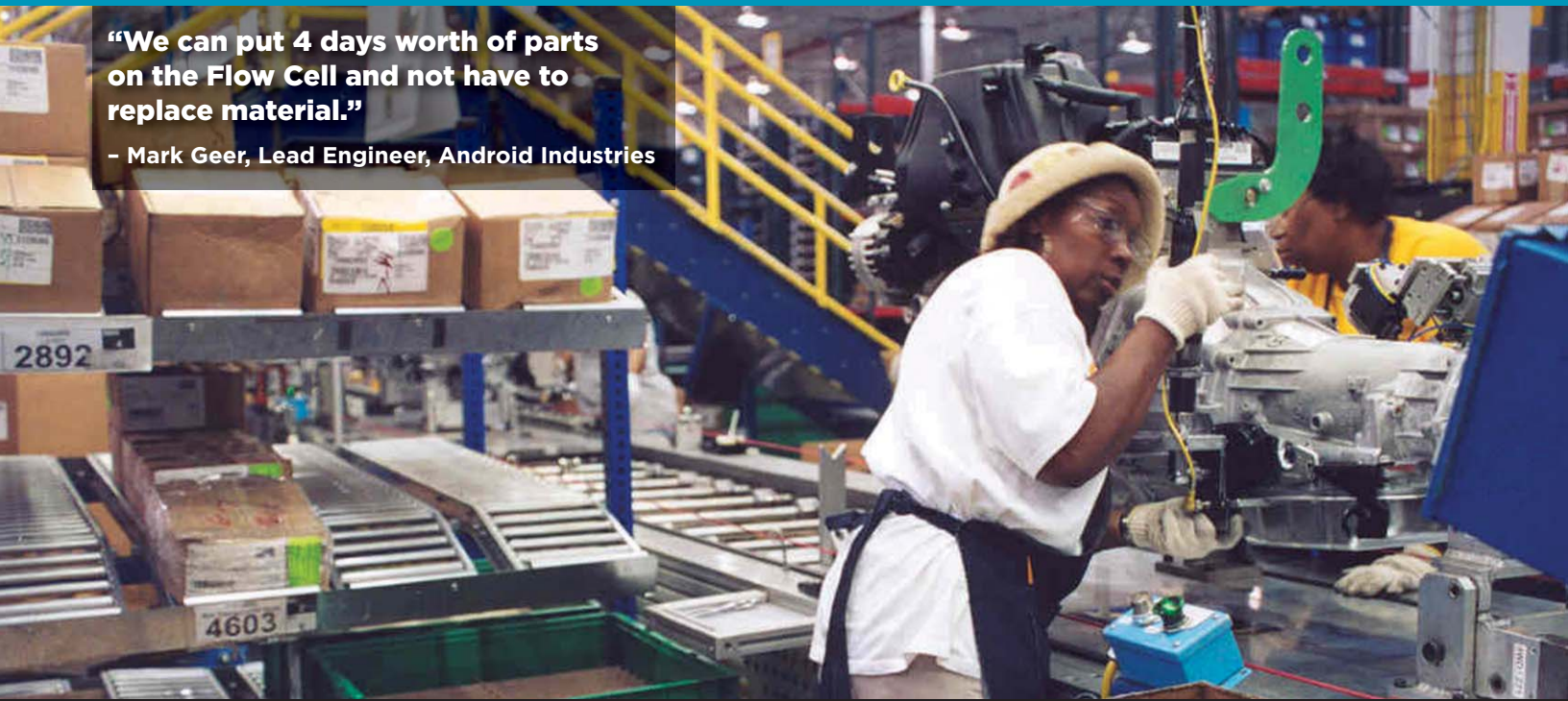




# UNEX CASE STUDY

**"We can put 4 days worth of parts on the Flow Cell and not have to replace material."**

**- Mark Geer, Lead Engineer, Android Industries**



**customer: ANDROID INDUSTRIES**

**operation: Engine and transmission assembly plant**

**goal: Keep assembly lines moving to satisfy "just-in-time" demands at GM**

**solution: FlowCell Modular Flow-Thru Workstations from UNEX**



## Modular Flow-Thru Workstations Help This GM Supplier Deliver "Just in Time"... Every Time

*Android Industries, a valued GM supplier since 1989, knows the road to a successful relationship and what it takes to keep pace with the renowned car and truck builder. At its seventh and newest facility in Shreveport LA, it takes top quality outfitting or "engine dressing" of close to a thousand GM engine/transmission assemblies per day, sequenced and delivered 'just-in-time'... every time!*

Big wheels keep on turning in Shreveport, LA - big 18 wheelers that is - as they make the one mile drive from Android Industries' new assembly plant to GM's sprawling manufacturing complex, delivering completed engine and transmission assemblies for 'just-in-time' placement onto awaiting truck chassis.

According to Mark Geer, Lead Engineer and member of the launch team for this new facility that went on-line in 2003, the company's commitment to build in Shreveport was the result of being awarded a GM assembly contract to support the introduction of two new truck lines - the Chevy Colorado and GMC Canyon.

### Not a Robot in the House!

It may come as a surprise to learn there's not a robot to be found in the 226,000 sq. ft. Android Industries building, or for that matter in any of their other facilities.

But up and down the 'line' today in Shreveport, highly skilled Android Industries technicians are meeting and exceeding critical production targets. And right alongside silently assisting them are fully stocked UNEX® FlowCell® Workstations from which components are quickly and easily picked and attached to the engine/ transmission assemblies at a steady, seemingly choreographed pace.





In manufacturing operations, UNEX FlowCell Workstations with full-width roller SpanTrack® are typically used 'line' side, as they are at Android Industries, and perform a dual function: maintaining a ready supply of components and making them available for easy picking.

***"We can put 4 days worth of material on the FlowCell and not have to replace material," Geer says.***

Also, he explains that Shreveport is the first of their facilities to employ UNEX FlowCell Workstations.

Geer anticipated outfitting the new Shreveport facility with equipment similar to that operating in their other plants. But when it came to workstations, he knew that the ubiquitous "pipe type" structures with plastic wheels was not what he wanted to continue being saddled with. "Bolt boxes don't go down wheels very well," he says.

"The SpanTrack full length rollers sections in the FlowCell is what we needed." Geer recalls "heaps" of pipes cut to every which size stored in other plants in hopes of someday being salvaged for reuse. Someday never arrived and the piles of pipes presented more work than value to Android.

### Modular Flow Cell Units - Easy to Move and Refit

"We were doing the initial start-up and wanted to put a system in place with the greatest flexibility for change," Geer continues. With employees on the 'line' working at various heights from the plant floor and assembly operations that could likely change according to new contracts, workstations he would purchase had to assemble and disassemble easily, be capable of being reconfigured as needed and be durable for movement around the plant.

Mark Geer found the workstations that met his company's requirements when Blake DeFatta from Nelson Equipment Company, UNEX's Shreveport distributor, recommended FlowCell Modular Workstations. He found ease of assembly and disassembly, durability, mobility and flexibility.

According to Bill Edgy, UNEX Manufacturing's Southern Regional Manager, "99% of the time assembly is done by the end user," which is why FlowCells were designed for quick,

easy assembly. The rugged construction assures the cells withstand the heavy duty, high volume pace of the manufacturing process and perform well beyond the Seven Year Platinum Warranty.

Nelson Equipment Company's president and owner Mark Nelson indicates that his company has supplied a large amount of equipment to Android and as a result they have a good understanding of their operation.

"They counted on us to bring in a quality product that would help speed along their operations and FlowCell was the appropriate choice," he says. UNEX FlowCell Modular Workstations are comprised of standard "Mix & Match" components that form an efficient, ergonomic station where parts and product are always ready and reachable. They include vertical posts, horizontal beams, and SpanTrack full-width roller tracks that provide the flow from load point to pick point - even for hard to handle totes. SpanTrack is easy to add and reposition within the FlowCell.



***"It does what it's supposed to do and doesn't take up a lot of floor space," says Geer. "You spec it for what you need. We ordered 22 Flow Cell units and they all went together in one day. It probably took about 30 minutes to set up each Flow Cell and everybody that assembled the units out here were production line employees."***

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# UNEX CASE STUDY



**“Without the SpanTrack from UNEX, we would have had to expand our cooler area by another 5,000 square feet, and that would have been very costly.”**

**– Shaun O’Halloran, Director of Operations at Atlas Distributing**

**customer:** ATLAS DISTRIBUTING

**operation:** Beverage Distributor

**goal:** Make room for craft beers without additional floor space

**solution:** SpanTrack from UNEX



## Solving the Beer SKU Squeeze

*A beverage distributor makes room for an influx of craft beers without adding a single inch of new floor space.*

*How did the distributor do it? SpanTrack from UNEX helped roll out the “amber” carpet for New England’s growing cast of flavorful brews.*

At Atlas Distributing, Inc., Director of Operations Shaun O’Halloran faced a conundrum: His inventory of craft beers had steadily increased in the past year and more were on the way.

***“We had anticipated growth in the craft beer industry,” recalls Shaun. “Inventory was growing in the cooler, and it seemed like we were getting new SKUs every day.”***

In late 2013, Atlas Distributing was awarded the distributorship for Yuengling, a popular lager from a brewery in Pennsylvania. “Yuengling had not been distributed in Massachusetts since the early 1990s, so this was a big deal — and a big line, which meant we needed to plan accordingly for the most efficient and effective use of our warehouse space,” says Shaun.

### Inside the World of Atlas

Atlas Distributing, Inc. was founded in 1933 and distributes more than 1,500 types of alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, including kegs and cases to customers in central Massachusetts. Beer makes up approximately 1,100 of those SKUs, including a growing list of craft beers that creative breweries churn out at a rapid clip.

***“Long gone are the days when you walk in to a bar and see four handles for beer on tap. Now, some bars have as many as 25 handles,” says Shaun. “Once consumers try craft beer, they appreciate the flavor profile and want to try others.”***





The variety is great for beer lovers but creates challenges for distributors who have to make room for full and partial kegs, like the 1/2 and 1/6 kegs warehoused at Atlas Distributing, Inc.

In the beer distribution industry, space isn't the only challenge in the cooler. Picking the 165-pound 1/2 kegs and 60-pound 1/6 kegs (sixtel) is also a heavy burden for workers.

Between space constraints, inefficiencies for pickers and safety issues, the problem in a beer distributor's cooler area is anything but pint-sized.

### Calling in the Pros of Pickability

Shaun called John Chauncey, Sales Manager at 1 Stop Material Handling, to help solve the space squeeze, improve keg flow and productivity, and make room for all the cranberry concoctions, blueberry brews and caramel crafts the industry had to offer.

John already knew that in warehouse areas outside the cooler space, Atlas Distributing, Inc. was successfully using multiple UNEX solutions to improve space utilization and manage carton flow. For example, in one section, the UNEX SpanTrack Roller Rack solution allowed the beverage distributor to house 10 times more cases in the same footprint than the previous solution.

To help address space and efficiency issues in the cooler area, John put in a call to Bill Link, Northeast Regional Manager at UNEX. "I contacted Bill at UNEX because if anybody can solve a problem with keg or case flow, Bill can do it," says John.

Together with Atlas and 1 Stop, UNEX mapped out a SpanTrack system to accommodate existing SKUs and create space for future growth. Using over 800 feet of durable tracks, the distributor was able to get SKUs off the floor and into organized gravity-fed rows and racks, resulting in multiple benefits:

- **More efficient order picking** — Workers now locate and retrieve long tail SKUs faster and easier because they are densely housed together in visible rows.
- **Simple replenishment**—SKUs are easily restocked from the back.
- **Flexibility and diversity** — Racks are configured to accommodate a variety of SKUs and can be reconfigured as SKUs change.
- **A clean, clutter-free warehouse** — When customers visit, they see a cooler area that is neat and orderly.

But the biggest benefit is the space savings. "Without the SpanTrack from UNEX, we would have had to expand our cooler area by another 5,000 square feet, and that would have been very costly," says Shaun.

*"You can't go out and build a new warehouse every day or expand your existing warehouse," adds John. "You have to optimize your space, which is exactly what UNEX helped us do for Atlas Distributing."*

### A Safer Solution — for People and Products

"Storing SKUs on pallets can create a dangerous maze," says Bill, who has helped UNEX imagine and create customized solutions for manufacturers and distributors for more than 3 years.

He says UNEX solutions are designed to:

- **Get product off the floor to prevent tripping hazards and poor space utilization**
- **Create a safer and more convenient pick**
- **Protect product integrity**

Because the area is now so well organized, Shaun says he no longer needs 20 workers to pick product from the cooler. Instead, he has two experts managing the entire cooler area, which keeps 18 employees out of the 38-degree temperatures in the cooler. Those 18 are now working in other growing areas at the facility.

SpanTrack has been good for workers, and it's good for SKUs too. The pitched rollers ensure that SKUs of all shapes and sizes flow smoothly without hanging up, falling over or getting damaged. The durable rollers create a sturdy platform for the product, regardless of weight, height or width. Customized roller stops prevent kegs from falling forward.

But as all beer drinkers know, what really matters is taste. With the newly organized cooler area, workers can keep close tabs on the ever-evolving menu of brews and their expiration dates, since shelf life is incredibly important when it comes to crafts.

### Big Wins with SpanTrack

- **Space Optimization**
- **Organized, easy-to-find inventory**
- **Safer work environment for order pickers**
- **Greater pick density**
- **Reduced footsteps**
- **Higher productivity**
- **Easy SKU replenishment**
- **Easy installation of UNEX solution**

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# UNEX CASE STUDY

**“The system makes inventory control easy. We can keep track of everything we have, so that when our stores need a specific paint, we can find it fast and fulfill the order accurately”**

– Charles Aubuchon, VP of Distribution Center Operations



**customer: AUBUCHON HARDWARE**

**operation: Hardware Store Chain**

**goal: Improve pick efficiencies for split case paint cans**

**solution: FlowCell from UNEX**



## A Break in the Case

### *Paint Can Racks Keep Aisles Clear, Speed Pick Rates by 50% at Distribution Center*

With dozens of paint cans stacking up in the distribution center, Aubuchon Hardware needed to get its inventory under control. The company turned to UNEX to design a storage and flow solution that would save space, increase productivity and ensure accurate order fulfillment at the warehouse.

#### The Situation

Aubuchon Hardware is the oldest family owned and operated chain of hardware stores in America. The chain includes 120 stores in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York and Vermont. Each day, the company's distribution center in Massachusetts fulfills dozens of orders and ships them to Aubuchon Hardware stores across New England.

***“Our stores rely on the distribution center to have the products in stock when they need them, so they can stay competitive with national hardware chains,” says Charles Aubuchon, VP of Distribution Center Operations for Aubuchon Hardware.***

***“Inventory control is a major issue for the warehouse.”***

But inventory control became a concern after Aubuchon Hardware added the Benjamin Moore® line of paint to its product offering. The primers and white paint were moving quickly, so employees shipped them by the case. “But our stores didn't need full cases of the colors and tints because they are slow movers,” says Charles. “We decided to break the cases on the slow movers to give our stores more flexibility to order one quart or gallon at a time.”





The idea made the space-constrained stores happy but created storage issues for the warehouse. “There are more Benjamin Moore® SKUs than you can shake a finger at,” says Charles. “We couldn’t store all those extra paint cans on pallets because we’d take up all our aisle space. Plus, our existing flow racks were not strong enough to handle the weight.”

### Exploring the Options

Aubuchon Hardware turned to distributor Northland Industrial Truck Co., Inc. (NITCO) for help. “When I met with the Aubuchon team, we explored the options,” says Scott Ferris, NITCO’s Vice President of Sales. “Placing the SKUs on pallets was not a good choice. All the different types of paint would be hard to organize, which could result in mispicks. Static shelving also was not a good option because inventory would have been left sitting idle, and you would not have the first in, first out benefit.”

Scott contacted UNEX, the industry leader in innovative order picking solutions. “I felt confident that UNEX could solve this problem,” says Scott. “Working with UNEX is always a real partnership.”

UNEX engineers visited the distribution center, evaluated the product flow and inventory, and designed the perfect rack system for quart cans.

### A Custom Solution for Flowing Round Objects

UNEX created a flow rack system, FlowCell, measuring 96” wide by 96” deep and 84” high. The rack included 7 levels containing 13 lanes of 6” wide tracks with 1” roller centers and guardrails. Designers added snap-on slow-down plates to prevent denting and created the appropriate rise across the lanes to ensure optimal flow of the paint cans.

“With UNEX FlowCell and SpanTrack, we can slot 180 SKUs in a 20-foot section,” says Charles. “The system is strong enough to hold thousands of pounds, and it’s durable and adjustable. We incorporated it right into the pick path.”

The UNEX solution worked so well that Aubuchon Hardware asked UNEX to design a similar system to manage slow-moving gallon cans of paint. Charles says employees can slot about 120 gallons of paint in the new rack. “The system makes inventory control easy. We can keep track of everything we have, so that when our stores need a specific paint, we can find it fast and fulfill the order accurately.”

Charles estimates that pick rates have increased substantially with the flow rack system. “The picker can pull up to an area and easily pick multiple SKUs without having to move his tugger. This has cut picking rates by about 50%.”

### Running ‘Lean and Mean’

Charles says that competition is tough for a family owned business. Aubuchon Hardware competes with ACE®, True Value® and other big chains.

“We have to run lean and mean. At the same time, we have to stay on top of inventory so that we always have what our stores need to meet customers’ demands,” says Charles. “To be successful in this business, you can’t be as good as the competition; you have to be better.”



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# UNEX CASE STUDY



**“Individuals work from a convenient work table with parts, lights and tools all within reach, rather than having to move around to different locations to find things,”**

**- Ben Hitchens, Materials Manager**

**customer:** **BraunAbility®**

**operation:** **World's leading manufacturer of wheelchair-accessible vehicles and wheelchair lifts**

**goal:** **Add new assembly line in same footprint, improve overall plant productivity**

**solution:** **FlowCell from UNEX**



## Picking up the Pace and Maximizing Space with FlowCell

***When car companies launch new minivans and SUVs, workers at BraunAbility® gear up to take them apart.***

BraunAbility transforms thousands of vans, SUVs and taxis into handicapped-accessible vehicles and builds tens of thousands of wheelchair lifts every year. The work is complex, fast-paced and growing rapidly.

“To keep pace with growth, we needed to find a new carton flow solution that would allow us to fit more product in our footprint and keep our lines moving quickly,” says Ben Hitchens, Materials Manager for BraunAbility.

FlowCell from UNEX turned out to be the perfect fit, allowing BraunAbility to replace clunky pipe and joint structures with flexible modular and portable workstations for the company's ever-expanding lineside and sub-assembly operations.

### The BraunAbility Back Story

In 1962, Ralph Braun built his first motorized wheelchair in a small farm shop. Ralph had spinal muscular atrophy and had been unable to walk since the age of 15. He was determined to find ways to be more mobile, rather than having someone push him in a wheelchair or lift him in and out of vehicles. In addition to the motorized wheelchair, Ralph built tri-wheelers in his parents' garage and invented the first wheelchair lift, paving the way for the first full-sized handicapped accessible vans.

As Ralph's inventions mounted, so did the interest in his mobility solutions. Today, BraunAbility offers the broadest line of wheelchair accessible vehicles and wheelchair lifts across the United States, Canada and various international locations. Approximately 1,000 employees work for BraunAbility.

“It's incredibly rewarding to know that we help thousands of wheelchair users gain mobility and independence every year,” says Ben. “We want to keep building on Ralph Braun's legacy. Having the right equipment helps us do that. That's where UNEX came in.”





## FlowCell Racks to the Rescue

BraunAbility geared up for an exciting opportunity in early 2017: upfitting Chrysler's new Pacifica to create the most spacious wheelchair-accessible minivan in the industry. To make that happen, BraunAbility needed to build a new assembly line at its Indiana plant, and the team had to do it fast.

"When a company like Chrysler launches a new vehicle, our clock starts," says Ben. "Developing a new line is like a fire drill. Speed is critical. You can't have any delays in getting product out the door."

In the past, pipe and joint structures served as storage for the multiple parts and tools required to convert vans and cars into accessible vehicles. The structures "were a monster," says Ben. "They had hundreds of tiny components and took hours or days to build. They kept getting bigger and taking up more space. We added small pallet racks, but they did not give us the flexibility we needed."

Greg Miller, Account Manager at Crown, a manufacturer of powered industrial forklift trucks and a variety of material handling solutions, told Ben about UNEX FlowCell and showed him the product on the UNEX website. Ben ordered a handful as a test, and before long, more than 100 FlowCell racks took shape for the Pacifica assembly line and replaced cumbersome storage systems on other lines. "We like the product so much that we keep adding more," says Ben.

## Big Benefits for BraunAbility

Better use of space is one of the major benefits of FlowCell for the BraunAbility team. FlowCell is proven to increase space utilization by up to 50 percent.

"Before FlowCell, if we had to add a bin, it was like an act of Congress to pull the rack apart, cut new tubes and install the new rack," says Ben. "With FlowCell, we only have to stock four parts because the racks are modular. We standardized to a 48-inch beam with a 32-inch depth, and the beams are interchangeable. We can swap out parts or expand racks with simple tools and have the line up and running in no time flat."

Productivity also has increased significantly for sub-assembly workers. FlowCell workstations allow workers to efficiently complete small assembly tasks such as welding components, modifying doors or preassembling axels. "Individuals work from a convenient work table with parts, lights and tools all within reach, rather than having to move around to different locations to find things," says Ben.

Workstation designs ensure a safe, ergonomic pick since parts flow directly to the individual. "We don't have to worry about people picking up bins or reaching under a bench to get them. They work right off the flow rack, which helps keep them safe and saves steps and time."

## Tough and Clean

FlowCell durability gets high marks from the BraunAbility team. "I can put lightweight parts or flow a 50-pound bin of heavy metal parts and never worry about whether the joints will pop or come apart," says Ben.

FlowCells are made of heavy gauge steel construction. They are up to 13 times stronger than 28mm tube and joint flow rack systems and will support up to 1,000 pounds per level.

*"UNEX gave us a clean, organized solution that makes the plant look uniform and very professional," says Ben. "We're proud of the work we do and proud of the place where we do it."*

## 'No Hiccups'

Partnering with UNEX and Greg Miller at Crown to find the right flow rack solution has been a positive experience for the BraunAbility team. "There have been no hiccups. We're very pleased. Materials get here quickly and without backorders."

Greg adds that introducing BraunAbility to UNEX was a great decision. "UNEX works with the customer to understand their unique business, rather than simply providing a quote on a job." As result of this approach, UNEX delivered a solution for BraunAbility that maximizes space and helps a growing business keep pace with demand.



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# UNEX CASE STUDY



**“UNEX’s reputation for quality is bulletproof”**

– Jim Thibeault, Operations Manager, Capital Candy Co.

**customer: CAPITAL CANDY**

**operation:** Full line grocery and convenience store wholesaler

**goal:** Improve pick rates, rework space for storage and future growth

**solution:** ShelfTrack, Gravity Conveyor, Roller Rack & SpanTrack systems from UNEX



## UNEX Strings Together a Collection of Carton Flow Solutions for Candy Wholesaler

### *And the Results are Sweet!*

In 1938, a Mom & Pop penny-candy operation opened in a small Vermont town. Success followed, and Capital Candy Co., Inc. emerged as a full-fledged wholesaler for grocery and convenience stores. Growth was good, and more was on the way. At a rapid fire pace, manufacturers began introducing new product extensions by the hundreds. Capital Candy was running out of space and the surges in inventory made the need to increase productivity greater than ever.

### Exploring the Options

Even with 70,000 sq. ft. of warehouse space spread over three buildings, Capital Candy was stretched to the limit. “In any space-constrained building like ours - a 175 year old granite shed with lots of poles, beams and posts - maximizing the cube is imperative”, says Operations Manager, Jim Thibeault.

The company considered several options:

- ☐ Move to a new building - deemed too expensive
- ☐ Construct an addition - again, too costly
- ☐ Stack inventory higher - an inefficient approach since perishables have to be rotated regularly
- ☒ **Reorganize facility** - the most practical, cost effective solution



**Existing plastic wheel track was replaced with UNEX ShelfTrack.**  
“a sweet rolling major improvement,” says Thibeault.



Working with a consultant, Capital Candy decided to reorganize the pick areas for each product group with UNEX carton flow solutions to match the unique needs of each area. This would maximize pick efficiency and provide a space friendly operation allowing Capital Candy plenty of room to grow.

## Reconfiguring the Warehouse

Applying a multifaceted carton flow approach allowed Capital Candy to reconfigure its warehouse and unleash greater productivity for each pick area.

**The Grocery Area** needed a major overhaul, requiring the construction of a three-level pick module. On the first level, UNEX's low profile SpanTrack was installed. Low Profile's drop-in design nests between the beams, maximizing vertical space for product storage. The second and third levels were set up for pallet storage, which allowed Capital Candy to make the most of limited warehouse space.

**The Cigarette Area** has UNEX Roller Rack with high profile SpanTrack installed. High profile sits on top of the beams, allowing the carton flow track to extend beyond the structure, which enable Capital Candy to store more units per SKU.

**In The Freezer and cooler sections**, UNEX combined low and high profile SpanTrack in pallet rack to create Easy Access/Fast Pick of cold inventory items. "When we put in something new, we like to use SpanTrack", explains Thibeault, "because everything here is short-coded and needs to be FIFO managed. We have to ensure that customers always receive fresh products."

**The Candy Line** replaced the existing plastic wheel track with UNEX ShelfTrack, a built-to-last, full-width aluminum roller track that 'drops-in' to existing flow rack shelves - a "sweet rolling major improvement," says Thibeault.

**Customized Flow Solution:** UNEX engineered a custom flow rack installed with gravity conveyor sections to accommodate the unique handling requirements of Capital's dairy line.

## Measuring the Results

Since implementing UNEX solutions, Capital Candy has realized all of the project's objectives and gained several other benefits in the process.

- **1,000 New SKU's Added**
- **Pick Rates Improved 35%**
- **Labor Costs Down/Sales Up**
- **FIFO Issues Resolved**

1,000 new SKUs have been added to the warehouse due to the space gained during the reconfiguration. Inventory is now rotated appropriately. "In the past, if you got a delivery twice a week, sometimes the latest ended up on top of the previous delivery, and the lower inventory went out of date," says Thibeault. "UNEX's carton flow approach put an end to that problem."

## Focusing on the Future

Capital Candy's 70 year legacy continues, and so does the company's confidence in UNEX. "We've done business with UNEX for over 30 years and never had the need to look at other suppliers," says Thibeault. "Everything has always worked great. UNEX's reputation for quality is bulletproof."



**Right: UNEX's custom engineered flow rack for Capital Candy's dairy line.**



**"In any space constrained building like ours... maximizing the cube is imperative"**



**We've been able to decrease labor costs while increasing sales."**

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# UNEX CASE STUDY



**"Efficiency was up immediately on day one - greater pick density, fewer steps, less climbing and better product storage."**

**- Jim Thibeault,  
Operations Manager**

**customer:** Capital Candy Co., Inc.

**operation:** Picking, packing and delivering grocery and convenience store items

**goal:** Maximize pick area for fast movers, deploy high-density storage for slow movers

**solution:** SpanTrack Wheel Bed, SpeedCell, Gravity Conveyor from UNEX



## Wholesaler Makes Room for 3,600 More Cases and Speeds Pick Time with UNEX Carton Flow Solutions

*SpanTrack Wheel Bed, SpeedCell and other UNEX innovations help Capital Candy keep pace with growth and keep customers coming back for more.*

Growth is great for business, but it can put a squeeze on space at the warehouse—which is exactly what happened at the Capital Candy operation.

"We've been fortunate to have increased sales every year for the past 15 years. But when COVID hit, many restaurants shut down, and convenience stores got very busy, which meant our SKUs had to increase too," says Jim Thibeault, Operations Manager. "At one point, we were over 140% full in two regions of our warehouse. We had to do something."

Capital Candy had two options: Find another warehouse and move, or build onto the existing facility in Barre, Vermont, where the operation had serviced customers for nearly 50 years. Capital Candy chose option two and got approval from the town for a 60- by 100-foot addition measuring 26 feet high to the warehouse.

Jim says deciding how to equip the new space with pick and storage solutions was an easy choice. "UNEX has worked with us for many years to help us maximize efficiencies in every area. When it came time to expand one of our regions, we spoke with UNEX first."





## From a Mom-and-Pop Shop to a Hub with Hustle

Capital Candy's history dates to 1938, when a couple from Montpelier, Vermont, opened a penny candy operation from their home. Over time, the operation offered new product lines, became incorporated and expanded into new territories.

Today, Capital Candy operates six days a week, 24 hours a day to provide grocery and convenience store products to 3,000 customers across six states. "We pick, pack and deliver 55,000 packages a week. Our trucks make 33 trips every night," says Jim.

The operation houses mostly perishable items, such as dry grocery products, frozen and refrigerated foods, and nonfood items, such as tobacco products. As the demand and variety of SKUs increased in the tobacco category, Capital Candy decided to design the new addition to house all tobacco-related products. But to make room for an ever-growing and ever-changing line of inventory, the operation required optimal storage, picking and replenishment solutions. And that's where UNEX shines.

## Room to Spare

Century Conveyor installed 27 bays of SpanTrack Wheel Bed with four levels in each bay or 108 total levels of carton flow. "The Wheel Beds are great because they make picking and replenishing easy. It will never be hard for them to re-slot the flow rack again," says Dave Mydlowski, the engineer from Century Conveyor Systems who worked with Capital Candy and UNEX to design and implement carton flow solutions at the site. "And the quality of the product is excellent, durable, reliable."

The Wheel Beds allowed Capital Candy to store 3,600 more cases of product in the location and enabled the operation to add 900 new items with room to spare. The density of the pick also reduced the number of pickers needed in the tobacco area. The same picks are now being done by 1.5 fewer pickers, which is a huge savings for Capital Candy and a win for workers too. Pickers are paid by the number of items they pick. And because the pick area is so dense, pickers can pick more items faster.

SpanTrack Wheel Beds drop easily into structures to create the ultimate flow rack system for full-case and each-case picking. The system is highly flexible, sturdy and provides carton flow for products of various sizes and weights. And because SpanTrack Wheel Beds provide 300% more product contact than plastic wheel rails, hang-ups are eliminated.

"With the UNEX solution, efficiency was up immediately on day one—greater pick density, fewer steps, less climbing and better product storage," says Jim.

## Flawless Slotting for Slow Movers

UNEX also added two bays of SpeedCell and Gravity Conveyor in both downstairs and upstairs pick areas. SpeedCell provides high-density storage and can compress 200 feet of rack or shelving into 40 feet of highly organized space. More pick facings and greater SKU density mean less travel time and faster picks and restocking.

By implementing SpeedCell, Capital Candy was able to slot 196 slower-moving items into two eight-foot bays with each picking, saving the operation about 72 feet of shelf space. "We've used many UNEX solutions, but this was the first time using SpeedCell, and our

intention is to add it to other areas of the operation," says Jim. "The product has maximized our space, and it's been a hit with pickers, stockers and our purchasing department."

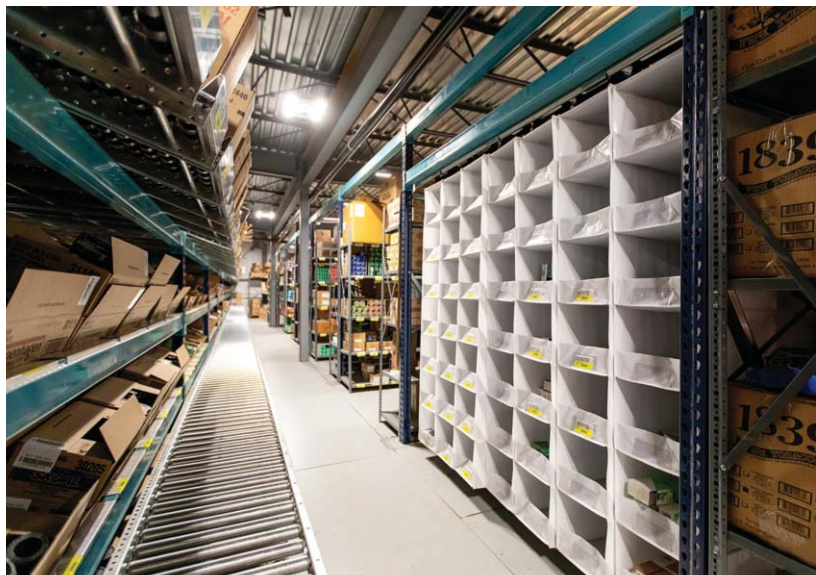
And what about those Gravity Conveyors? "We use them in every region of the operation, so it made sense to have them in the tobacco area. They keep all types of loads moving through the warehouse," says Jim.

UNEX Gravity Conveyors are engineered to last and can be customized in special lengths, widths and more to provide uninterrupted flow for busy operations.

## On Track with UNEX

UNEX has a long history of helping Capital Candy solve unique warehouse challenges. Across the operation, Roller Rack, Shelf Track and other innovations help workers pick, pack and deliver the items stores need to keep their customers coming back for more.

*"Our operation has relied on UNEX solutions for many years," says Jim. "We still have UNEX products from the early 1990s, and they're going strong. You can't match the durability and efficiency. Why would we want to try anything else?"*



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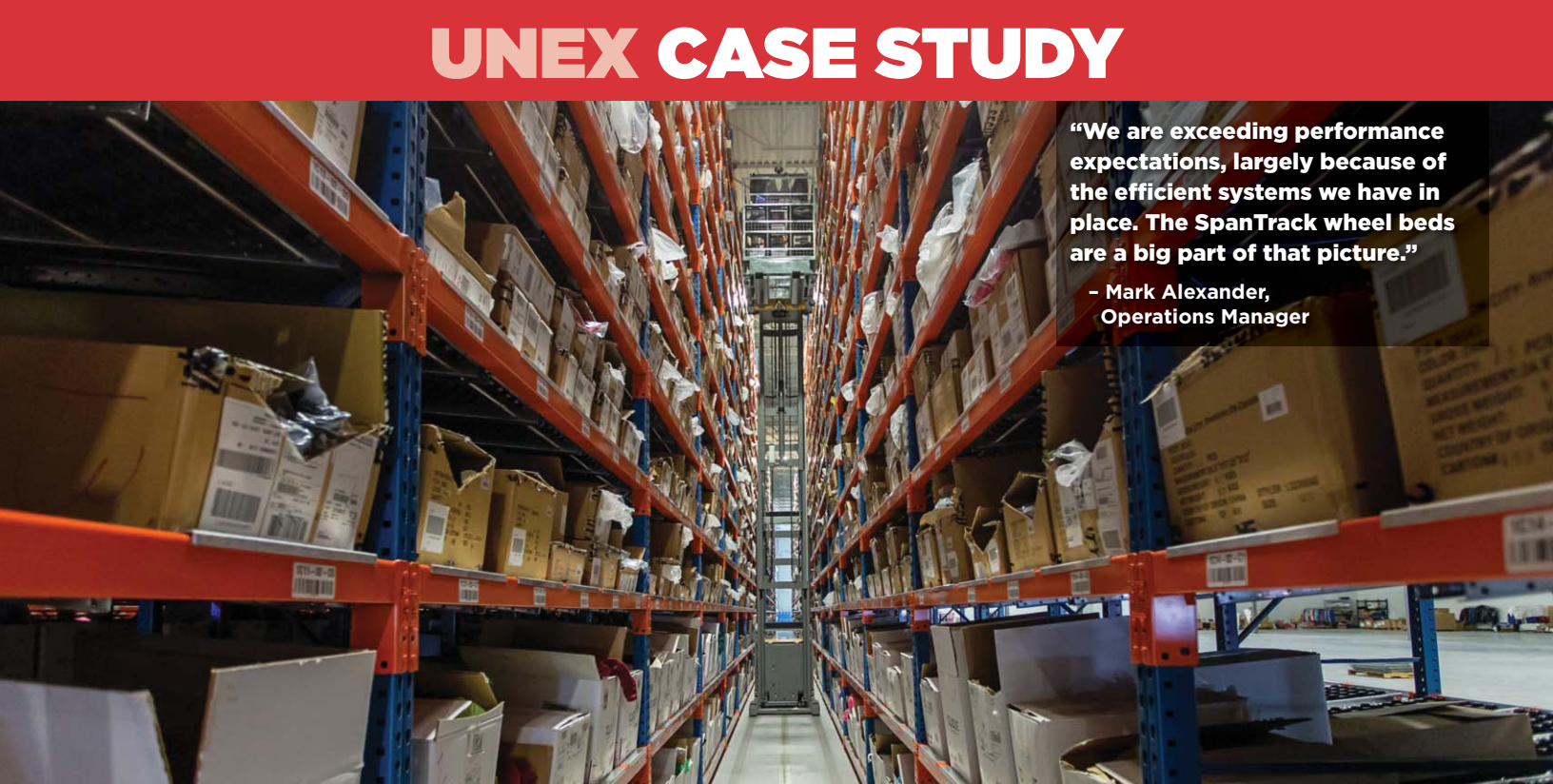
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LIT-CASE-022



# UNEX CASE STUDY



"We are exceeding performance expectations, largely because of the efficient systems we have in place. The SpanTrack wheel beds are a big part of that picture."

– Mark Alexander,  
Operations Manager

**customer:** Cutter & Buck, Canada

**operation:** Distributor of active lifestyle apparel

**goal:** Create ideal picking environment for new, high-tech distribution center

**solution:** SpanTrack wheel beds from UNEX



## New Distribution Center Maximizes Product Flexibility and Flow with SpanTrack Wheel Beds

*Apparel from Cutter & Buck is contemporary and meticulously designed, and so is the company's new high-tech distribution center equipped with SpanTrack wheel beds from UNEX.*

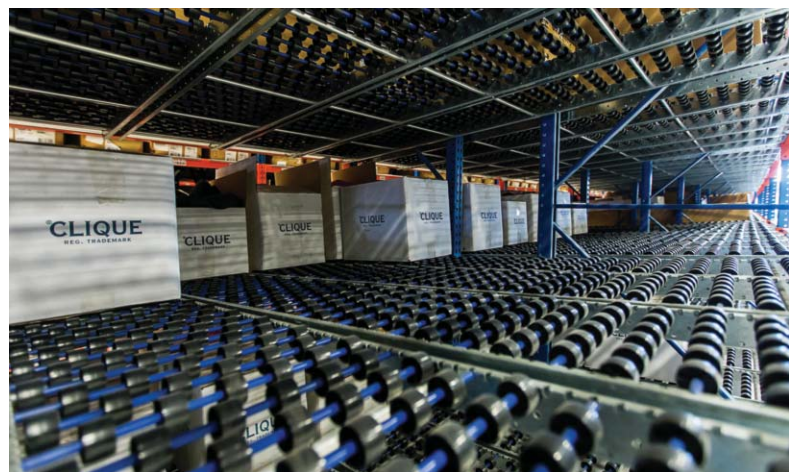
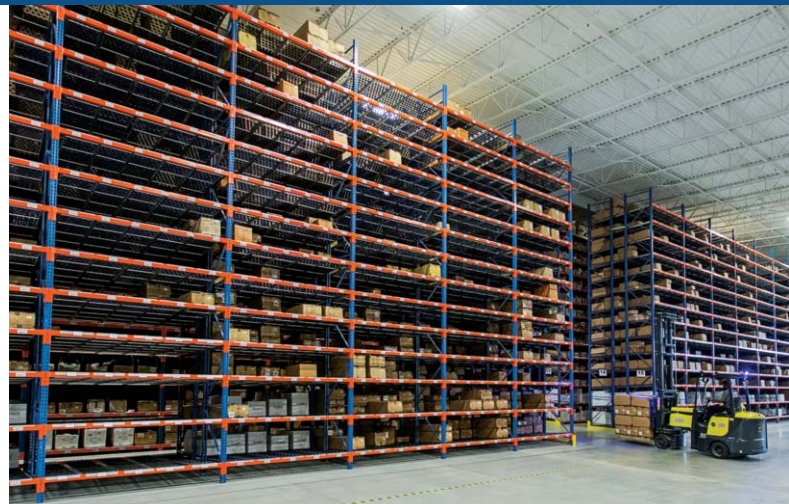
When Cutter & Buck decided to add a new distribution center in Canada, company leaders set out to create a fast, efficient and technologically savvy facility to service Canadian customers. "We wanted something fresh and innovative, because that's the type of brand we are," says Mark Alexander, Operations Manager, Cutter & Buck, Canada.

The center opened in Brampton, Ontario, in October 2017, fully equipped with state-of-the-art systems that allow a lean staff to pick from 1 million golf shirts, hoodies, rain jackets and other items across 25,000 distinct pick locations.

More than 4,000 SpanTrack wheel beds help keep the high-tech operation wrinkle-free.

### The Wow Factor

The high-ceilinged, 75,000-square-foot Brampton distribution center is near the Toronto Pearson International Airport, an ideal location for Cutter & Buck. Hundreds of customers have businesses within a 30-mile radius of the center. It's not uncommon for customers to stop by and pick up their products for corporate outings, sales meetings, college events and more. They often want a tour of the impressive facility.





"When customers walk into the distribution center, the first things they see are the UNEX racks going up 30 feet and extending from one end to the next," says Mark. "It's a jaw-dropping experience for them. They always talk about how everything is extremely organized and clean. And that's important, because it reflects our commitment to delivering the optimal experience."

Each day, a small core team of Cutter & Buck employees pick, pack and ship multitudes of orders to Canadian customers. "We are exceeding performance expectations, largely because of the efficient systems we have in place," says Mark. "The wheel beds are a big part of that picture."

## Buttoned Up and Ready to Grow

The SpanTrack wheel beds are located in 42,000 square feet of the distribution center. The additional 33,000 square feet is slated for future growth of the Cutter & Buck business.

*"The wheel beds maximize our warehouse space and give us lots of flexibility," says Mark. "In fact, with the wheel beds and our other efficient systems, we could double our business without having to double the space footprint."*

Whether the Cutter & Buck team is adding new products or replenishing existing ones, Mark adds that SpanTrack helps keep the operation flowing. "It's easy to replenish products from the back side. And when we do inventory, we don't have to shut down the operations twice a year. Everything is well-organized and easy to count, so we can keep track of inventory on a daily basis without disrupting the pick."

## The Right Fit

The distributor who recommended SpanTrack says the solution was just the right fit for Cutter & Buck. "The wheel beds are well-engineered. They are strong, durable, reliable and easy to install," says Ross Shepherd with 3D Storage Solutions Limited.

He adds that an additional benefit is working with UNEX. "It's a worry-free experience. And that's important for companies like 3D Storage Solutions and Cutter & Buck. We need efficiency in our operations so that we can focus on growth."

## Creating the Best Place to Work

Cutter & Buck was founded in 1989 in Seattle, Washington. Like the current Seattle location, the Brampton operation must compete with a number of major distribution centers for employees, such as Coca-Cola and Amazon.

"Recruiting an exceptional staff can be a challenge," explains Mark. "We want to attract great team members and keep them for the long term. Anything we can do to improve the work experience will help us compete for talent."

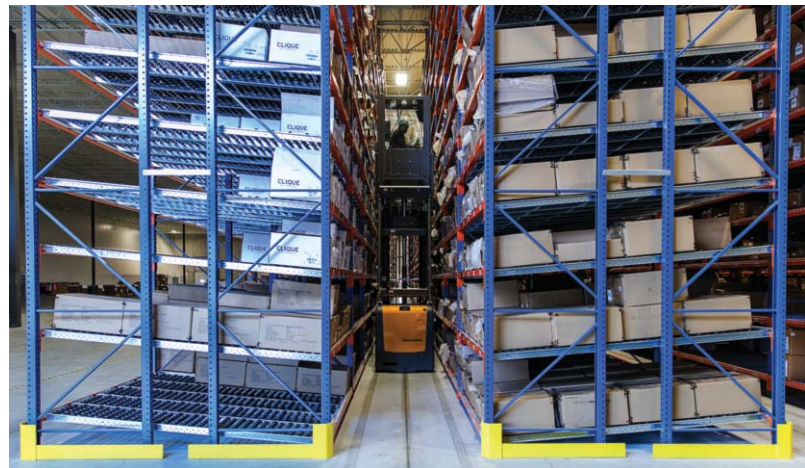
State-of-the-art systems, including one of the industry's most advanced order-picking trucks, help make Cutter & Buck a great place to work.

"The UNEX racking system helps us create a more efficient, accurate and safer pick environment than a traditional setting. New employees see that, and it gives us a competitive advantage," says Mark.

## Performance Predictions

With the big boost in pick rates provided by SpanTrack wheel beds, Cutter & Buck has the tools in place to go above and beyond its performance goals. Studies show that pick rates jump by up to 150% with SpanTrack wheel beds compared to traditional pallet picks.

Overall, the company's strategy to create a high-tech, high-performing distribution center is working well. "We are exceeding our original targets for the new center and will plan to expand two to three years sooner than expected," says Mark. "The UNEX racking has played an important role in helping us achieve aggressive targets."



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# UNEX CASE STUDY



**"We need to run the facility as efficiently as possible to keep up, and the UNEX products help us do that."**

**- Rodney Honeycutt,  
Materials Supervisor**

**customer:** Daimler Trucks Components & Logistics

**operation:** Parts distribution and assembly facility for Daimler Trucks North America

**goal:** Maximize space and improve efficiency in pick and sub-assembly areas

**solution:** FlowCell with SpanTrack Lane from UNEX



## A Booming Truck-Building Business Creates an 'Efficient, Nimble and Quick-Moving Operation' with UNEX Solutions

*A supermarket setup and high-performing sub-assembly line keep truck parts rolling full speed ahead at a North Carolina plant.*

Nothing collects dust at the Daimler Trucks Components & Logistics facility in Gastonia, North Carolina. The plant runs 24/7, rapidly fulfilling orders and sub-assembly of thousands of parts used to build commercial trucks and buses for Daimler customers in North America.

"We have an excessive amount of work and multiple activities going on at once," says Rodney Honeycutt, Materials Supervisor. "Space, speed and accuracy are very important at our facility." To achieve all three and more, Rodney says Daimler turned to UNEX to transform "an archaic" storage, picking and lineside sub-assembly system into an "efficient, nimble and quick-moving operation."

### The Speed Bumps

The Components & Logistics facility was originally designed as a distribution center, but with the company's growth and a full-scale truck manufacturing plant nearby, the facility quickly added a sub-assembly area as well. The site includes 4,000 square feet, where 2,600 small truck parts are picked, such as bolts, nuts and other fasteners; 800 square feet of lineside assembly space; and areas for pressing and stamping operations.

Initially, bulky cardboard boxes on pallets filled the small-parts pick area. "It was a mess," says Tom Currier, the Distributor from Harris Handling who helped Daimler find more efficient solutions for the site. "People were using box cutters and ripping open cartons to grab what they needed. There were stray screws and empty boxes scattered all over the floor."

The cumbersome setup created a major speed bump for pickers responsible for delivering the fasteners to lineside. It also boxed in the





space, and that was a significant issue for Daimler. The site needed to quadruple the number of parts coming in – an impossible goal to achieve with the old racking system in place.

### Delivering a Quick Pick Supermarket Design

Tom called in UNEX to provide a solution that would address the space issue and establish an orderly, efficient and safe pick environment. The UNEX team designed a grocery store-type setup using FlowCell with 6-inch-wide SpanTrack Lanes.

“We initially tested about 40 racks at the facility to see if they would work in the pick area,” says Tom. “They worked great. Everything was controlled, contained. It was like night and day from what they had before. So, we added more.”

The pick area for fasteners now includes 2,600 SpanTrack Lanes, which Rodney says “take up a third less space than the old system and allow us to get a lot more product in the same footprint. And the racks are really durable. We can count on them to hold the weight.”

In addition, the UNEX system provides high visibility and accessibility. “Everything is labeled and coded, so we know we are getting the right fastener,” says Rodney. “It’s a quick and accurate pick point.”

### Productivity ‘Definitely Jumps’ at Lineside

Maximizing space and efficiency are top priorities at the pick point, and the same holds true for the lineside area. This is the place where Daimler workers assemble doors, windshield brackets, tire frames and other components that are shipped to plants that are building the complete truck or bus.

“We were looking for lineside storage solutions that were strong, serviceable, clean and lightweight,” says Rodney. FlowCell from UNEX turned out to be the best fit. Pickers from the fastener area deliver totes full of various fasteners to the FlowCell units, where lineside workers pick the exact screws and bolts they need to assemble an item.

“Productivity at lineside definitely jumps when workers don’t have to come off their station and waste a half hour to an hour walking 300 feet to sort through the parts they need,” says Tom.

UNEX provided 40 FlowCell Workstations, giving workers an organized and dependable way to carry out a variety of assembly tasks. The easy-to-build steel units are adjustable to allow for maximum product density to accommodate Daimler’s lineside needs.

UNEX studies show that FlowCell workstations can increase space utilization by up to 50% and boost production efficiency by 30%, because parts angle toward the picker, making picking easy and fast.

### Quality ‘Is Always There’

Rodney says his facility has “been busier than ever and won’t be slowing down any time soon.” A number of North American truck manufacturing facilities depend on the Gastonia plant, along with a handful of school bus companies and auto parts stores. “We need to run the facility as efficiently as possible to keep up, and the UNEX products help us do that.”

Tom adds he knew UNEX could provide the right solutions for the thriving Daimler facility. “I’ve done business with UNEX for a long time, and the quality of the product is always there. As a distributor, I only like to sell things with value, and I can count on UNEX to provide that.”



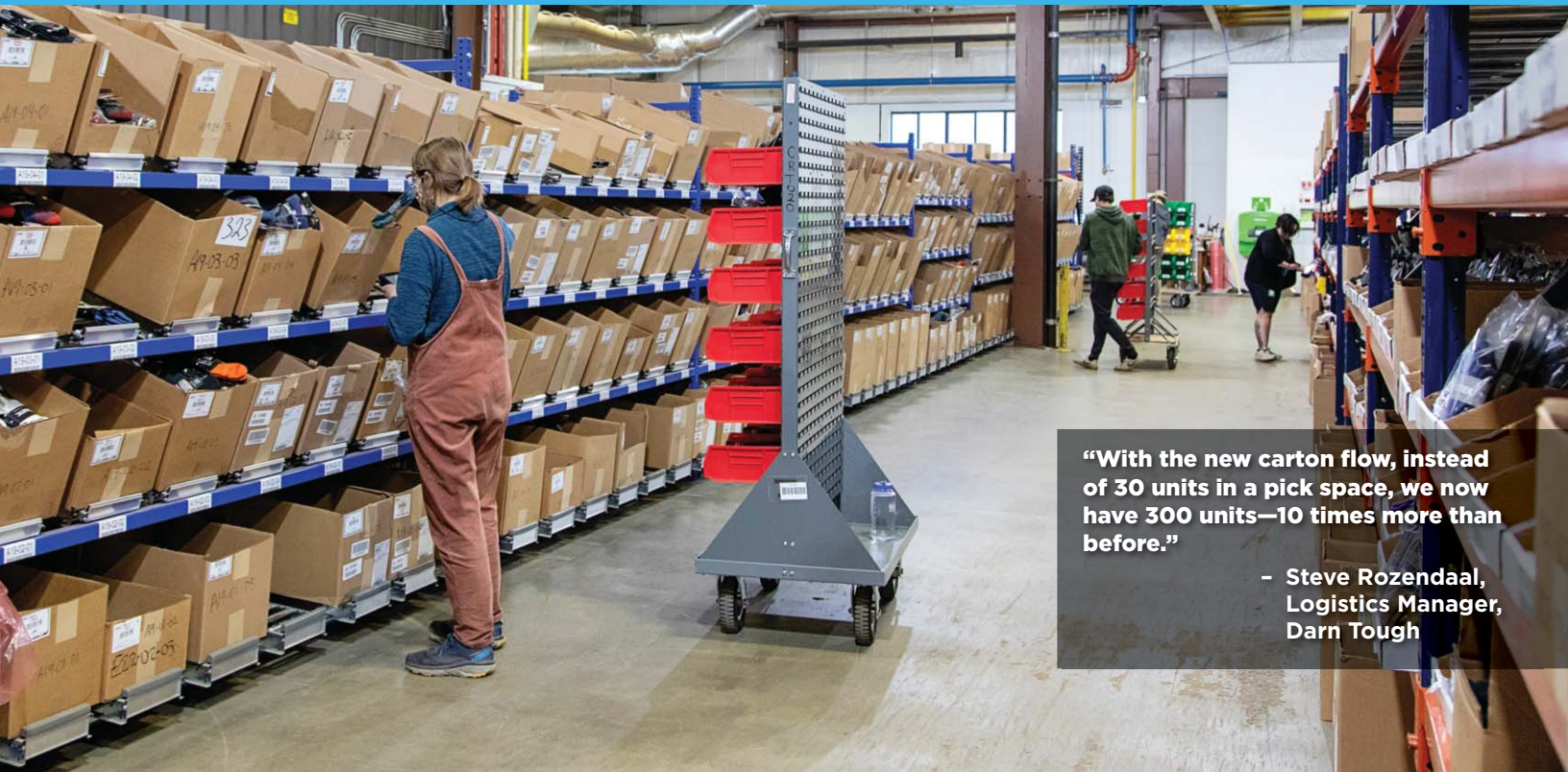
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# UNEX CASE STUDY



**“With the new carton flow, instead of 30 units in a pick space, we now have 300 units—10 times more than before.”**

**– Steve Rozendaal,  
Logistics Manager,  
Darn Tough**

**customer:** **Darn Tough Vermont®**

**operation:** Design, manufacture, pick, pack and ship thousands of socks every day

**goal:** Maximize pick efficiency and pick space, increase storage capacity

**solution:** FlowCell flow racks + SpanTrack carton flow from UNEX



## Sock Capital of the World Finds Its Match with UNEX Solutions

***Darn Tough ships more than 9 million pairs of socks to customers each year. UNEX solutions help keep them picking and packing.***

It's hard enough to keep a drawer full of socks matched and organized. But what about thousands of pairs—every day? That's exactly what happens at the Darn Tough facilities in Vermont. And the orders keep piling up.

“We make the greatest socks in the world,” says Kirk Smith, Director of Engineering & Maintenance. “And because of that, we continue to see double-digit growth each year.”

To keep pace with customer demands, the operation had to rethink its space and identify ways to increase efficiency and reduce replenishment. UNEX had the ideal solutions.

### **Moving More Socks without Hitting Any Snags**

Darn Tough socks hit the market in 2004. Until 2020, staff members knitted the socks, stored, picked, packaged and shipped them from the Cabot Hosiery Mill in Northfield, Vermont. But as word got around about the comfy, durable and best-fitting socks, orders stacked up, putting a tight space squeeze on the 40-year-old mill. Ultimately, Darn Tough found a 15,000-square-foot facility in Waterbury, Vermont, which was the former home of Green Mountain Coffee, and moved its order fulfillment operation there, giving manufacturing and packaging some breathing room at the mill.





"We ship out 3,000 pairs of socks a day from the Waterbury facility, and that number goes up to 15,000 pairs during the holidays," says Steve Rozendaal, Logistics Manager, Darn Tough.

To design and equip the Waterbury operation with the right carton flow and storage solutions, Darn Tough leaders met with Paul Nicholson, a Professional Engineer from The Beacon Group. "I reached out to UNEX because I had a long history with the company and knew UNEX products always exceeded expectations as far as performance," says Paul.

UNEX provided 70 feet of SpanTrack wheel beds and created lanes for each SKU. Lanes were equipped with knuckled end treatments to allow pickers to clearly see and safely grab items from a tote to fulfill orders at the facility.

In addition, UNEX installed 9 bays of FlowCell with 4 levels per bay and 7 lanes per level to provide a flexible solution to organize inventory, accelerate pick productivity and eliminate waste.

"With the new carton flow, instead of 30 units in a pick space, we now have 300 units—10 times more than before," says Steve. "We also identified 250 of our fastest selling socks and got them into the FlowCell. This helped us significantly reduce replenishment time and freed staff to focus on picking."

### Feeding the Knitting Machines

The newly designed order fulfillment operation worked so well that other departments implemented similar solutions. The production team implemented SpanTrack wheel beds in pallet racks on the second-floor mezzanine at the Waterbury facility to allow operators to retrieve high volume yarn counts and feed the dozens of knitting machines at the site.

The machines are grouped in rows with 16 machines to each set. "The tracks give us excellent storage and visibility to locations that may be empty," says Kirk. "The yarn is easy to reach and at the perfect height. You don't have to stretch or bend over to get what you need."

### Packaging and Product Come Together

The packaging team at the Northfield facility also installed 3 bays of FlowCell, 4 levels per bay, and 7 SpanTrack lanes with knuckled end treatments per level to improve storage and flow for slower-moving and faster-moving SKUs. At the mill, a steady stream of socks moves in and out of the building. Socks enter the room on carts, staff members match the orders to their unique packaging and then run the packages through the labeling machines.

### Growth Ahead

Production, packaging and order fulfillment are all realizing benefits from carton flow and storage solutions from UNEX. "I've been impressed with the whole process," says Steve. "In our area, the install took about 10 hours, and we were up and running. And the speed and functionality were perfect right out of the gate."

Since 2019, Darn Tough has experienced 75% year over year growth, and Steve says he doesn't expect that to change anytime soon. "It's because people love our socks. Have you tried a pair?"



"We're working out of an old mill, and the space is broken up. And that makes it a challenge to figure out how to increase storage and improve how socks enter the building, flow through it and leave," says Tim Bullard, Engineering Manager. "But with the new carton flow and racking, we are utilizing the space much better and improving efficiency in the packaging area."



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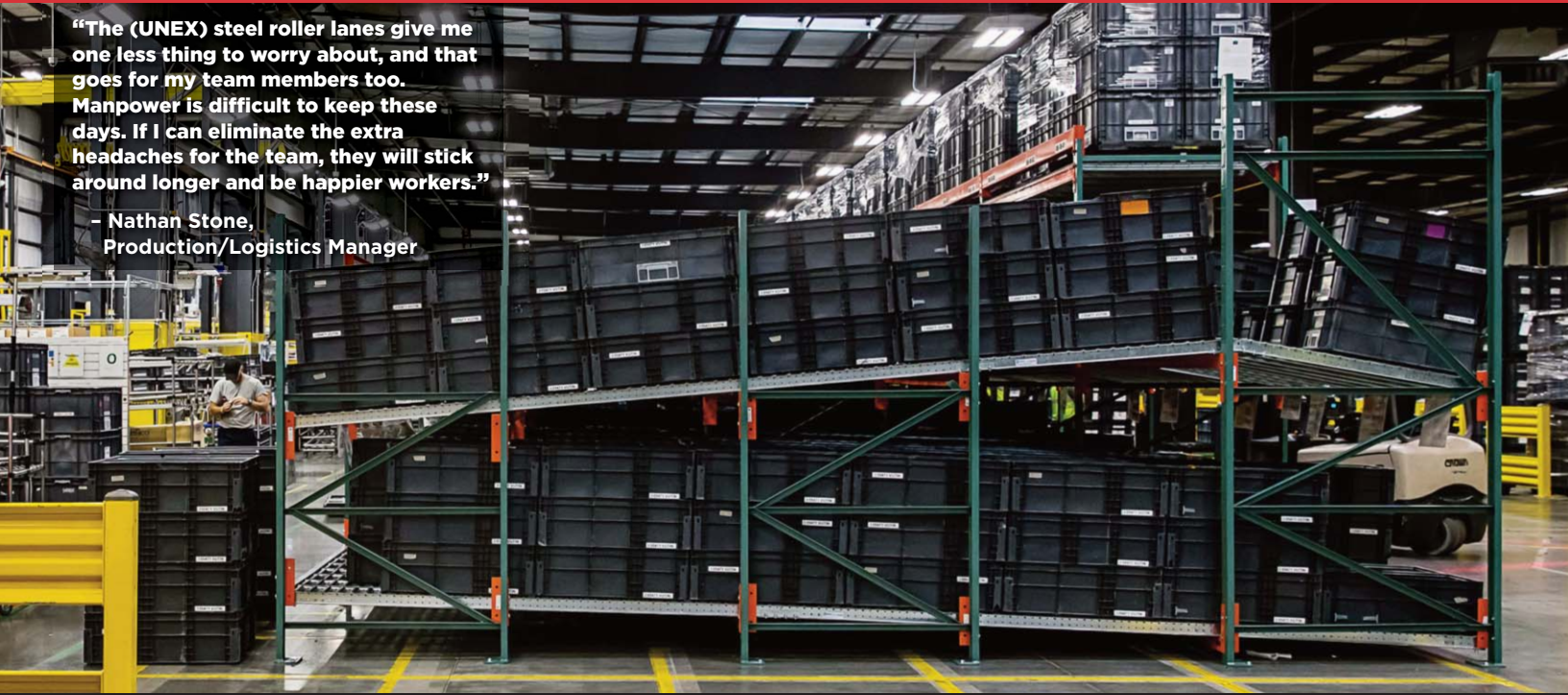
LIT-CASE-023



# UNEX CASE STUDY

"The (UNEX) steel roller lanes give me one less thing to worry about, and that goes for my team members too. Manpower is difficult to keep these days. If I can eliminate the extra headaches for the team, they will stick around longer and be happier workers."

- Nathan Stone,  
Production/Logistics Manager



**customer:** Parts supplier for large automotive company

**operation:** Picking, assembling, manufacturing and shipping

**goal:** Modify carton flow area to improve flexibility, durability and safety

**solution:** Heavy duty SpanTrack steel roller lanes from UNEX



## UNEX Steel Rollers Help Automotive Supplier 'Knuckle Down' and Continue to Deliver Parts on Time and on Track

*A fast-paced facility is on a roll with an upgraded carton flow area equipped with heavy duty SpanTrack steel roller lanes.*

Workers at a thriving Indiana facility deliver 6,500 parts each workday to a major car and truck manufacturer. "We are a just-in-time supplier and are constantly moving a high volume of automotive components of all shapes and sizes, from parts that go under the hood to under the body," says Nathan Stone, Production/Logistics Manager.

Throughout each shift, empty and filled totes flow seamlessly across 38 bays equipped with heavy duty, galvanized steel rollers from UNEX. But this uninterrupted volley of carton flow was not always the case.

### In Search of a Flexible, Durable Solution

A few years ago, Nathan and his team recognized the need for a major upgrade to the carton flow area. Components were changing, which meant totes were getting bigger and heavier. It was time to make significant changes to keep pace with the automotive industry's ever-evolving demands.

"At the time, we were using skinny tracks with skinny rollers. The wheels were falling apart. Shafts and bearings were all over the floor. Totes were hanging up. Team members were climbing inside the lane to pull out the totes, and that was a safety issue," says Nathan. "We needed a solution that could drop in easily, since components are always changing, and we had to find something durable, efficient and safe."





Nathan met with Darrin Wicks of the Indoff Corporation, to redesign a new and improved carton flow area that could meet the facility's needs for years to come. Darrin is a UNEX distributor that has utilized the UNEX product line to help his customers improve their processes in many different projects.

"We modified the entire system to give the plant the flexibility to put heavy and large containers as well as small, light ones into the racks," says Darrin. "We selected the heavy duty rollers from UNEX, because they provided the versatility and durability we were looking for."

The team put a few lanes to the test. "They rolled better than we ever expected," says Darrin. After the rollers passed with flying colors, the team installed 652 heavy duty SpanTrack steel roller lanes across 38 bays. The installation was completed in one week during the plant's regular shutdown to avoid downtime at the busy facility.

*"Overall, this was a massive project. We changed our entire storage system," says Nathan. "With the old system, if I had to change finished goods, I also had to change the conveyor beds. Now, all I have to do is move my signage and my totes. Moving things around and joining lanes together is so easy."*

## The Need for Knuckles

Inside the plant, totes filled with parts move at a steady clip as team members fill orders from the automobile maker. At the same time, empty totes are collected, refilled with parts, and returned to a top level. "The lanes with the newly filled totes are pitched, so height can be an ergonomic issue if our team members have to lift the totes too high and push them toward production," says Nathan.

To minimize over-the-shoulder lifting and to ensure the efficient flow of totes down the length of the lane, the UNEX team installed knuckles at rear-loading areas. The attachments create a bend in the track, which lowers the pick point. "We typically use the knuckles with light duty rollers," says Ryan McKinney, Regional Sales Manager, Central East, UNEX. "For this project, we customized the knuckles for the heavy duty rollers to make it easy for workers to load totes and to help meet the customer's ergonomic standards."

## Tough and Organized

Nathan recalls that the previous rollers "were just not made for the abuse of a high volume of totes moving forward on a daily basis. The UNEX rollers are tough. We haven't had to do any repairs. The frames are solid."

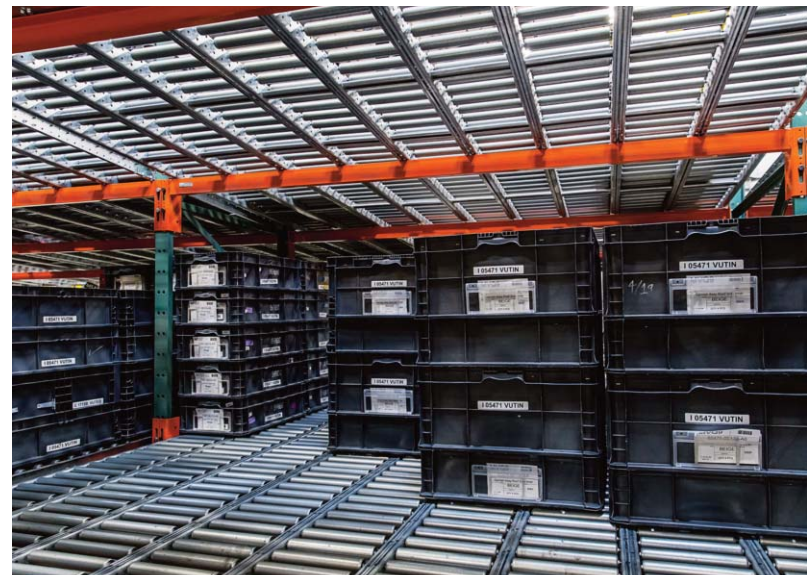
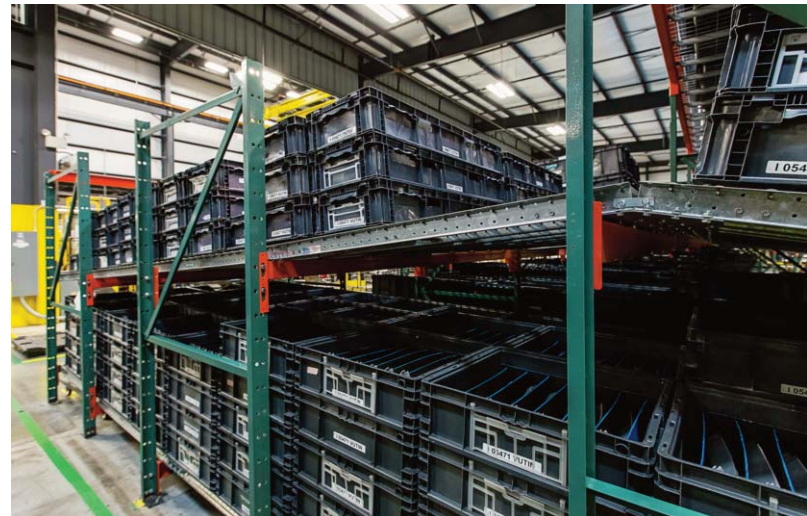
The all-steel full-width rollers with ball bearings allow for less slope, maximum carton support and help boxes and totes track straighter—features that are significantly superior to the previous system.

"If there's ever a concern about weight, customers should think seriously about using the steel rollers from UNEX," says Darrin. "These will be workhorses in the plant for a long time."

The UNEX solution also provides a clean, uniform look across the plant. "There are no gaps. Everything is butted together well. It's much cleaner," says Nathan. "When people walk in here, they are impressed."

## 'One Less Thing to Worry About'

The heavy duty SpanTrack steel rollers have been working well at the plant for months. But there is another benefit that Nathan thinks is also important. "The steel roller lanes give me one less thing to worry about, and that goes for my team members too. Manpower is difficult to keep these days. If I can eliminate the extra headaches for the team, they will stick around longer and be happier workers."



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# UNEX CASE STUDY



## Feeding the Big Apple



**customer:** FRESH DIRECT

**operation:** Online Grocer

**goal:** Dramatically improve order picking system, increase storage density

**solution:** SpanTrack systems from UNEX



## Online Grocer Finds Floor Space for Hundreds of SKUs and Improves Pick Rates with SpanTrack®

When Fresh Direct set out to dramatically improve its order picking system, the company turned to UNEX to design and deliver a solution that would increase operational efficiency while reducing space requirements.

Fresh Direct is a Manhattan-based online service that gives New Yorkers a way to get their groceries delivered right to the front door. Customers place an order over the Internet, and then Fresh Direct order pickers maneuver large, state-of-the-art pick carts along the aisles of the company's distribution center to fulfill each order.

Once orders are complete, truck drivers load the groceries and deliver them to street corners around the city. Runners then take the groceries directly to residents' apartments and homes.

*"Our employees pick about 63,000 orders a week, averaging 8.5 lines per order and 10 items per order," says Silvio Trumper, Senior Operations Manager. "We have delivery guarantees, so every order has to be picked correctly and delivered on time."*

And that's where UNEX provided a key ingredient to keep Fresh Direct's grocery service moving without interruption.

### Replacing a Worn-out, Inefficient System

When Silvio joined Fresh Direct several years ago, one of his first goals was to create a more efficient system for picking the thousands of products stored in the company's dry and cold storage warehouse.

*"The existing system was falling apart," says Silvio. "The plastic wheels were breaking, leaving debris all over the warehouse."*





### With the old carton flow system:

- Items were getting stuck or falling through the shelves because of extra spacing between wheel rails.
- Workers were reaching deep into the shelves and using hooks to retrieve and pull forward products that were hung up on shelves.
- Flexibility was non-existent: Dividers couldn't be moved to accommodate changes in product sizes.

"The system was awkward and a waste of space," says Silvio. "Overall, our pick rates were suffering."

Meanwhile, the Fresh Direct business was exploding with growth. "Fresh Direct was offering a one-of-a-kind service for residents of New York City," says Greg Caron, an Account Manager for Abel Womack who helped evaluate Fresh Direct's processes. "But the existing order picking system was getting in the way of growth. Workers needed a durable solution and room to add more SKUs to keep up with demand."

### A Customized Solution: SpanTrack

Greg brought in UNEX to take a look at the operation. He says, "From experience, I knew UNEX could provide the right system for this customer" – which is exactly what UNEX designed and delivered.

Using a phased-in approach, UNEX replaced the carton flow at about 4,000 product locations/roller tracks with SpanTrack at Fresh Direct's Borden Avenue warehouse. Then, when Fresh Direct opened the Revue Avenue warehouse in October 2011, UNEX equipped the entire 70,000-square-foot facility with SpanTrack.

"When we moved all of our dry goods operation to the second warehouse, we had many projects going at once," says Silvio. "It was so critical to keep the picking process moving smoothly, and SpanTrack played a big part in that."

One of the biggest benefits of SpanTrack is that the system has allowed Fresh Direct to minimize required floor space in a city where real estate is at a premium. SpanTrack's flexibility to handle products of varying sizes and shapes has enabled Fresh Direct to add 500 new SKUs in the past year alone.

Silvio says Fresh Direct has experienced many benefits from SpanTrack compared to the old carton flow system, including:

- Faster pick rates – Inventory is easy to see, reach and retrieve.
- Efficient product replenishment (FIFO) – Product is loaded from the back and rolls smoothly forward.

- Cleaner warehouses – The full-width roller maximizes the conveyable surface area under each carton, eliminating gaps and preventing items from falling through shelves.
- Durability – The first installation took place about 4 years ago, and Silvio says the product "still looks like new and is in great shape."

### What's Next on the Check List?

UNEX is currently designing and testing additional carton flow solutions for Fresh Direct, such as a knuckle-style flow system that will give order pickers an ergonomically sound way to pick individual pieces from the case.

***"The UNEX team is great to work with. They get out there on the floor with us and work hard to understand what the customer needs," says Greg. "They are proactive, professional and help solve the issues so that companies like Fresh Direct can keep growing."***



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# UNEX CASE STUDY

**The UNEX team is up for challenges. They work with you until they design a good, cost-effective solution."**

- Frank Falter, CEO, George J. Falter Co., Inc.



**customer:** GEORGE J. FALTER CO., INC.  
**operation:** Convenience store supplier  
**goal:** Increase pick lines to accommodate new SKUs  
**solution:** Roller Rack with Flow Bed from UNEX



## Distributor Maximizes Space, Boosts Efficiency and Reduces Labor Costs with Roller Rack Solution from UNEX

*Walk down any convenience store candy aisle, and you'll see a new product or service every other week. All that variety is great for consumers, but it can wreak havoc on the distribution center that has to store and pick the product and support the services - unless you have the perfect carton flow system in place.*

In 2011, an inefficient and cumbersome pick line in an existing mezzanine area was undersized and falling apart and slowing workers down at George Falter in Baltimore, Maryland. "Our old system had lanes with plastic wheel tracks that would get busted up, and product would fall through or get hung up," explains Frank Falter, CEO of George J. Falter Co. Inc. "Plus, the layout of the area made it tough for employees to reach products easily and safely."

To address the problem, Falter turned to Werres Corporation, a materials handling solutions company based in Frederick, Maryland. "George J. Falter distributes a variety of products that go into small stores, from candy to food items," says Bill Costa, Vice President of Sales for Werres. "This type of distributor has to store a significant number of SKUs, and most of those products are going to have broken-case picking. Carton flow racking is the product of choice in this setting. We recommended UNEX's flow tracking because it's the best product for the job."





## The Mezzanine Makeover

UNEX was no stranger to the folks at George J. Falter. “We had worked with UNEX a couple of years before,” says Falter. “Mark Neuwirth came up with some great ideas for how to reconfigure the flow pattern for our cigarette pick operation.”

So, when it came time to rethink the pick lines in a mezzanine area, Falter says he was confident that UNEX could come up with the right solution.

In the first phase of the mezzanine project, the team focused on the upper level, the pick point for grocery products and dry goods. “We had a combination of fast and slow-moving products on top of the mezzanine,” explains Falter. “UNEX designed two sides of Roller Rack with Flow Bed flanking both sides of standalone wire shelving for slower movers.”

***“The finished area was the perfect combination of carton flow, static shelving and conveyor,” says Costa. “It was very successful.”***

The makeover was so effective that Falter decided to work with UNEX to create a pick line under the mezzanine deck. “It’s cooler there, which is great for chocolate, and we figured we could model the flow upstairs to optimize the space under the deck,” says Falter.

The UNEX design incorporated 32 bays of carton flow and approximately 45 wire deck shelving units, resulting in three pick lines: two upstairs and one u-shaped line downstairs, housing 3,000 SKUs.

## Hitting a Wall... a Column, Actually

Columns holding up the mezzanine initially presented a challenge to the design team. “We worked with UNEX to figure out a way to make sure pickers could work around the columns and maximize the use of the space,” says Costa.

UNEX customized its roller system so that shelving actually went through the columns. “That’s the thing about UNEX. The team is up for challenges,” says Falter. “They work with you until they design a good, cost-effective solution.”

## Measurable Results

Falter says that Roller Rack and Flow Bed from UNEX have generated multiple benefits for the distribution center. Between previous improvements to the cigarette picking area and the mezzanine improvements, Falter says he’s been able to reduce the number of pickers by a third.

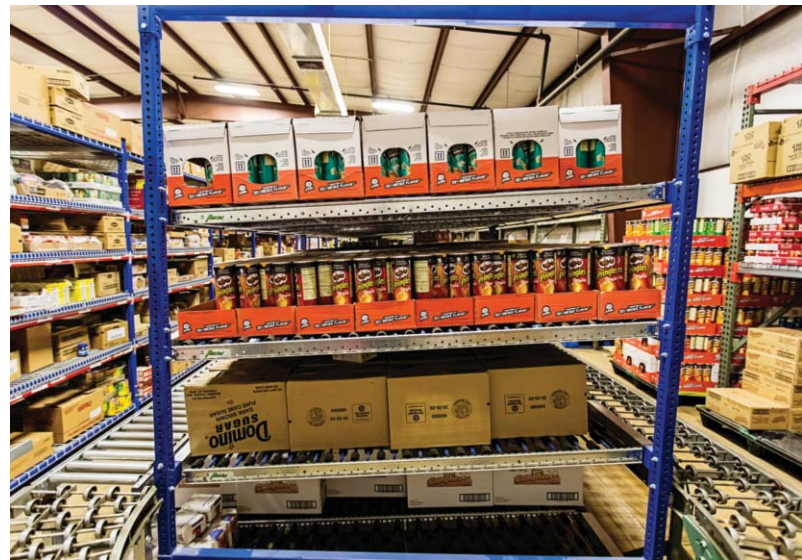
Neuwirth is quick to note that the Falter team’s hands-on approach was a key factor in the successful transition. The Falter team phased-in the additional pick lines, which

prevented interruptions to the day-to-day business. “Their commitment to the project played large for them and ensured the best return on their investment.”

## Other benefits stack up well, too. According to Falter, UNEX solutions:

- Maximize the use of space. “Manufacturers come out with new SKUs every month. We’re always trying to use every square foot that we can. UNEX solutions help us maximize space because we can put any size box next to another, which creates more pick faces in the carton flow area.”
- Reduce walking time. “Having the product in a good spot where it can be picked efficiently can save you time and money. UNEX’s designs minimize walk time, and that means higher productivity.”
- Improve ergonomics. “Everything is within 5 feet with carton flow from UNEX. There’s less bending, reaching and walking so that pickers can do their work safely and quickly.”

***“When I talk to customers, there are three key things they usually want to know: How to use their space better, more efficiently and with fewer people,” says Costa. “UNEX helped George J. Falter achieve all three.”***



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# UNEX CASE STUDY



**"In total, we eliminated more than 3.1 miles of non-value-added movement per day. The changes to the facility allow our ShopGoodwill.com team to produce 1,000 items per day compared to 800 items in the prior state."**

**- Matt Grossberg, Operations Analyst, Goodwill Industries of Central and Southern Indiana**

**customer:** Goodwill of Central & Southern Indiana

**operation:** E-commerce facility, Indianapolis, Indiana

**goal:** Improve efficiencies to create a better working environment and make room for more SKUs.

**solution:** SpeedCell from UNEX



## E-commerce Facility Gets a Makeover to Drive Efficiency for Good

***A workflow redesign and SpeedCell help a growing operation pack in 30% more products and eliminate miles of daily steps for employees.***

From golf shoes to guitars, the Goodwill eCommerce facility in Indiana houses hundreds of items of all shapes and sizes – and the products just keep coming.

"By the end of 2022, we had experienced significant growth and recognized the need to redesign the facility for better flow and efficiencies that would make way for future growth," says Matt Grossberg, Operations Analyst, Goodwill Industries of Central and Southern Indiana. "Expanding the building was not an option. We needed to store a lot more volume in the space we had. And we needed to get items closer to employees. They were having to walk 10 to 15 feet to store products after they had been inspected, and pickers and material handlers were wasting steps too."

### Identifying the Right Fit

Matt brought in the UPS Process & Flow Engineering team to redesign the layout of the facility. He also met with Peter Jochim, Process Specialist from Stac Material Handling, to analyze the existing storage solutions and identify potential new ones for the facility's redesigned floor plan.





"We looked at the existing SKUs and the popular items that needed a footprint," says Peter. "There were products sitting on top of shelving – and that was a deep pick for employees – and there was additional racking that was unused, static storage. We called UNEX to talk about adding SpeedCell for better storage throughout the facility."

SpeedCell proved to be a perfect fit. In 2023, UNEX added 1,806 SpeedCell locations to the facility, stacked to create 252 columns across 13 new bays. UNEX SpeedCell instantly transformed Goodwill's space into useable, accessible storage.

### Shaving off the miles

The new workflow design and SpeedCell reduced walking time for shelving associates by 1.6 miles per day; pickers, by 1 mile per day; and material handlers, by half a mile per day.

*"In total, we eliminated more than 3.1 miles of non-value-added movement per day. The changes to the facility allow our ShopGoodwill.com team to produce 1,000 items per day compared to 800 items in the prior state. By reducing task time, we reduced the wear and tear on employees, and that improved their daily experience at the facility."*

- Matt Grossberg, Operations Analyst, Goodwill Industries of Central and Southern Indiana.

### 'It's All about the People'

Matt says keeping employees safe and satisfied on the job is a priority for the Goodwill team. "Anytime you talk about Goodwill, you have to talk about how you impact people – the people who work with you and the communities you serve. Everything we do needs to support the Goodwill mission and the goals of the organization."

More than 150 Goodwill organizations from the U.S. and Canada list and auction items on the eCommerce site, such as purses, jewelry, collectibles, clothing, and more. Purchases help fund Goodwill programs and services that help individuals build skills, find jobs, and grow their careers. The organization has provided career training for more than 230,000 people and supportive services to help them be successful, such as English language training, additional education, and access to transportation and childcare.

### Showcasing SpeedCell for other Goodwill stores

Each year, the eCommerce facility hosts the Midwest Conference for Goodwill franchises across the Ohio Valley, and Unboxed, an annual gala that welcomes vendors who are good citizens and provide a good product. Matt says his team will showcase UNEX SpeedCell and how high-density storage has created efficiencies and a better working environment for employees.

"We now have a new workflow and storage space that allows for a flexible and agile eCommerce facility that can meet the ever-changing demands of eCommerce customers in a cost-effective manner," says Matt. "We are excited to share that with other Goodwill stores."

### The SpeedCell Stats

**SpeedCell** from UNEX is proven to increase storage density by up to 60% and reduce labor costs by 40%. SpeedCell creates a highly efficient and accurate pick.

**SpeedCell** is made from no-fray vinyl with an interwoven mesh inside to give it superior strength. It comes in six different sizes ranging from XS to XXL.

**SpeedCell** columns are hung from a patented steel track system using high-strength webbing for maximum durability, and can be purchased with or without racking.

For more information, visit:

[unex.com/solutions/high-density-storage/speedcell](https://unex.com/solutions/high-density-storage/speedcell)



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LIT-CASE-025



# UNEX CASE STUDY

"If we have a new recipe to build with different fresh foods, we have to be flexible to make those changes. Carton flow from UNEX gives us that flexibility. The product is modular and easy to install, without any glitches or interruptions to production."

- Valerie Clements,  
Special Operations Team, Hello Fresh



**customer:** HelloFresh

**operation:** Picking, assembling, packing and shipping fresh meal kits to homes

**goal:** Condense lines, maximize space, allow for expansion and flexibility

**solutions:** FlowCell carton flow racks and SpanTrack with gravity rollers from UNEX



## A Recipe for Success

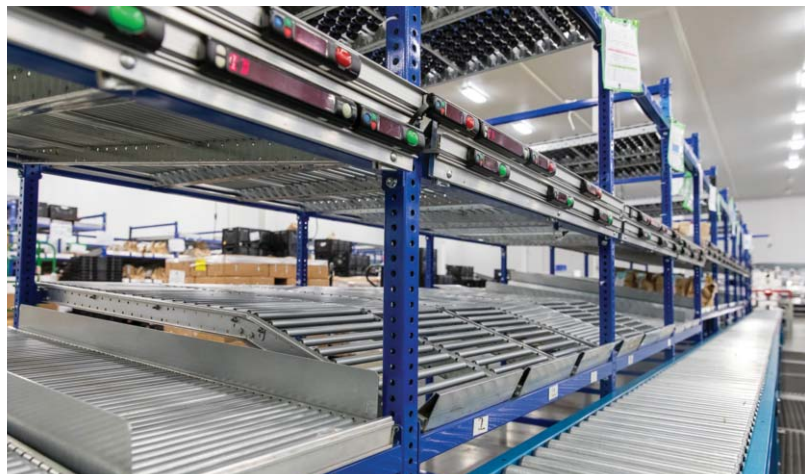
**UNEX carton flow solutions help HelloFresh condense meal-kitting lines, maximize space and make room for future growth - and appetites.**

"We're continuously expanding our offerings and currently have more than 20 different meal options to choose from each week," says Valerie Clements, who works on the HelloFresh Special Operations Team. "We have to be flexible. When HelloFresh makes a decision to offer something new for customers, my team has to be ready to make that happen."

### Squeezing the Most Out of the Space

With business growing rapidly, the HelloFresh Special Operations Team began investigating ways to add more lines and speed up kit assembly at the Newark facility. "The products weren't flowing down the line smoothly. We had wire structures with lots of angles and various racks. There weren't any rollers, so team members had to manually push the cartons down while pickers had to pull the boxes forward," says Valerie.

Jay Cox, Northeast Regional Manager for UNEX, says HelloFresh learned about FlowCell carton flow racks from UNEX and decided to put a few to the test. "We set up the line where kits are built and then followed the line all the way down with our FlowCell product," says Jay. "We tried a few things - different roller types, rails and heights to get the configuration exactly right."





## More Lines, Same Floor Space

Creating meal kits is not a simple task. The facility must be kept at 36 degrees at all times to keep food fresh. Every step of the kit-building process must be precise to ensure the right elements come together in the right package at the right time. Various lines are working to package the tiny kits containing the pre-measured ingredients needed to make each meal.

The last step in the assembly line requires adding the protein: the chicken sausage that pairs with the spinach ravioli, the beef for the Tex-Mex cheese-stuffed burgers and the tilapia that tops off the potato wedges and cabbage slaw.

"If we have a new recipe to build with different fresh foods, we have to be flexible to make those changes. Carton flow from UNEX gives us that flexibility," says Valerie. "The product is modular and easy to install, without any glitches or interruptions to production."

Most important, FlowCell from UNEX maximizes the facility's space. "With FlowCell, we were able to cut the length of the lines in half, which gave us the ability to increase the number of kitting and assembly lines from 18 to 28 in the same amount of floor space," says Valerie.

Gravity rollers are housed inside the FlowCell so the product flows smoothly to pickers. "It's ergonomically friendly, because workers don't have to reach over and pick," says Valerie. "We also use SpanTrack to create return lines for empty boxes so that replenishers can pick them up with ease."

In addition, FlowCell helps reinforce one of the company's key messages to customers: "We're all about providing customers with wholesome, fresh food," says Valerie. "The racking system helps keep our centers clean and organized to help deliver on that promise."

Today, UNEX solutions are helping HelloFresh meet demands not only at the Newark facility, but at facilities in Richmond, California, and Grand Prairie, Texas.

## A Full Menu of Benefits

UNEX has been providing space saving, productivity boosting solutions since 1964. Studies show that FlowCell can help companies increase space utilization by up to 50% and elevate productivity by up to 30%.

In addition, FlowCell carton flow racks are up to 13 times stronger than 28mm tube-and-joint flow rack systems and will support up to 1,000 pounds per level.

"We help create flexible, durable, customized carton flow that allows growing companies like HelloFresh adapt to product changes quickly, efficiently and without interruptions to customers," says Jay.



### Did You Know?

**2011**

The year  
HelloFresh  
launched in  
Germany

**10**

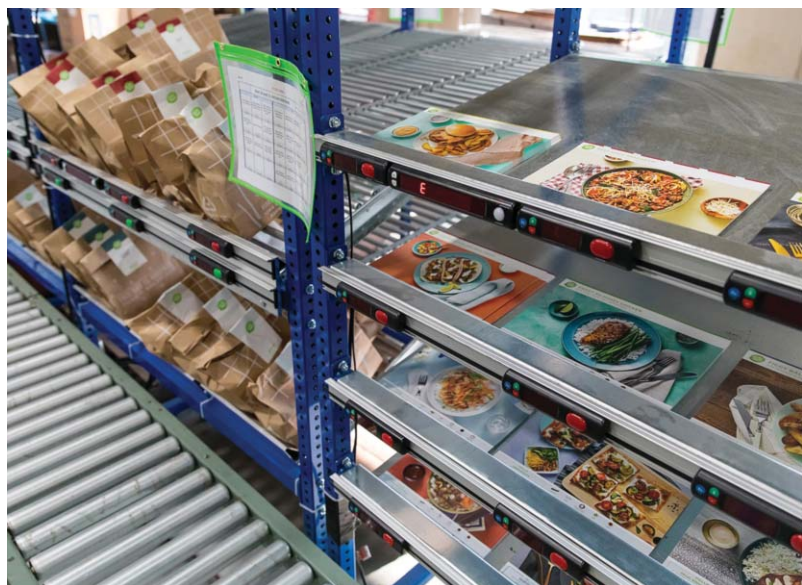
Number  
of countries  
HelloFresh  
now serves

**3**

Number of U.S.  
locations: New  
Jersey, Texas &  
California

**4-6 million**

Number of customers  
worldwide who regularly  
order HelloFresh kits



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LIT-CASE-010

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# UNEX CASE STUDY

**“I’m able to put about 6 times more product in the same footprint because of the Span-Track, and that’s a huge benefit.”**

– Jason Lucas, Facility Warehouse Manager, Maletis Beverage



**customer: MALETIS BEVERAGE**

**operation: Wholesale Beer Distributor**

**goal: Organize beverage mini-kegs, kegs and cases for accessibility**

**solution: SpanTrack systems from UNEX**



## SpanTrack by UNEX Gets Kegs off the Ground and Gives Beer Distributor Room to Grow

*A thriving beer distributor now has an efficient and space-saving system for storing and moving mini-kegs, thanks to a customized SpanTrack system from UNEX.*

With the beer business booming, workers at Maletis Beverage must manage hundreds of mini-kegs of domestic and imported beer that arrive each day at the distribution center in Portland, Oregon.

“We have 400 different types of beer in these kegs because there are so many microbreweries in the area,” says Jason Lucas, Facility Warehouse Manager. “In the past few years, we’ve picked up a couple of thousand SKUs, and our building isn’t getting any bigger.”

Historically, workers stored the 65-pound aluminum kegs on pallets on the ground. “Our space was almost maxed out,” says Jason. “And it was tough to find and retrieve the kegs on the pallets because they weren’t organized. It was a time-consuming mess.”

### An Idea Begins to Brew

Jason began to sketch an idea that would free up floor space and create a more efficient pick. He shared his concept with John Caselli, a distributor from NorthWest Handling Systems, and the plans were handed off to UNEX for development.



*SpanTrack keg lanes were installed without pitch. The rollers assist the operators with picking/loading from either side of the rack.*





***“I had the idea; John had the toolbox - UNEX,” says Jason.***

UNEX in turn “gave us an excellent design, developed the customized roller tracks and delivered them fast,” says John. “Ultimately, Maletis Beverage was able to get hundreds of kegs off the ground and into a much more condensed area.”

### Let It Flow

According to Chuck Doty, UNEX Director of Western Sales, UNEX manufactured 144 lanes of Heavy Duty SpanTrack for Maletis Beverage. Each track holds 9 kegs deep of a specific brand, and the kegs can be loaded easily from the front or back of the lane. UNEX created side guards to keep the kegs steady.

“I’m able to put about 6 times more product in the same footprint because of the roller tracks, and that’s a huge benefit,” says Jason.

He adds that the new system has significantly reduced mispicks because every brand is so clearly tagged. And accuracy is critical to his company’s reputation. “If we get the wrong beer on the truck, we have to make a special run out to the account to make it right,” says Jason. “Accuracy builds trust with your customers and efficiency within your operation.”

### Ready for the Future

Every week, new products arrive at Maletis Beverage for distribution. “Even in a difficult economy, the liquor business continues to do well,” says Jason. “Now, we have the space for whatever comes in next.”

The SpanTrack system is working so well that Jason has placed an order to implement the same systems at the company’s Vancouver location.

“UNEX delivered a cutting edge design that is not overly built or overly complex,” says John. “This is just a great example of creative minds getting together to develop a helpful solution.”



***A Maletis operator picks a 1/6 barrel keg from the rack and adds it to the outgoing shipment.***



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# UNEX CASE STUDY

**customer:** NATIONAL FOOD  
WHOLESALER

**operation:** Grocery distributor

**goal:** Maximize use of picking space

**solution:** Pick Tunnel Carts from UNEX

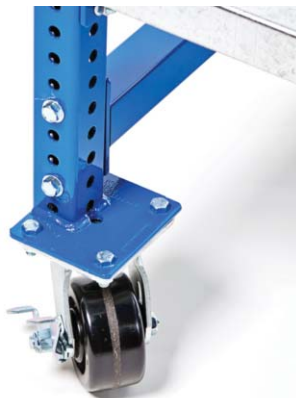
## The Path to Higher Productivity

### More SKUs in the Pick Path and Fewer Footsteps Result in Dramatic Efficiencies for National Distributor

*Workers at a national distributor of food products have reduced travel time on the pick path by 80%, reduced pick time by 42% and freed up 456 pallet positions. How did they do it? With innovative storage solutions and pick tunnel carts from UNEX.*

#### Too Many SKUs Going Askew

The distributor was faced with a great problem – explosive growth. Unfortunately, the proliferation of SKUs was wreaking havoc on productivity. To create space, slow moving items were taken away from the pick aisle and shoved in corners on shelves here and there, requiring workers to leave the pick line to retrieve items.



***“The number one time waster in order picking is footsteps,” says Mark Neuwirth, UNEX Vice President. “Leaving the pick line also wastes energy and jeopardizes the accuracy of the pick.”***

#### Activating SKUBE

The distributor turned to UNEX for help. “It was time for the customer to rethink the warehouse,” says Brian Neuwirth, UNEX President. “We had just the tool to get the job started.”

The UNEX team deployed SKUBE, UNEX’s proprietary software that analyzes an operation’s inventory and assigns products to the correct storage medium.

“SKUBE analyzed the movement of products so we could understand which items should be assigned to pallets, carton flow or shelving units,” says Mark. “The analysis was the first important step to getting things in order.”

#### The ‘Tunnel’ Vision

Once the right medium for storage was assigned to each product, the team set out to redesign the pick line. The UNEX team created a new pick line that intermixed pallet positions, carton flow and shelving. The team incorporated shelving into the existing pallet rack layout by removing the beams from the ground floor positions on selected bays, creating a walkthrough within the pallet rack.



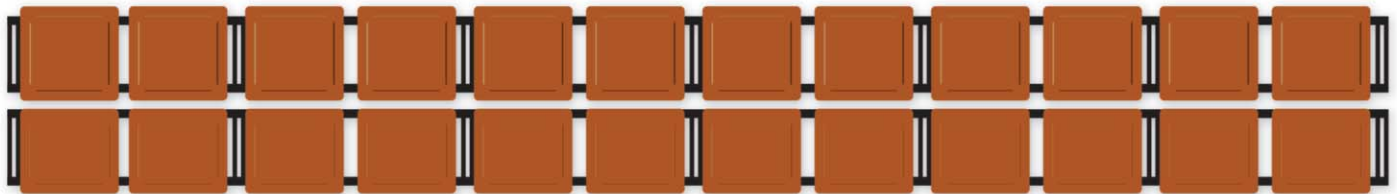
The team then installed mobile shelving units within these walkthroughs, and the shelving has become known as **"Pick Tunnel Carts."**

The mobile pick tunnel carts are loaded off line and moved into the pallet rack bays in the pick area. The new configuration eliminated the need to travel up to an additional 500 feet per order to pick the slow moving product from the shelving in the storage areas.

The pick line redesign improved productivity and provided huge space savings. "The same pallet footprint that once held only 4 SKUs could now fit 28 SKUs per bay with the carton flow setup and 80 SKUs with the shelving system," says Brian. "One of our goals was to maximize space at the facility, and getting each product into the most efficient storage medium allowed us to do that."

**- BEFORE -**

**Standard floor pallet pick line - picking from 7 bays of floor pick pallets.**



**24 SKUs on Pick Line**



**- AFTER -**

**Integrating Pick Tunnel Carts for slow moving items, Carton Flow for medium moving items and floor pallet picks for fast moving items.**



**154 SKUs on Pick Line**





# UNEX CASE STUDY



**customer:** Overton's

**operation:** A leading retailer of apparel, water sports, marine, hunting and boating accessories

**goal:** Add a large number of additional pick slots to support rapid growth in the apparel category

**solution:** SpeedCell from UNEX



## Leaving the Competition in its Wake

*Overton's adds thousands of SKU locations to its existing facility with SpeedCell from UNEX*

### Riding the Growth Wave

The world's most extensive watersports and marine accessories dealer, Overton's began by selling water skis out of a local grocery store in Greenville, North Carolina, in 1976. The company now provides an expanded selection of over 100,000 boating and water sports products worldwide.

Overton's faced multiple issues with their previous storage solution. Wear and tear on their bin boxes, poor cube utilization, and improperly sized pick locations did not support growth in specific categories. Order pickers had to use ladders or get on their knees to reach the back of the bin boxes. They needed a large number of additional pick slots to support their desired rapid growth in the apparel category and needed them quickly!





## Same Floor Space, More Pick Locations

Overton's installed 112 SpeedCell bays within their 267,000 square foot facility, which added 219 locations in each bay, resulting in 4,380 locations per aisle, 17,000 locations total.

The implementation of SpeedCell has not only increased SKU locations but also reduced footsteps. Workers no longer need to crawl and climb ladders to reach for products, increasing productivity, and saving a significant amount of time.

Overton's added thousands of SKU locations with SpeedCell while still utilizing the same warehouse footprint, and ultimately improved efficiency by 20-30%. The number of pick locations also increased by 150%, compressing the amount for floor space required, allowing Overton's to delay significant site alterations. SpeedCell also increased the number of orders pulled per day per employee, allowing them to put off hiring additional staffing.

## Space Optimization Leads to Business Growth

Storage density and labor optimization allowed Overton's to improve the SKU-selection & variety it can offer to its customers, which can be a critical differentiator in their industry.

UNEX delivered a solution for Overton's that maximizes space and helps a growing business keep pace with demand.



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LIT-CASE-021



# UNEX CASE STUDY



**customer:** PINE STATE TRADING CO.

**operation:** Convenience store products distributor

**goal:** Maximize space and flexibility for a diverse inventory in a new facility

**solution:** Flow Bed and SpanTrack systems from UNEX



## Go With the Flow

### Leading Distributor of Convenience Store Products Maximizes Space and Flexibility with UNEX Systems

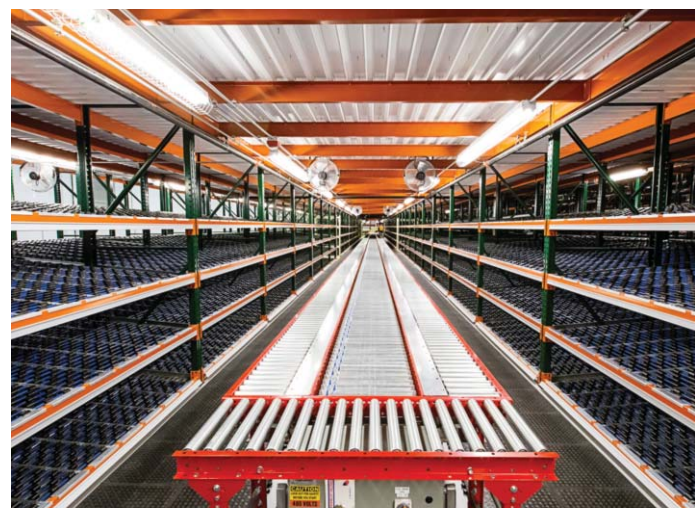
*With a warehouse space crunch jeopardizing growth opportunities, Pine State Trading Co. decided to make a big move and flex for the future.*

More than 5,000 convenience stores in the New England region and New York depend on Pine State Trading Co. to deliver a variety of products to fill their shelves – from salads to cigarettes. “We distribute items of all shapes and sizes, and our stock can change frequently,” says Steve Mitchell, Director of Operations at Pine State Trading Co. “To keep up with customer demands, our distribution center must run efficiently and flawlessly.”

### Out of Space

Founded in 1941 as a small family-owned business, Pine State Trading Co. has evolved into a prominent distributor for the region’s convenience stores. In 2011, the company faced a significant challenge: “We were completely out of space at our distribution facility and were even renting additional storage facilities,” says Steve. Meanwhile, the company was projecting a 50% increase in volume. “We needed a place where we could grow.”

In 2012, the company located a larger facility in Gardiner, Maine, and brought in St. Onge, a supply chain and engineering logistics firm, to design the ideal warehouse system. Pine State Trading Co. also brought in Mark Goldstein, President of Coastal Equipment Corporation, to help select the right equipment to accommodate the existing 10,000 SKUs and leave plenty of room for growth in the future.





Flow Bed and SpanTrack from UNEX turned out to be critical pieces of the puzzle.

### Finding a Flexible Solution

Pine State Trading Co.'s list of inventory is extensive and diverse. Candy, beverages, paper products, automotive supplies, deli sandwiches, dairy, and health and beauty items are among the company's growing list of stock.

"Storing and picking such a wide variety of products can present a number of challenges," says Mark. "We had to find the right mix of carton flow systems to optimize space and allow us to quickly respond to customers' needs."

That "right mix" included a full-width roller carton system for products that have consistent carton sizes, such as cases of cigarettes, and a highly flexible, universal wheel bed carton flow solution that allows workers to quickly slot products of varying sizes, such as candy and grocery items, into any location without having to change or move equipment.

### On the Right Track

After looking at a number of carton flow systems, Mark recommended UNEX's SpanTrack and Flow Bed, offering considerable benefits for Pine State Trading Co.

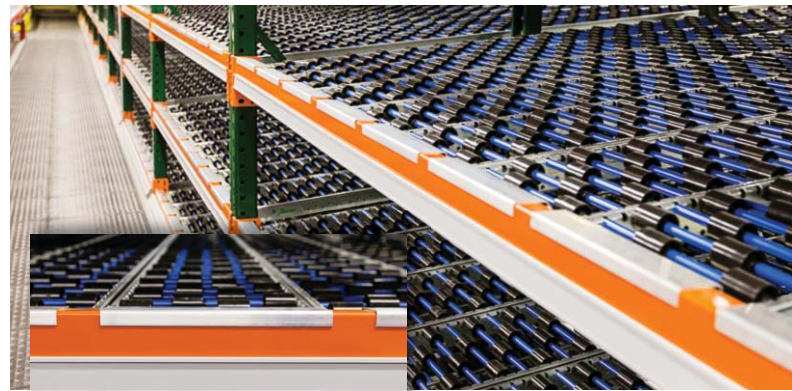
Ultimately, UNEX installed 561 levels of SpanTrack and 568 levels of Flow Bed at the Pine State Trading Co. facility. UNEX also reused hundreds of lanes of SpanTrack that had been in place for years at the previous facility and remained in great condition.

Reusing existing SpanTrack created cost-savings for Pine State Trading Co., and so did the structural integrity of Flow Bed. "Without the strength of the Flow Bed side channels, we would have had to install intermediate support beams, which would have been costly and taken up much-needed space," Mark explains.

### Flawless Implementation

Steve says the design and implementation of the Flow Bed system was "flawless – we did not have a single issue during the process."

Products were shipped on time, materials were well-packaged and easy to unload. "UNEX delivered as promised," says Steve. "Now, if our sales reps come to me with a new product line for our customers, I have the space and the flexibility to turn things around quickly."



*UNEX developed this unique label holder for Flow Bed lanes because stock can change so quickly at Pine State Trading Co. The labels allow order pickers to clearly see which items are stored in various lanes, and the labels can be switched out easily as SKUs change.*



#### Benefits for Pine State Trading Co.:

- Installation is easy because of the drop-in design.
- A variety of product sizes can be slotted in, giving Pine State the flexibility to adapt to changing customer product demands.
- Tracks are designed to maximize the conveying surface and eliminate product hang-ups that can slow down or bring picking to a halt.
- The rugged design of the Flow Bed carton flow panels provides excellent support for up to 50 pounds per foot of load.

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# UNEX CASE STUDY

**“We do a lot of re-slotting. With SpanTrack one person can change out a bay in 15 to 20 minutes... it’s flexible... user-friendly... very easily interchangeable”**

**– Bob Glinka, Manager/Industrial Engineer, Smart & Final**

**customer: SMART & FINAL**

**operation: Grocery distributor**

**goal: Maximizing use of freezer space**

**solution: SpanTrack systems from UNEX**



## Carton Flow at 10° Below

*Grocery Distribution Leader Gets “Smart & Final” Answer for Maximizing Use of Freezer Space*

After 128 years of superior service, growth and success in the wholesale grocery industry, you can bet Smart & Final knows a good thing when they see it. When corporate decided it was time to revamp their existing Port Stockton Foods distribution warehouse in Northern California, Smart & Final management turned to SpanTrack by UNEX for carton flow.

SpanTrack was already being used in small quantities with great success at Smart & Final’s Los Angeles facility and in their deli operation at their Miami facility. With Port Stockton’s approximately 2800 items stocked in the freezer area and a total SKU count of about 12,000, space was at a premium. According to Bob Glinka, Smart & Final’s Manager/Industrial Engineer, something had to be done and quickly. “We had far more items than pick slots. Our only alternative was to go vertical. Instead of picking off pallets and putting the pallets in the air, we decided to put case flow in the air and make them fixed locations.”

“We went floor to ceiling with the intention of increasing pick facings.” Glinka aid. “It worked so well on the floor we decided to try it in the air and it worked great. Now we just receive the product, put it on an orderpicker and stock just like you would a hand-stocked shelf. It’s allowed us to get more facing into the freezer without doing a major overhaul.” Glinka points to SpanTrack’s ease of use a key benefit. “Hands down, SpanTrack beats conventional flow lanes with the plastic wheels and the clips and the dividers,” Glinka said.



***“SpanTrack allowed us to get more facings into the freezer without doing a major overhaul.”***

**In the freezer environment, SpanTrack’s full width rollers create superior carton flow – beam-to-beam and floor-to-ceiling.**



“One of the main reasons we went with SpanTrack was that one person can basically change a bay out in fifteen to twenty minutes, when it would normally take two people the better part of a day to reconfigure and re-slot a bay of conventional case flow lanes.” Another reason for utilizing SpanTrack was low maintenance.

“We had 60 to 90 bays of plastic wheel flow lanes in Miami and 40-50 bays in Commerce. They’re just a maintenance nightmare keeping them repaired,” Glinka said. “We don’t have to make any repairs to SpanTrack.”

“Once we started using the product, we decided not to even look at anything else. As far as I’m concerned it’s the best case flow product out there.”

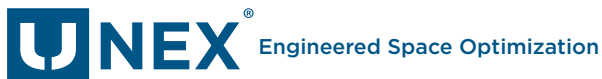
At the onset, Glinka received input from the selectors and fork lift operators through a series of committee meetings. The meetings were designed to find the best solutions to any problems plaguing the facility. Both management and the workers agreed SpanTrack would alleviate the rotating slots nightmare. Glinka said, “The workers loved SpanTrack because the product was always at the pick face.” Another benefit Glinka pointed out was that “SpanTrack is flexible and user-friendly. It’s very easily interchangeable.” This allows Smart & Final to match SpanTrack with the product going into a particular slot. Even large boxes like bread products, which typically exceed 24” in width are easily slotted by putting two sections of track side by side. Plus, because SpanTrack loads from the back, you always have strict rotation of your product.

## Smart & Final

Smart & Final, with headquarters in Commerce, California, stocks over 11,000 different grocery items, from canned foods and deli items to restaurant and janitorial supplies. They operate 218 stores in California, Arizona, Nevada, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Florida and Mexico, in addition to two large foodservice distribution businesses in Florida and Northern California.

## UNEX Manufacturing, Inc.

Located In Lakewood, New Jersey, UNEX is a major manufacturer of carton flow products, including SpanTrack, the original “shelfless” carton flow track. With its ease of installation in ANY pallet rack, its superior flow and its rugged design, SpanTrack is **“Setting the Standard in Carton Flow.”**



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LIT-CASE-018

## SpanTrack BENEFITS

1. Easy to Reslot
2. Maintenance-Free
3. Product Always at Pick Face
4. Shortens Pick Time
5. Withstands the Rigors of the Grocery/Freezer Environment



Worker loads product from back of rack. SpanTrack consistently flows product to “last in” position for strict inventory rotation.

SpanTrack requires no shelves or intermediate supports to handle “freezer” weights up to 50 lbs/ft on spans up to 10’.



We don’t have to make any repairs to SpanTrack... it’s the best case flow product out there.”



# UNEX CASE STUDY

**"We recently tweaked our control system and think we'll be at a peak of 10,000 cases per hour... I don't think there's another center in our industry that does that much volume per hour"**

- Robert Pavone, VP Operations, Southern Wine & Spirits



**customer:** SOUTHERN WINE & SPIRITS

**operation:** Wine, spirits and soft drink distributor

**goal:** Modernize and consolidate distribution facilities to increase throughput rates

**solution:** SpanTrack flow rack systems from UNEX



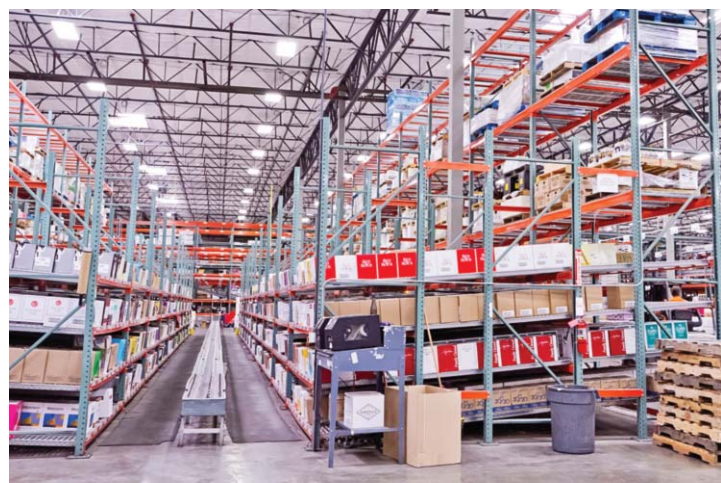
## UNEX keeps spirits flowing at two distribution centers

*Southern Wine & Spirits' Santa Fe Springs, CA and Louisville, KY facilities use SpanTrack flow rack systems to keep the product rolling*

**California** - The largest distributor of wine and spirits in the country, Southern Wine was serving Southern California from a total of 800,000 square feet spread over five different warehouses and 35 miles with the city of Los Angeles in between them.

The logistics of balancing inventory of 12,000 SKU's over five warehouses while servicing customers in the LA market posed a real challenge. A major issue was no single facility could store all 12,000 different items. This required Southern Wine & Spirits to transfer 4 million cases a year between their facilities. Additionally, the distributors business continued to expand.

Robert Pavone, VP of Operations for Southern Wine and Spirits realized the only way he could better serve his customers while improving the efficiencies of the supply chain was to consolidate their operations.





## Design for the Future

The goal was to create a world class facility with the capability to handle today's demands plus room to grow during the next 20 years. The facility consolidated five regional warehouses into one 620,000 square foot high-speed distribution center. Working with W&H Systems, Southern Wine designed a facility with automated technologies including voice-based logistics, high speed conveyor/sortation systems and four tri-level pick module with UNEX SpanTrack.

The new system in place at the Santa Fe Springs, CA distribution center has been producing one of the highest throughput rates in the industry (**15 million cases per year**)<sup>(1)</sup> while increasing operational efficiencies and allowing for future growth.

**Kentucky** - Operating from a 217,000 square-foot building in Louisville, SW&S distributes liquor, wine and other beverages to retailers, restaurants, bars and clubs across the commonwealth. Since moving from paper to voice software for its split-case bottle picking, it has increased speed, accuracy and flexibility, while improving its allocation of labor.

UNEX SpanTrack flow racks store fast-moving SKUs that are readily accessible for workers using voice-based picking software in the split-case fulfillment areas. SpanTrack is also used throughout the rest of the facility where up to 17,000 full cases of wine and spirits are shipped out every night.<sup>(2)</sup>

Southern Wine & Spirits' Kentucky distribution center has nearly doubled productivity and dramatically improved accuracy, thanks to voice picking and UNEX SpanTrack flow racks.

<sup>(1)</sup> "Spirited Distribution" by Bob Trebilcock (excerpts)  
Modern Materials Handling, December 2006

<sup>(2)</sup> "The Speed Challenge" (excerpts)  
DC Velocity



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# UNEX CASE STUDY



**“Pickers can clearly see the SKUs, which supports our goal of having a 0% mispick rate. And we’re getting products out the door faster and into customers’ hands.”**

**– Thomas Brown, Thermo Fisher**

**customer: THERMO FISHER SCIENTIFIC**

**operation: Global biotechnology company**

**goal: Improve pick efficiencies in cold box and freezer areas**

**solution: SpanTrack Bed from UNEX**



## Deli Doors + Span-Track® Bed Deliver 45% Increase in Pick Efficiency at Maryland Plant

*Pickers at Thermo Fisher Scientific get out of the cold and heat up productivity with SpanTrack Bed from UNEX.*

Thermo Fisher is the world leader in serving science, whose mission is to enable our customers to make the world healthier, cleaner and safer. It helps its customers accelerate life sciences research, solve complex analytical challenges, improve patient diagnostics and increase laboratory productivity. At one of the company’s manufacturing and distribution centers located in Maryland, workers fulfill customers’ orders by picking from thousands of unique SKUs, including many that must be kept in cooler or freezer areas to preserve the product.

### A Sluggish Scenario

In 2012, engineers from Thermo Fisher set out to dramatically improve pick efficiencies in two areas at the Maryland plant: the 13,000-square-foot cold box space and the 9,000-square-foot freezer area. About 35 pickers worked inside these areas, wearing cold suits because of the extreme temperatures and picking from pallets containing anywhere from three to 10 boxes, each with different SKUs.

“Pickers had to go through all the boxes on a pallet to find the right SKU, which was very time-consuming,” says Thomas Brown, Systems Engineer, Thermo Fisher. “We needed a new way to pick more efficiently and accurately and get products out the door faster.”





## Bringing the Pick Zone out of the Cold

Brown and his team decided to redesign the cooler and freezer areas to create an ideal carton flow and order picking scenario at the plant. The redesign included the installation of 94 deli doors, similar to the doors in grocery store freezers and convenience stores.

***“The goal was to move as much of the order picking process as possible outside the cold and freezer boxes,” says Bill Costa, Vice President of Sales for Werres, a partnered UNEX Distributor. “Inside the doors, we installed SpanTrack Bed, which created an efficient way for pickers to reach in and find the right SKUs to fulfill each order.”***

The team installed about 1,600 linear feet of SpanTrack Bed to house 2,000 of the plant’s fastest moving temperature sensitive SKU’s, representing 70% of the daily picks in the operation.

“We chose the SpanTrack Beds because they provided maximum flexibility for slotting SKUs of different sizes, from vials that may be an inch high to 10 milliliter bottles,” explains Brown. “Now, we can get 20 to 30 bins of SKUs inside each deli door on four to five levels of SpanTrack Bed.”

The condensed, organized storage has allowed the plant to improve pick efficiency by more than 45%. “We’ve cut back considerably on the time spent replenishing SKUs. Pickers can clearly see the SKUs, which supports our goal of having a 0% mispick rate. And we’re getting products out the door faster and into customers’ hands.”

## Off the Ladder and out of the Suits

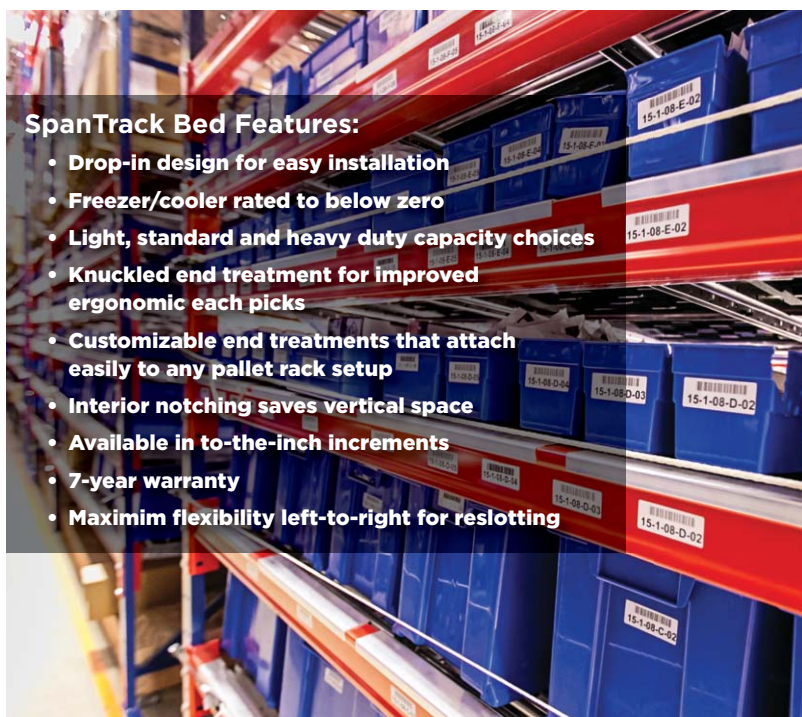
Before SpanTrack Bed and the deli doors, workers had to wear cold suits all day. They had to climb up and down ladders to pick SKUs, and they had to work around forklifts and push carts. “Now, we have a safer and more comfortable environment for our pickers,” says Brown.

The plant has also significantly reduced costs. Fewer pickers are needed at the plant because of productivity improvements, and plant hours have been reduced from 12-hour to 8-hour shifts.

## Ready for the Future

Brown says the redesign of the Maryland plant was a major undertaking. “SpanTrack Bed was just one piece of a huge transformation for the plant. But it was the piece that brought everything together.”

Costa adds that the redesign sets the stage for future growth. “Thermo Fisher is known for its innovative solutions. The Maryland plant must have built-in flexibility to accommodate the company’s ever-growing product mix. SpanTrack Bed offers that flexibility.”



### SpanTrack Bed Features:

- Drop-in design for easy installation
- Freezer/cooler rated to below zero
- Light, standard and heavy duty capacity choices
- Knuckled end treatment for improved ergonomic each picks
- Customizable end treatments that attach easily to any pallet rack setup
- Interior notching saves vertical space
- Available in to-the-inch increments
- 7-year warranty
- Maximum flexibility left-to-right for reslotting

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# UNEX CASE STUDY

**“Overall, we gained enough extra storage to accommodate a 30% increase in business.”**

– John Wall, Production Control Assistant Manager, Toyotetsu



**customer: TOYOTETSU**

**operation: Manufacturing of metal frame parts for Toyota automobiles**

**goal: Gain space, increase storage density and move components efficiently**

**solution: Flow Rack systems from UNEX**



## More Storage, More Space

**UNEX flow racks clear the path for growth and efficiency at a thriving automobile plant in Canada.**

*At the Toyotetsu plant in Simcoe, Ontario, workers stamp the metal frame parts for cars such as the RAV4, Corolla and Lexus.*

“Our business is projected to grow considerably in the next 2 years,” says Andy Elkin, Production Control Manager. “We’re anticipating a two-fold increase in the number of parts Toyota wants us to build and volume increases for certain models, and that means we need to use our space as efficiently as possible.”

### A Peek inside the Plant

At Toyotetsu, components are stored in plastic boxes or hand totes, depending on weight and size. Operators drive tuggers down aisles to find and pick parts, place them on carts and deliver them to the welding area.

In August 2011, Andy and his team recognized that Toyota’s projected growth would result in a tight squeeze for the existing tugging zone. Some flow racks had been used since the plant opened in 2007, “but we knew we needed a complete UNEX system to save space and increase storage density for components,” says Andy.

### Room to Grow

According to UNEX distributor Brian Pollock, President of Northstar Industries, UNEX met with the Toyotetsu team and custom-designed a flow rack system that eliminated an entire tugging aisle by increasing storage density, doubled the length of the racks, tightened up spaces between roller chutes, and integrated the new flow rack system with an existing one.





John Wall, Production Control Assistant Manager for Toyotetsu, says the new flow rack system gave the plant 10% more floor space. “Plus, a lot of that racking became a bi-level storage area, which means we saved even more space. Overall, we gained enough extra storage to accommodate a 30% increase in business.”

### The Kaizen Mindset

Kaizen, or continuous improvement, is the norm for many Japanese-owned facilities, and Toyotetsu is no exception.

“The roller racks from UNEX are made of portable material, and they are easy for our staff to take apart, reconfigure and put together,” says Andy. “This allows us to make continuous, incremental improvements to our storage systems as our business evolves. It also allows us to maintain the Toyota production system: running small batch sizes and frequent production lots.”

### No Speed Bumps

Keeping things moving without interruption on the plant floor is more important than ever, considering the expected growth ahead. Tugging tractors work on a 30-minute cycle, so team members must get into the pick area, identify the parts they need, get those components on the cart and move them to the welding area as quickly, safely and accurately as possible.

“The UNEX racking provides a designated storage area for every part, and bins are clearly marked with key product characteristics,” says Andy. “Team members are able to find what they need and keep the job moving forward.”

John adds that when people come into the plant, “they see a clean, orderly system, and that’s very important for our facility.”

### The Right Partner in the Driver’s Seat

Brian from Northstar Industries says collaboration between his company, UNEX and Toyotetsu was remarkable. “We created prototypes and tested the product flow to make sure the designs worked well and the product was excellent,” he says. “This was a situation where teamwork was strong throughout the entire process.”

Andy agrees. “UNEX took an off-the-shelf system, customized it and made it work with another system. We decided to use our staff to install the flow racks, and UNEX provided the training and stayed in close contact throughout the installation. This was a good partnership.”



### Flow Rack Benefits for Toyotetsu

- Increased storage space
- Fewer aisles for tuggers to maneuver
- Increased accuracy and speed of pick time
- Easy handling and installation of material
- Integrated with existing materials



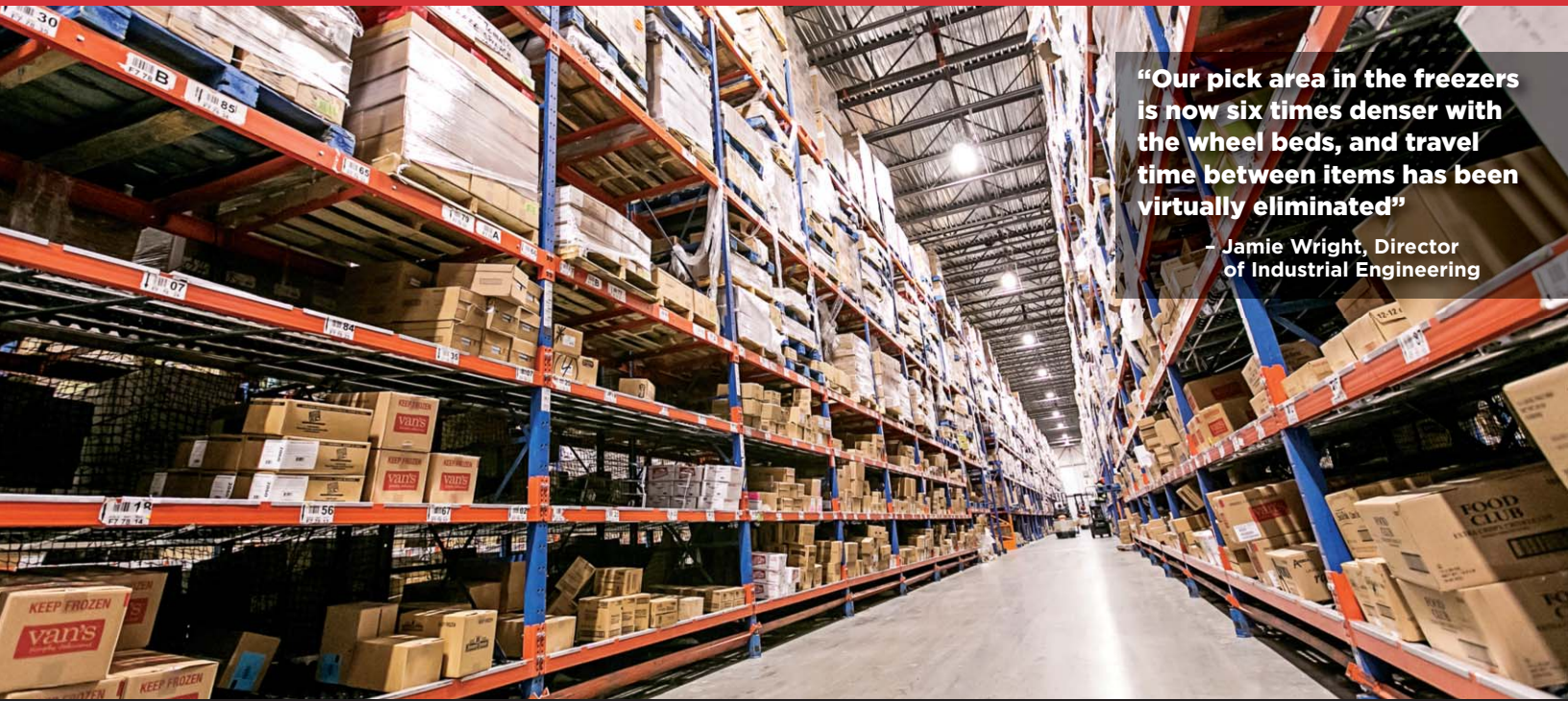
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# UNEX CASE STUDY



**“Our pick area in the freezers is now six times denser with the wheel beds, and travel time between items has been virtually eliminated”**

**— Jamie Wright, Director of Industrial Engineering**

**customer:** **WHOLESALE DISTRIBUTOR**

**operation:** **Distributor of food and household products**

**goal:** **Fit increasing number of SKUs into existing freezer areas**

**solution:** **SpanTrack Bed from UNEX**



## 10 Big Benefits for Busy Wholesale Distributor

***Productivity Jumps 17% After Distributor Installs SpanTrack Wheel Beds in Freezers Kept at -10 Degrees.***

***When a leading distributor of food and household products added a large grocery chain to its client base, the wholesaler had to act fast and find a home for hundreds of new SKUs in already-packed freezers.***

“We didn’t have time to add onto the building or make alterations to the freezers,” says Jamie Wright, the distributor’s Director of Industrial Engineering. “We needed a cost-effective and efficient solution in a hurry.”

That solution was SpanTrack, designed by UNEX to maximize product flexibility and flow. The wholesaler equipped 7,200 feet in the freezer area with the wheel beds, and the benefits started rolling in.

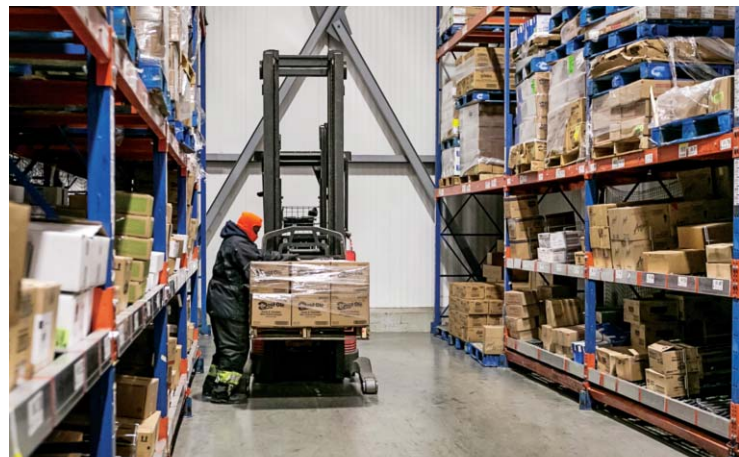
### **Top 2 Benefits:**

#### **Better Space Usage, Higher Productivity**

Because wheel beds can increase space utilization in the rack by 50%, the wholesaler was able to reconfigure SKUs and create a more compact pick area. “Our pick area in the freezers is now six times denser with the wheel beds, and travel time between items has been virtually eliminated,” says Jamie.

The more efficient pick has resulted in 17% higher productivity for pickers. “The SKUs are easily within reach. We’re not driving around or walking up and down to locate items. We’ve maximized our storage cube, and there’s no wasted space between lanes,” says Jamie.

An efficient and effective pick is a top priority for the growing wholesale distributor, which serves about 900 supermarkets and mom-and-pop stores in New England, New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.





### Big Benefit #3: Helping Clients Meet Consumer Demands

Because consumers are demanding a greater variety of products, such as less-expensive store brands and quick-and-easy meals, SKUs are “growing by leaps and bounds,” says Jamie. “If you look inside our freezer, you’ll find everything from gluten-free pizza to barbecue chicken with grits. Our customers have to meet consumer demands in order to stay competitive. And we have to be ready to accommodate those demands. It’s not unusual to add 200 items at a pop on very little notice.”

### Stacking up Benefits #4, #5 and #6: Flexible, Durable and Easy to Install

UNEX engineers developed SpanTrack wheel beds for ultimate flexibility. “The wheel beds are easily adjustable. So, if a customer discontinues one item, like enchiladas, I can quickly switch it out with frozen fish or jalapeño poppers or whatever is the latest hot item,” says Jamie.

The wheel beds are also made to withstand harsh temperatures. The freezers are kept at -10 degrees, which is no problem for SpanTrack wheel beds. “They are super durable and work flawlessly, and that’s why the distributor has added them to all three local distribution centers,” says Paul Nicholson, Professional Engineer from The Beacon Group who helped the distributor find the right carton flow solution for freezers.

The drop-in design is another big plus. “They are so easy to install with the hangers. They simply drop onto the rack beams and fall into place,” says Paul. Also, installation of the flow beds does not require any tools or additional hardware.

### Bumping up against Benefits #7 and #8: An Ergonomically Sound and Safer Pick

The wheel beds move cases forward and present them at the front for the picker. “Many items are at waist level, so there is nothing all the way to the floor that requires the deep bending that can cause back strains and muscle pulls,” says Jamie. “This is a much more ergonomically sound way to get the work done.”

“It’s also a safer solution. Having SKUs located in a compact area reduces the need for forklifts to be driving around the warehouse in search of products,” says Paul.

### Benefit #9: Good Dollars and Sense

The growing wholesale distributor must be able to flex with its clients – and do so in the most cost-effective way possible.

***“We had only about two or three months to figure out what to do when we added our new client,” says Jamie. “The wheel beds allowed us to meet our timelines and offered an affordable solution that did not require us to make any significant capital investment.”***

### And #10: One of the Best Benefits of All: Products from Expert Problem Solvers

Bill Link, Northeast Regional Manager at UNEX, says SpanTrack wheel beds provide one more effective option to meet customer needs. “We offer a range of versatile products because we know every customer is faced with unique challenges and demands.”

Jamie says he appreciates the “practical, real-world solutions” that UNEX designs and develops. “There are UNEX people out there in the field, in distribution centers, figuring out what we need to make our work more efficient. It’s a lot easier to have UNEX thinking of the solutions and drawing up the designs, because it frees me and my team to focus on the high demands of our rapidly growing business.”




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# UNEX CASE STUDY



**“Our #1 goal was to reduce damage to our cabinetry inventory. The roller gravity conveyors from UNEX have helped address that problem.”**

**– Amanda Williams,  
Vice President of Operations,  
Williams Distributing**

**customer:** Williams Distributing

**operation:** Distributor for kitchen & bath, heating & cooling, plumbing and other markets

**goal:** Reduce damage to inventory; improve warehouse efficiency

**solutions:** Roller gravity conveyors and ball transfer tables from UNEX



## Goodbye, Awkward Furniture Dollies. Hello, Smooth-Flowing Gravity Conveyors from UNEX

*When Williams Distributing moved its kitchen cabinets operation to a new warehouse, the company had two goals in mind: 1) Create a better way to move inventory without damaging products, and 2) improve warehouse efficiency to keep up with customer demands. UNEX helped the distributor do both.*

On a typical day, staff members at Williams Distributing in Grand Rapids, Michigan, load up to 15 trucks with kitchen cabinetry to deliver to customers in Michigan, Indiana and Ohio. They also receive up to five semi-trailer trucks filled with cabinetry inventory every day.

“We’ve been around since 1968 and have been servicing the cabinet industry since the beginning,” says Amanda Williams, Vice President of Operations at Williams Distributing and the third generation helping to lead the family-owned business. “We’ve grown over the years, which is great, but with that growth, we’ve had to rethink warehousing and distribution to ensure we deliver quality products for our customers.”

### A Power-house Distributor

Builders, contractors, architects, interior designers and other customers rely on this distribution powerhouse to provide heating and cooling, kitchen and bath, plumbing, fireplace and garage door products. Williams Distributing has 32 locations.





In 2021, the company moved all of its growing kitchen cabinetry operations into a single, 90,000-square-foot warehouse just miles from company headquarters. As part of the move, Amanda's team sought a more effective way to move inventory to and from the warehouse.

"Our old way was to hand-load boxes of cabinetry onto wheeled carts or dollies and roll them across the floor," says Amanda. "We couldn't move very many boxes at a time, and the product would sometimes get damaged from unloading and loading from the carts."

Even the tiniest ding is considered "a big ding for customers," says Amanda. "Kitchen projects are not cheap. And if cabinetry arrives damaged in any way, getting a replacement can sometimes take weeks, especially when there are supply chain delays like those during pandemic times."

### Improving Quality and Efficiency at the Warehouse

After visiting a cabinet distributor's carton flow system on the East Coast, Williams Distributing decided to adopt a similar approach to create a high-quality and efficient way to move inventory.

*"We worked with UNEX to determine what would work best for the warehouse, considering the different sizes, weights and volume of boxes," says Dave Holwerda, account manager at Morrison Industrial Equipment. "We chose the roller gravity conveyors because they allow one person to easily and safely push multiple boxes at a time across 8 different zones in the facility. Now, each employee is more efficient!"*

The UNEX conveyors included 3,766 feet, or 419 total tracks, of floor-mounted MRS roller gravity conveyor with 1.9" diameter steel rollers, along with 200 feet, or 20 total tracks, of JRS roller gravity conveyor with 1.38" diameter aluminum rollers and aluminum frames.

Gravity conveyors from UNEX are low-maintenance and strong enough to move all types of loads through a facility. They are easy to install and are made to order in custom lengths, widths, roller centers, wheel patterns and more. Studies show they significantly increase warehouse efficiency and throughput.

In addition to the roller gravity conveyors, UNEX provided 58 multidirectional ball transfer tables, which allow boxes to keep moving without any additional space required.

"Our #1 goal was to reduce damage to our cabinetry inventory. The roller gravity conveyors have helped address that problem and allow us to move a greater volume of boxes faster," says Amanda. "With the conveyors, we get things right the first time for customers. And that means everything when it comes to your reputation as a reliable supplier."

She adds that the new conveyors are part of the company's ongoing efforts to "invest for the future." Other improvement projects include upgraded technology for tracking inventory and expanded delivery zones and delivery models.

### Why Work with UNEX? 'Responsive... Good Products'

Dave has turned to UNEX for solutions on multiple occasions.

"The UNEX team is always responsive, helpful. And they have good products. I always feel confident when I'm working with a UNEX solution."

Amanda says the conveyor system is an excellent fit for the company's "newer, cleaner" warehouse in the Grand Rapids areas. She says, "If you are in the cabinet industry, using this type of conveyor system is a best-in-class application."



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