

Warehouse Coach

Improving warehouse performance

A simple method to improve picking accuracy

By Don Benson – www.warehousecoach.com

When I entered this field, Warehouse Managers and Consultants looked to equipment and systems as the primary way to optimize labor productivity. And as you can see in the trade press today, the industry continues to develop new equipment and systems that can make a difference in productivity. Some of us however, have recognized that equipment and systems are not enough to achieve their productivity and quality performance objectives, and have developed many powerful and simple methods and procedures to help them make the most of their current investments. Last week I was introduced again to one of the simpler and more powerful approaches, with a great twist!

During a tour the Warehouse Manager explained their concern that the pickers and packers had significant responsibility and little recognition for their work. And then to help me understand what she had done to deal with this, she asked me to remember the experiences I have had ordering items of merchandise that required assembly, and that after receiving them, opening and assembling the several pieces to construct the items ordered. I remember the experiences well, with bicycles, swing sets, furniture, etc. Then she asked if I remembered finding in the carton a slip of paper with the packing materials or instructions containing a message something like

The content of this box was picked and packed by operator #24.
If you discover something missing, please contact 1-800-xxx-xxxx
and mention my number.

Well the description was accurate and I remember seeing many of those small notices. She then described how in her warehouse they had used this method, with a slightly modified slip of paper that she believes has significantly improved level of service and pride of workmanship in her warehouse.

In this warehouse, they use a 2"x 3" piece of paper with a similar written message, and replaced the Employee Number with the packing person's first name and photograph. In this warehouse the picker/packer is no longer an anonymous Number but becomes truly visible to the customer. The manager reported that the quality has increased so much, as measured by customer calls and returns as a percent of orders shipped, over the prior method that used a Employee Number only, that the incremental cost of taking and using the employees digital photo and printing it on the packing slip was trivial.

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Clearly this process worked for them. I have had other clients use it as well with very satisfying results works for them. Let me know what this change does for the quality of your picking, packing and shipping. You can reach me at coach@warehousecoach.com.