

Warehouse Coach

Improving warehouse performance

Planning daily operations

By Don Benson – www.warehousecoach.com

Many years ago I attended a class in management. The text we used defined the functions of management as Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing and Controlling. I learned a lot from that class, and recently I have come to realize one of the most important points was why the authors decided to list the functions in that specific order.

While visiting a very large company that had been experiencing significant growth, as we talked about problems of inventory levels and space, DC Manager mentioned the seriousness of his problem on the shipping dock, where nothing seemed to be working right. Late shipments, missing orders, errors happening every day, the dock was consistently congested and it was hard to find orders for loading.

In exploring the situation, we discovered that Shipping Supervisor receives the next day's shipping schedule every evening from the Traffic Department, but they had never used it. I recommended that the Shipping Department begin publishing their daily shipping schedule and talking about it with their peers in their daily status meeting. Soon thereafter the picking, pick position replenishment, and receiving put-away departments began scheduling their work consistent with the shipping schedule. Orders for the early departure vehicles began arriving on the dock first, etc. The results were dramatic and almost immediate. Distribution Center performance improved substantially, and the Shipping Department discovered that they needed less dock space. Clearly the authors of the text book knew that putting planning first makes a difference in operational performance.

I recommend that your Shipping Department publish its shipping schedule, listing the departure times for carriers. The schedule could be for every day next week or the following day. For Route Delivery vehicles, indicate the loading sequence by customer. Then prior to the start of work, meet with representatives from Picking, Replenishment, etc. to discuss how they might organize to sequence their work consistent with the planned departure of the shipping carriers.

For those of you with an advanced Warehouse Management System (WMS) you may notice this process is similar to what has been called Wave Planning. Yet, without a WMS, establishing this objective can be accomplished manually in a small operation. The results will be worth the time spent planning.

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If you would like to talk about this suggestion or to explore options for issues you have with your warehouse operation, you can reach me at coach@warehousecoach.com.