

# Sweeper sorter offers cost-effective distribution solution

Omnichannel operation realizes increased accuracy, reduced labor with sweeper sorter



After relocating to a larger facility with sufficient space to handle current throughput and future growth, a mid-size distributor set out to conquer a new challenge — improve the efficiency of its fulfillment processes.

The legacy retail and direct-to-consumer fulfillment operations ran rife with inefficiencies. Manual sortation of small, hard-to-sort items meant several manual touchpoints before distributing products to multiple locations, risking inaccurate picks and shipping errors. The labor-intensive processes required excessive travel time per order and risked counterproductive levels of congestion in pick aisles if order volumes continued to grow at anticipated levels.

## Right-size automated solution

While many small- and medium-sized distributors consider automation too costly of an investment, they continually struggle to compete with larger distributors that understand how to efficiently leverage automation in their operations. Working with USS, an Intelligrated company, this retailer introduced a two-stage sweeper sorter with wave picking, to handle small packages in a minimal footprint.

The wave picking operation uses employees to pick batches of the same item for several orders, then the bi-directional sweeper sorter to separate them into twenty large order batches to feed downstream processes. Each batch is inducted into a larger, 80-destination, bi-directional sweeper sorter with dual-level chutes for the final round of sortation before packaging.

## Operational benefits drive overall business growth

This system enables a 40 percent reduction in annual labor costs, cutting labor from an equivalent of 27 full-time employees to 16 and reducing employee workdays from 14 to 8 hours, all with significant cushion for order spikes. The labor savings alone enabled a return on investment in less than two years. The automated system also provided value in the form of increased customer satisfaction, thanks to increased accuracy, improving retention and developing new prospects.