Reducing Pick Error Rates - Start with the Fundamentals

Pick Error Reduction in Small Volume Fulfillment

Order fulfillment is a crucial part of many businesses. Because it is the last link in the supply chain, and in many cases, the only direct contact with the end customers, the order fulfillment process can make or break your reputation as a customer-focused provider. If an order is wrong, damaged or late, the

Accurate order fulfillment is a crucial part of customer service.

customer experience will suffer. However, when customers receive their orders on time, in good condition and the fulfillment center is responsive, a strong customer relationship will be created.

Many options exist in the marketplace for high-tech solutions that reduce or nearly minimize errors in the fulfillment process, including pick-to-light systems, voice-automated picking systems and even fully-automated robotic picking systems. However, these often multi-million dollar solutions are not financially justifiable for small volume or highly variable fulfillment operations. So what's a small guy to do? The following are just a few tips to keep you focused on the fundamentals.

Thorough Part Number Identification

A good place to start is insuring that all product received into your warehouse is properly identified and labeled with a unique part number. Not only can poor product labeling result in mispicks, but it also results in inefficiencies and lost time as employees spend time researching parts rather than filling orders.

Grouping Orders

Smart sorting of orders can be another useful method of reducing pick errors. Often times the 80-20 rule will apply, and the majority of orders will look very similar, if not identical. If feasible, orders can be presorted into groups of like kind so that orders calling for the same product are filled together. Not only does this increase the efficiency with which orders are filled, but also keeps the picker focused on one type of order at a time.

Careful Staging of Product

It goes without saying that the less non-value added travel time by an order picker the better; product should be stored as close as possible to the pick/pack area to minimize travel time as the order picker fills orders. But when picking similar items that might be prone to pick errors (for instance, multiple colors of the same item) care should be taken not to stage easily confused products next to each other. Furthermore, it might prove beneficial to sort orders as indicated above, and then stage only one product at a time, removing easily confused products from the pick area altogether.

Visual Aids

Where possible, visual aids can be used to bring attention to specific requirements of the order. For instance, if a particular product is offered in either green or red, highlighting the product number in the appropriate color while presorting orders offers an additional visual indicator for the order picker. Also, any orders calling for special treatment (special shipping instructions, collateral material, etc.) can be highlighted as well.

Sure, spending a million dollars on a high-tech solution like voice-activated picking sounds impressive but is it practical? Take a close look at the fundamentals. Focus on these basics first, and watch your order accuracy climb!

TAGGlogistics

www.tagglogistics.com
314.991.1900

TAGG Logistics is a leading, Midwest-based third party logistics provider specializing in order fulfillment, distribution services and packaging, kitting and assembly.