

# 10 Steps to Choosing a Warehouse Management System

**1. Operations experience in your WMS solution provider is a necessity.** Seek out WMS solution providers that combine operations experience with state-of-the-art WMS experience. Many contract WMS solution providers have developed excellent systems with real-life operational know-how. These businesses are capable of adding critical input from their organization's top operations people during the development and ongoing enhancement of their WMS. The result is a very practical system that is tried and proven and will likely gain quick acceptance from employees on the floor.

**2. Conduct a business needs assessment.** Before you go through the process of selecting a WMS, you must match business requirements to functionality. It is very difficult to choose an optimal WMS without first identifying your company's key business requirements.

**3. Ability to interface is critical.** Ensure that the WMS has open architecture and is able to interface with your ERP system without incurring excessive costs. Ask prospective WMS solution providers for case studies where they have previously interfaced with your organization's specific ERP or accounting system.

**4. Control modification costs.** Choose a WMS solution provider that has reasonable modification rates and is willing to set up a realistic budget, based on your needs assessment, prior to formalizing the relationship. You can also modify costs by choosing a solution provider that has already installed WMS systems with clients in your industry as well as your ERP. In such cases, the base code of the solution provider's WMS may already reflect the industry-specific modifications you require.

**5. Support during installation is crucial.** Make sure that the WMS solution provider can support you during the implementation phase. Prior to making a final selection, ask the WMS solution provider to share a detailed implementation plan that includes an installation timeline and resource commitment.

**6. HelpDesk support is key.** Select a solution provider that has a responsive HelpDesk and enough resources to provide ongoing support at a previously agreed upon rate. HelpDesks play an integral role in reinforcing user training, troubleshooting problems, and supporting system upgrades. Partner with a WMS solution provider that has an adequately staffed HelpDesk. The HelpDesk should work during your company's hours of operation.

**7. Keep it simple.** Look for a WMS that provides adequate functionality to meet your specific business needs. Do not simply purchase the most sophisticated WMS. This invariably leads to longer training cycles and poor return on investment.

**8. Select a WMS that is user friendly.** Focus on Graphical User Interface (GUI) systems that employ 100-percent point-and-click operating environments. These types of systems have a positive impact on operator productivity and satisfaction ratings.

**9. Guard against future obsolescence.** There are two key points here: First, verify the WMS is scalable in order to accommodate future sales growth and/or acquisitions. Second, ensure that the WMS is adaptable to the next generation of technology including voice recognition and/or RFID technologies. Verify that your prospective WMS solution provider is reinvesting significant capital into research and development, and future product enhancements.

**10. Make data accessibility easy.** Look for a WMS that allows for easy data retrieval. For example, ease of conducting inventory queries, cost-to-serve modeling, and performance reporting are key elements in choosing the right WMS.