

CLOUD INVENTORY®

The Warehouse Guide to Mobility

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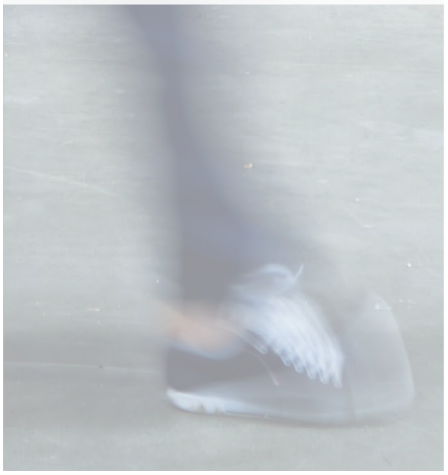


ENTERPRISE RESOURCE PLANNING (ERP) SYSTEMS serve as the transactional backbone for countless distributors, orchestrating the intricate dance of processes ranging from financial management to procurement, warehousing, and sales. Yet, as distributors continue seeking new ways to streamline warehouse operations, a significant limitation of ERP systems becomes apparent: most were not conceived with mobility in mind.

Treating mobility as an afterthought often funnels businesses into a relentless loop of shufÒing papers, scurrying back and forth between the bustling warehouse floor and stationary desktops, or struggling with defective integrations to 3rd party mobile solutions that lead to time-consuming performance lags. In such scenarios, efÏciency and agility become a distant and elusive dream.

How can enabling a connected workforce be the natural next step on your digital transformation journey? In this guide, we will unpack the compelling case for investing in mobility. And we will delve into the meaningful criteria to consider that will ensure your next mobile solution is not just a choice for today, but a lasting investment.

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Ditch the paper: the case for mobility

WITHOUT A MOBILITY PROGRAM IN PLACE, odds are that your warehouse is running on paper to some degree. Dependence on paper-based processes:

- Requires your warehouse workers to interpret paper and turn it into actionable information with little to no context.
- Prevents real-time access to data regarding inventory levels or an order status.
- Hinders collaboration and communication between workers about critical focal points like inventory levels and order fulfillment.
- Makes tribal knowledge and hearsay a requirement to be successful and efficient on the warehouse floor.

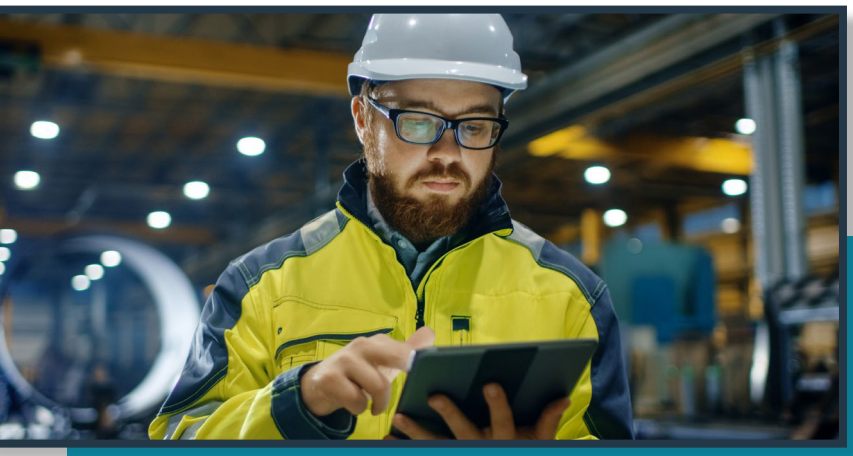
Mobile programs deal with data and can effectively turn it into actionable tasks for your workers. The actions required of them become more apparent and their work output becomes more consistent and predictable.





Bridging the gap: introducing the connected workforce

THE CONNECTED WORKFORCE IS COMPRISED OF WAREHOUSE AND FRONT-LINE PROFESSIONALS who utilize digital technologies and smart wearables to stay interconnected and collaborate with each other both within the warehouse and out in the field or a yard. They gain and enable access to real-time information, which leads to increased efficiency and data accuracy. According to Adroit Market Research, the global market for connected workers is projected to grow from $3.19 billion in 2022 to a staggering $21.72 billion by 2029, citing initiatives such as hyper-automation and efficiency, real-time data visibility, growing demand for remote workforce, over reliance on worker tribal knowledge, and worker safety.





The adoption of smart gadgets and mobile devices has paved the way for this connected workforce. These tools bridge the known gap between back-office applications and workers in the warehouse or field, allowing them to see and capture data when an activity occurs.
A few examples of mobile-enabled capabilities for warehouses include:

- Assigning and completing mobile work orders
- Inbound and outbound movement of inventory
- Integration with advanced picking systems like pick-to-light, carousels, caravans
- Wave picking
- Cycle counting
- Complex UoM handling such as crates, pallets, and eaches
- Production materials transfer and consumption
- Sharing and tracking inventory in the field
- Conducting quality checks and capturing relevant images in real-time
- Operating in a disconnected state when WIFI or service is not available

Connecting the dots: mobility that drives results

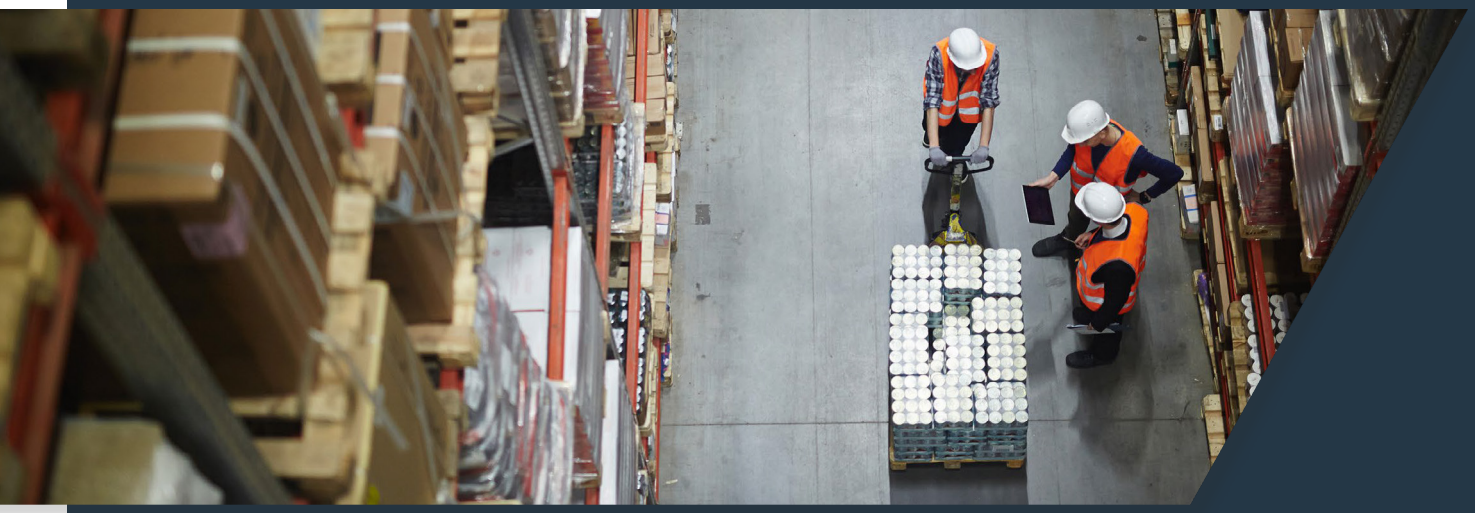
CONNECTED WORKFORCE PROGRAMS HAVE BECOME A TOP PRIORITY in corporate digital transformation strategies for distributors, as highlighted by LNS Research, because mobile adoption can significantly increase efficiency across operations by better utilizing existing resources and promoting warehouse and field collaboration all with the goal of delighting customers and continuing to earn their business. Let's take a look at some key use cases where mobility transforms warehouse operations.

Increase collaboration – mobility can increase collaboration across your warehouse, better synchronizing your workforce to fill orders faster and with greater accuracy.



USE CASE

Imagine your warehouse team is picking inventory for multiple orders. In any given order, there are a variety of different units of measure, one of which that requires a forklift operator. Paper-based systems might encourage the forklift operator to pick an entire order – even units that don't require a forklift. Now, this team member is being paid a specialized rate to do what your less specialized workers could be doing. **Smart mobile technology can promote a more collaborative approach** that accounts for the varying skillsets of those performing the picks. The forklift operator only picks crates, while other members of the team pull the rest of the order. This mobile-enabled collaboration leads to a more effective use of resources.



FOSTER COMMUNICATION – many warehouse workers rely on tribal knowledge of inventory levels and locations to conduct inbound and outbound activities. Where paper-based processes rely on word of mouth for communication, mobile-enabled processes proactively communicate relevant information to help warehouse workers be more informed and effective.



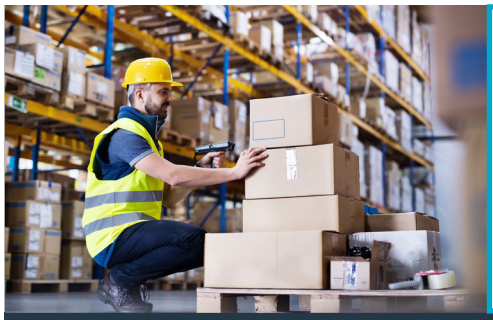
USE CASE

Stock outs are a common occurrence in warehouses. Without immediate, up to the minute stock levels, personnel may not be aware of the stock out, greatly increasing the amount of time necessary to complete an order. Without a mobility solution, these complex warehouse operations require word of mouth to disseminate the issue.

Mobility, however, provides real-time inventory visibility, logic to accommodate alternative locations or inventory, the ability to reorder on the fly, and notification of availability.



Raise efficiency - mobile programs can synchronize the day-to-day activities across your warehouse, eliminating the non-value add steps that could otherwise be automated.



USE CASE

In this use case, an item appears damaged upon receipt. The typical process is to usher the damaged inventory into a staging area until a team member can manually inspect the item and conduct the return process. Mobility eliminates days or weeks from this process by automatically prompting the documentation of damages when inventory is scanned and marked as damaged. Workflows can be created to trigger a return order with your vendor, saving your workers most of the time and hassle associated with these types of quality issues.

Attract and retain talent – there is a widely held set of expectations among professionals who are new or just entering the talent pool about the technologies a company leverages. Millennials, who will make up 75 percent of the workforce by 2025, have spent most of their lives in the presence of fast, easy internet access; smart, portable devices; and constant connectivity to each other and the world at large. It's no wonder this population expects this same level of access and connectivity in the workplace.

Workforce expectations for technologies are quickly outpacing the reality of what's available at many organizations. This imbalance creates an opportunity for the mobile technologies you choose to become a competitive asset for keeping and attracting talent.

Offer value-added services – in an increasingly competitive landscape, distributors continue to leverage value-added services to set themselves apart. The reality is that most enterprise systems fail to support these services out-of-the-box. Mobile solutions can be customized to support the way distributors choose to differentiate themselves.



USE CASE

In this example, a distributor is leveraging a 3rd-party logistics model and leasing out extra warehouse space that they manage. The customer wants to pay on a consumption-basis every month as opposed to a fixed price because the amount of space they need varies month over month. Leveraging configurable mobile technology to track events at the point of activity, the distributor could track square footage consumed based on the size of the customer units and volume of inbound and outbound activity each month. Mobile programs make unique customer requests simple and easy to manage.

Satisfy big box customers - for many distributors, big box customer orders are both an exciting opportunity and a daunting strain on resources. These customers come with different sets of requirements about when and how their orders are filled.



USE CASE

As an example, a distributor may want to prioritize big box orders above others but find themselves having to constantly sift through incoming orders to ensure they are prioritizing accordingly. Mobile technology, when supported with an intelligent inventory system and configured to prioritize big box customers, will direct a workforce to fill those orders first when they arrive in the order system.

Operate even without connectivity – if your warehouse has unreliable WIFI or your operations that send workers to remote locations with no cell coverage, advanced mobile solutions can function in a disconnected state. This means that at the point of an activity, the appropriate data can be captured and later updated to the system when the mobile device comes back online.



USE CASE

Consider a distributor of lumber that operates over a large remote yard. Despite being equipped with mobile devices, the workers still must return to a single spot in the yard with known coverage in order to complete a task in the system. Instead, an advanced mobile program would offer ofÒine functionality that allows for the capture of data in a disconnected environment and automatically updates the system when the device is restored to connectivity.

Get your data working *for you*

AMONG THE MANY BENEFITS OF IMPLEMENTING A MOBILITY PROGRAM is honing your data. Many companies report feeling like they're drowning in data rather than wielding it for their benefit. Mobile solutions can be a tool for better data collection and accuracy, turning data into meaningful information.

Take a look at the 5 C's of data enabled by mobility programs and a connected workforce.

CONTROL

Implement flexible process controls that put you in the driver's seat of any warehouse or inventory process and ensuring a single version of truth for better data governance. Some examples are adding quality checks to certain vendor items or detailing the load of a vehicle for optimal weight distribution.



COMPLIANCE

Increase compliance by accurately reporting on inventory levels and meeting industry, customer, and regulatory demands such as lots and serials tracking or unique labeling requirements.

COLLABORATION

From the back office to the warehouse floor, ensure that every member of your team is seeing the same, real-time information to react and even proactively manage operations and exceptional scenarios.

CONTEXT

Data with context becomes meaningful information. Mobile data collection can help inform your transactional data with the additional context required to make decisions about inventory levels or product offerings.

CONTINUITY

Where spreadsheets and paper get lost, mobile data prevails. Mobility ensures continuity of data and process from person to person, whether you're navigating around time off or resource churn.

Go above and beyond: capture high-resolution data

MOBILITY PROGRAMS DON'T HAVE TO STOP AT CAPTURING THE DATA YOU NEED. The true power of mobility lies in the ability to automatically capture extra kinds of data in a high-resolution manner through various integrations and applications. Imagine your connected workforce automatically capturing data related to weather conditions, humidity, machine run-time, temperature – without having to introduce an extra manual step. Consider the following use case as an example.



USE CASE

This particular customer distributes ice cream. They needed a way to keep quality control on the ice cream temperature, ensuring it never went above the proper freezing temperatures both in storage and in preparation for shipment. They connected mobile devices to several different freezers to monitor temperature conditions while in the warehouse, and during transportation.

Now, if the temperature exceeds the recommended range, the device automatically triggers alerts so their workers can quickly act accordingly to keep the ice cream batch properly frozen. This high-resolution data not only helps prevent spoilage but also ensures customer satisfaction and preserves brand reputation.

Key considerations for mobility selection

WHETHER YOU'RE LOOKING TO INTRODUCE MOBILITY FOR THE FIRST TIME or make improvements upon your existing program, there are several key criteria to consider. These can be used to ensure that your choice aligns with your goals today and can scale or evolve with you as your businesses changes.

INTEGRATION WITH YOUR TECH STACK

The compatibility of your chosen mobility solution with your current enterprise technology stack is critical. Ensure that your chosen solution has a flexible data model to connect well with your ERP system and is equipped with APIs to work with other smart devices and machinery like pick-to-light systems, caravans, carousels, or production equipment. A quality integration is critical for the seamless flow of information and system performance that keeps your workforce moving at the pace you need to stay competitive.

OFFLINE OPERATION CAPABILITY

In the real world of distribution, internet connectivity isn't always a guarantee. Warehouse WIFI could be unreliable, and you may even have yards and outdoor storage in remote locations. The ability of your chosen mobility solution to function in offline mode is crucial. It allows your workers to perform essential tasks even in locations with limited or no internet access, and the work automatically uploads to the system when the device is back online. This feature is particularly important for maintaining operational continuity and data integrity.



PERSONALIZATION OF PROCESSES

Every distribution business has its unique characteristics and workflows. Whether its support your value-add services, adding quality checks to existing processes, or completely building a new app from scratch, your mobility solution should be adaptable to these individual needs. The ability to customize the solution long after go-live ensures that your applications will evolve with your business.

USER-FOCUSED EXPERIENCE

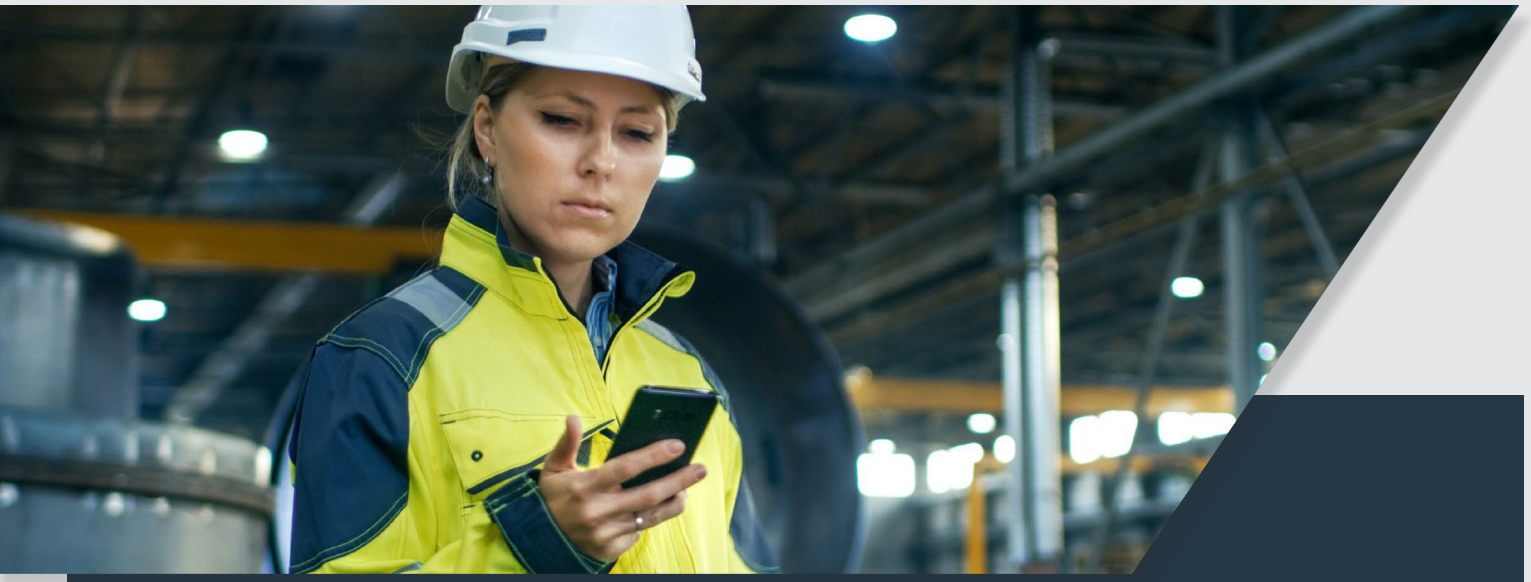
All too often, mobile deployments fail because the initiative did not include gathering requirements and data from the actual users. Mobile programs come with the ability to be incredibly tailored to a company's specific needs, but without gathering user input at the conception of the design, you could fail to properly digitize the parts of their job that would drive the most meaningful results.

Wrapping up: your mobile-ready future

IN THE WORLD OF WAREHOUSES, MOBILITY HAS GONE FROM OPTIONAL TO NECESSARY. Mobility can transform your warehouse operations, addressing the challenges of paper-based processes and ushering in a new era of efficiency and connectivity.

In this guide, we introduced the concept of the connected workforce and explored how mobility supports collaboration, revenue, efficiency, and compliance, turning data into meaningful information for every area of the business. By embracing the right mobile solution, you're investing in lasting success for your business. Start your journey toward a connected, mobile-enabled future today.

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A little about us

OUR ADVANCED INVENTORY MOBILE SOLUTIONS are designed to augment warehouse teams, enabling businesses to scale without multiplying their resources. We deliver unprecedented flexibility, allowing you to personalize applications to fit your exact processes, and even connect to your chosen enterprise technology. Want to find out if Cloud Inventory could have the right mobile solution for you? Have a conversation with us to learn how you can level up your warehouse today. [Schedule a call]