

by Curt Barry Sep 13, 2010 4:15 PM

While barcodes have been in use for many years in shipping and manifesting systems, many warehouses still don't fully use this technology. That's a shame, because barcodes help you reduce costs and increase control of your operation.

Among other functions, barcodes let you track the what, who and when for all warehouse activities within the four walls.

As a result, potential savings can occur in the following areas:

- A decrease in clerical costs due to reduced need for manual data-entry functions
- Fewer errors thanks to improved inventory tracking and positive verification of activities
- Increases in overall inventory accuracy
- Ability to track employee performance that can increase productivity
- Improved scheduling of warehouse activities

You can use barcodes in warehouse paperwork (purchase orders, pick tickets, etc.); for individual employee identification to track who did what; on individual products; and on cartons or pallets to identify the contents and track activities. Each warehouse location can have a unique barcode that facilitates inventory moves.

Many of the warehouses we work with have applied barcode technology to areas such as receiving, putaway, replenishment, picking, packing, shipping/manifesting, returns, cycle counts, value-add functions and labor tracking.

We recently toured a furniture warehouse that had installed a warehouse management software package within the past few years. As a result of being able to use barcode applications, the company reduced the warehouse staffing level by 50%.

We should note that this is not a typical result for most warehouses. But there's no question that moving from a very manual operation to one that uses barcode technology can yield significant benefits.

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