

Giving the boot to strenuous physical labor

Ariat: How a WMS and flexible AMRs helped an international retailer improve efficiency and employee satisfaction



Snapshot

Company Ariat International	Industry Retail
Number of Employees 300	Warehouse Size 1,000,000 Sq. Ft.
Solution(s) Autonomous Mobile Robots (AMRs) Infios Warehouse Management (WM) Advantage	

Complexity

Labor shortages created by seasonal demand spikes. Overcome the issues of labor efficiency and facility optimization.

Best practice

Introduce digitization to optimize the warehouse and increase associate productivity and satisfaction.

Evolving demand

Headquartered in Union City, California, Ariat makes a world-class product with world-class design, materials and workmanship. The team obsesses over every single detail of the boots, jeans and shoes—from the finish and durability of the leather and denim.

Ariat was using multiple third-party logistics (3PL) facilities to provide coverage for their operation. Different technologies and levels of technology were used throughout the facilities, making it cumbersome to adapt to their customer needs. They decided to build their own central hub, in which they would have full control over the operation and end-customer experience.

As Ariat created their new 1 million-square-foot distribution hub they looked for ways to optimize the facility, increase throughput and decrease labor dependency. The work in the facilities was physically demanding and strenuous, employees were lifting and carrying bulky boxes while walking up to 22 miles a day. In addition, the facilities saw overall inefficiencies due to manual processes and high SKU velocity. Orders would come in and employees would work overnight to configure the most efficient throughput work sequence for the coming shift.





“If we can take the hours and the heavy physical labor out of the process, we can reinvest that in value services, quality end of line processes and investing in other pieces of the business where there is a service element for the end-customer experience.”

Matt Hardenberg

Vice President of Distribution, Ariat International

A number of options were considered before, selecting Infios WM Advantage solution. Ariat chose Infios with the confidence they could develop and successfully internalize their supply chain operations. The software would allow Ariat to grow and evolve freely over time and its customization capabilities would improve each customer’s needs. Additionally, Ariat identified with Infios’s culture, and saw this as a partnership with potential to grow.

Less than a year after selecting WMS, Ariat experienced increased demand in e-commerce. They needed an additional solution to assist in picking that could deploy quickly and handle large footwear. The Infios team recommended their Autonomous Mobile Robot (AMR) partner, Geekplus. Geekplus presented a swift timeline, a robot capable to handle large items and potential to easily duplicate the system in future facilities. “We are thrilled with what we’ve experienced thus far with Infios WM Advantage. Infios recommended Geekplus as a partner and we took their word,” stated Matt Hardenberg, Vice President of Distribution, Ariat International.

Finding the right solution

Ariat had 3 main requirements when looking for the solution to best fit their needs. First, a solution that would not constrain the operation; flexibility and scalability with the business was critical. Second, a solution that would take away unnecessary manual labor and allow Ariat’s team to put efforts towards the end-customer experience. Lastly, Ariat holds value in their people, from their employees to customers and wanted to partner with a company with good culture that aligns with their values.

Working together

Infios worked collaboratively with Geekplus and Ariat to integrate and deploy WMS and AMR. Ariat opted for 88 AMRs with 2,000 racks that communicate with the WMS system to optimize the facility operation. A standard interface between Infios WM Advantage and Geekplus technology made for a rapid implementation.



Following implementation, Ariat found training associates quicker and easier. “The training process is infinitely easier than training them elsewhere in the facility. They are much happier with this solution,” says Alyssa Brainard, Project Manager, Ariat International. Associates are no longer experiencing strenuous physical labor, walking time has been cut up to 82%. The systems’ ease of use has increased accuracy and productivity. There is only one user interface (UI) associates must learn, within the system as well as a cross-checking system at the picking stations, leaving little room for errors.

Associates use the UI for direction at the put-away stations and load the products onto the inventory racks in placements selected by the system to optimize space on each shelf. Once a rack is finished, the robot takes it out to the floor where it waits to be called to the picking station. When inventory is needed at the picking station the robots bring it to the associate, eliminating unnecessary walking by the associates.



“The Infios and Ariat partnership is focused around teamwork. Especially as one of our core values, we couldn’t be happier to have Infios as a partner. They’re focused on how we both grow together and how we make each other better and that is invaluable.”

Alyssa Brainard
Project Manager, Ariat International

Ariat realized a number of key benefits with the new system:

- Reduced physical associate demand – decreased steps from 40,000 steps a day to 7,000 steps a day
- Picking accuracy – cross checking on the user interface at picking reduces errors and returns, leading to more satisfied customers
- Morale boosting – staff see that the robots are something to help them, rather than replace them
- Simplified training – ease of use has decreased training to one day

Looking ahead

Ariat is pleased with how the Infios and Geekplus solutions have overcome their operation and associate obstacles. They are already looking to expand the digitization further in the warehouse in partnership with Infios. “We view Infios as a partner that brings other solutions to the table. They have a wide portfolio of solutions that we can deploy,” stated Matt Hardenberg, Vice President of Distribution, Ariat International.

Whether you’re introducing your first AMR or integrating a complex automated warehouse solution, we can tailor the solution precisely to your needs.

Learn more about Ariat’s success story:

“How a Warehouse Management System and AMRs helped Ariat improve efficiency and employee satisfaction”

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