

the speed challenge

Brought to you by Fortna

Banta books more clients with new expansion

A 179,000 square foot addition brings distribution under one roof while meeting the growing needs of printing clients.



PRINTING POWERHOUSE BANTA CORPORATION HAS EXPANDED its distribution center in Harrisonburg, Va. The addition eliminates the need to store overflow products in five outside warehouses. It has also improved customer service, reduced operational complexity and provided room for future growth.

The expanded facility primarily serves the distribution needs of clients of the Banta printing facility located next door. These include publishers of how-to books on computers, home and garden topics, and home improvement, as well as other clients that produce textbooks and teaching materials.

"We felt the new addition was the best way to help our customers succeed," says Dwayne Black, vice president of operations.

Black explains that the expansion was necessary because of increased volumes and the addition of new clients.

"We align ourselves with companies that are growing. As our clients grow we are able to decrease their fulfillment costs."

One big advantage of the Harrisonburg distribution center is its co-location with the Banta printing facility.

"We are in a unique position to be one of the few facilities in the United States with print and automated distribution under one roof," explains Eric Kok, general manager.

This arrangement greatly lowers transportation costs, as products are quickly brought from the print floor by self-guided vehicles (SGV) through a 500-foot connecting tunnel. Another SGV with fork attachments gathers each pallet and takes it to staging.

Lift trucks then transport loads to pick up and delivery stations located on the end of very narrow aisles (VNA). Other products from outside facilities are also received and are taken to the VNA racks, where three turret trucks perform putaway duties.

Order picker trucks are used to gather batches of most full case orders as directed by on-board radio frequency terminals.

Orders for fast moving-items and new releases are picked directly to shipping cartons riding on conveyors in a high pick line.

Split case orders are processed in pick modules comprised of flow racks and shelving. Fortna, the materials handling designer and integrator for both the original facility and the expansion, installed its Fortnaplus system to coordinate the pick-and-pass operations used in split case fulfillment. Orders are sent only to zones where picks are required.

"Fortnaplus is a superior system, says Black. "It interfaces well with our warehouse management system."

Fortna also provided the EZ Logic conveyor control systems that interface the management systems in the building with the 2½ miles of belt, roller, accumulating and incline conveyors.

Completed picks are conveyed to pack stations where foam-in-bag dunnage is added. Cartons then are sent to a sliding shoe sorter where they are diverted to shipping docks.

The facility also features a value-added area where store displays are created and educational products are kitted. An additional processing area handles returns.

Overall, some 5,500 cartons of books and materials are efficiently processed each day, representing over 100,000 units. Much of this is due to the integrated Fortna design.

"We have had minimal downtime with the building. The Fortna design has worked very well and we are pleased with its performance," says Eric Pullen, maintenance and engineering manager.

"There are benefits with going with proven methodology," adds Black.

—By David Maloney, Special Projects Editor

For more information about Fortna's design and integration services, call 800-367-8621 or visit www.fortna.com.



Banta's newly expanded facility in Harrisonburg, Va. is now 433,000 square feet. It primarily serves publishing clients of the adjacent printing plant.