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It all stacks up nicely

A move to bolted racking has allowed Menlo Worldwide to quickly take on new distribution challenges.

MENLO WORLDWIDE IS LITERALLY RACKING UP EFFICIENCIES, thanks to new storage solutions it has installed in four of its facilities.

Menlo is one of the world's largest third-party providers of distribution and logistics services. The company recently expanded a relationship begun in 2002 with Phoenix Brands, maker of household products such as Rit fabric dyes, Niagara spray starch, Final Touch fabric softener and Sunlight dish detergent. In 2005, Phoenix Brands acquired several additional products from Colgate-Palmolive that required the company to revamp its supply chain, so it contracted with Menlo to engineer and deploy an expanded, integrated network for distribution.

To establish the network, Menlo had to quickly construct or retrofit a handful of facilities. Three existing operations serving Phoenix Brands were relocated to more strategic locations in Columbus, Ohio; Mississauga, Ontario; and Cranbury, N.J. New facilities were also built in Charlotte, Edmonton and Fontana, Calif. The new buildings all required rapid installation of storage systems to accommodate Phoenix Brands' wide mix of products. At four facilities, Menlo turned to the California-based material handling experts at Warehouse Engineering and Equipment Services to deliver a viable and cost-effective solution. WE&E responded by specifying a new and unique rack product from Interlake. The Interlock bolted rack system fit Menlo's needs perfectly, according to Dean Wright, Menlo's manager for equipment purchasing.

"For us, it was a combination of flexibility, price and fast availability," Wright says. "We also needed a rack system that could adapt to a vast range of pallet sizes."

Turnaround time was a critical factor in selecting racking for the four facilities, as the compressed project timelines were as short as 30 days. Unlike welded racking, the bolted rack system requires no factory assembly. Components are readily available and can be quickly shipped via common carriers. Transporting

uprights in un-welded form also saves greatly on freight costs.

Once the rack components arrived at the facilities, they were easily erected by trained teams of installers. Bolts on the racks are designed to provide a snug, secure fit without over-tightening. Recessed safety channels in the uprights eliminate any opportunities for the hardware to contact product, pallets or personnel. Wright was at the Columbus facility while the 5,400-position rack system was being installed and he says he was impressed with

how the crew was able to build an upright in only minutes.

"We were pleasantly surprised at how quickly they could put it up. Within a few short hours, we had standing rack," he recalls. "With the right crew, it is equivalent to or takes even less time and cost than erecting welded racks."

That isn't to say that transitioning to bolted rack was an easy decision, since it is a product very new to the U.S. market. But Wright and the Menlo team did their homework and saw the benefits they could gain in speed, cost and flexibility.

"We had discussions with others overseas where bolted rack has been used for a decade," he says. "We found that it is a tried and true product."

As a 3PL, Menlo Worldwide also appreciates the versatility it gains by using bolted racks. As their clients' needs change, they can easily reconfigure or even relocate the racks to another facility.

"Our goal is to have assets that we can move and adapt quickly to meet customer needs. We could disassemble racks in Ohio, for instance, and move them to a building in California," Wright adds. "The Interlock rack provides a high-quality standard and gives us more flexibility to create the right solution, efficiently and repeatedly across many clients."

For more information on Interlake Interlock bolted racking, call 800-INTERLAKE or visit www.interlake.com.



Menlo Worldwide found a nuts and bolts storage solution to hold Phoenix Brands' products at its Fontana, Calif. DC.

To watch a three minute video of operations at Menlo Worldwide's Fontana, Calif., distribution center, go to www.dcvelocity.com and click on The SPEED Challenge.