

VELOCITY VIDEO CASE HISTORY

A DC VELOCITY SPEED CHALLENGE

Conair force

A new automated distribution center has the power and flexibility to speed orders for multiple customer channels.

MOST CONSUMERS ARE FAMILIAR WITH THE Conair brand of hair-care products, which include hair dryers, curling irons, and Scünci hair ties. But the company also manufactures and distributes a range of household and personal care products. Among them are the Cuisinart and Waring brand kitchen appliances and Interplak dental-care products.

With its broad product lines, the company has diversified supply chains, including distribution to retailers and wholesalers, and direct-to-consumer fulfillment. In the past, some of this distribution was handled internally, while third parties took care of the rest, including distribution for Conair's repair-parts business.

In 2017, Conair decided to bring all of these diverse channels in-house and to consolidate products from some other buildings to reduce overall inventory and turn orders faster. It also wanted to add capacity for its fast-growing e-commerce business.

Conair contacted DMW&H to help it design and build a new 850,000-square-foot facility in Glendale, Ariz. The multichannel operation now fills most of the company's direct-to-consumer orders nationwide and also handles West Coast distribution for retail customers. The company additionally brought its replacement-parts inventory back in-house for national distribution.

A TRUSTED PARTNER

Key to the new facility is an automation design that replaces manual processes found in the previous buildings.

"It's not possible to use a manual process when you are handling the volumes that we have to turn around within 24 hours," explains Stephen Alley, director of Western operations for Conair. "DMW&H heard our needs clearly and provided the solution that offered capability and flexibility. It was the proposal that we felt the most comfortable with."

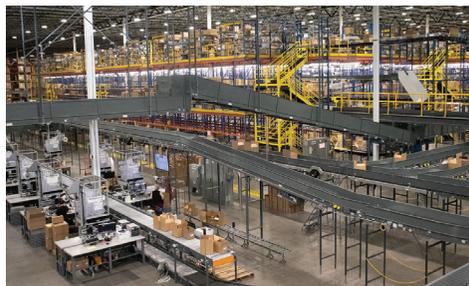
The automation includes some 10,000 feet of conveyor that winds

through three large pick modules and other processes. Within the modules, workers equipped with voice-directed technology perform piece picking for retail customers and the booming e-commerce business. Voice allows flexibility and speed for most of the 250,000 picks performed each day in the 24/5 operation. In all, the facility ships an average of 30,000 cartons daily.

CONAIR IN CONTROL

Inside the facility, the Manhattan warehouse management system teams with the DMW&H-supplied Shiraz warehouse control system to manage the fulfillment processes and to provide the data necessary for managers to direct labor where it's needed most.

"We know right away when we activate a wave what zones have the most picks. That's where we put our resources," explains Thomas Phillips, shipping manager. "So, we are always being proactive as far as where we're moving resources, all the way to the dock."



Elsewhere in the building, full cases are picked directly to conveyor belts. Another area handles the fastest-moving items, with voice directing selection of items to carts. Items eventually travel by conveyor to pack stations and special labeling machines. The labelers allow the facility to drop-ship e-commerce orders received from Conair's retail partners. The label machines print logos and other markings specific to each retailer, making fulfillment seamless to the end customer.

"This building was built with growth in mind," adds Alley. "The conveyor system and the automation were built to be done in several phases, and the building as well was built not with the current demands in terms of space and business in mind, but to be larger than the immediate need."

Since the facility opened, DMW&H has already expanded the material handling systems. Two years ago, an "Early Out" conveyor and the third "Pick-n-Pass" pick module were added. And last year, the shipping sorter was extended to provide another 10 diverts, including an additional "Value Added" conveyor line.

To see a video of Conair's distribution center in Glendale, Ariz., go to dcvtv.com and click on Channel 2. For more information on DMW&H, go to www.dmwandh.com.