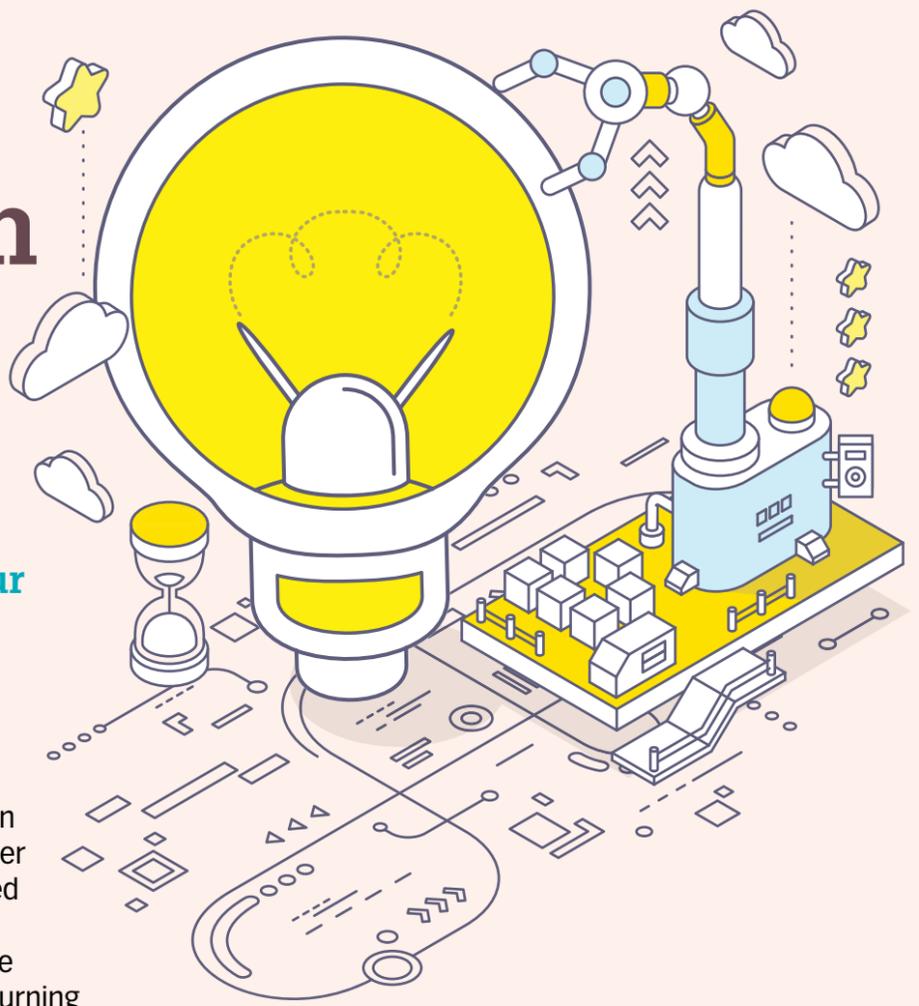


10 situations where automation makes sense

Whether it's saving space, boosting productivity, or slashing processing costs, the benefits of automation can make it a logical move. Here are some signs that your operation is ripe for automation.

Operating requirements can change quickly in the fast-moving world of fulfillment. Sometimes, managers find themselves trying to distribute products or serve customers from facilities that weren't originally designed for those purposes—a situation that's especially common in today's world of direct-to-consumer shipments. Other times, they're finding that growth has strained their DC's capacity to the point where changes are needed to merely survive. The answer to a facility's problems can often be found in a move to automation. Here are 10 situations where turning to automated equipment makes sense.



1 Productivity needs to improve

A lack of productivity is often reflected in rising costs. Automation can make workers more productive while reducing overall labor expenses.

2 Throughput needs to increase

Constrained facilities often have bottlenecks that hamper the operation's efforts to process orders quickly—a situation that can frequently be addressed through automation. Companies facing rapid growth can also boost their throughput capabilities with automated equipment.

3 Better accuracy is needed

Order fulfillment mistakes can be costly. Not only do they mean extra work to pick the correct products, but there is the added burden of processing returns. Automation can greatly improve accuracy and limit processing errors.

4 Goods can easily be inventoried and transported in cartons or totes

Cartons and totes provide an easy way to track inventory, whether it's in storage or in process. Automated systems can track the location of cartons and totes in real time to provide accurate and up-to-date inventory information.

5 The work force is aging and needs more-ergonomic systems

Automated equipment, such as goods-to-person picking systems, can benefit older workers by reducing walking, lifting, and reaching.

6 There is a need to limit exposure to harsh environments

It's no fun to work in a harsh environment, whether it's a freezer or an area where dangerous chemicals are stored. Machines minimize—or eliminate—the need for humans to work in these conditions.

7 There is a desire to increase security or improve control and safety

A benefit of many automated systems is that they store products behind protective barriers, making them hard to get at and thereby reducing the risk of theft. The systems also place the products in safer positions compared with conventional racking, reducing the risk of the items falling and potentially injuring someone.

8 There is a proliferation of stock-keeping units (SKUs)

Whether SKUs are growing in number or constantly changing, automated equipment's ability to accurately track data helps facilities manage their inventory. Automation can also eliminate the need for dedicated pick slots, which allows companies to fit in a larger array of SKUs.

9 Space is limited

One of the challenges faced by successful companies is that they often outgrow their DC space. Automated equipment provides denser storage in a much smaller footprint. Automating an operation is often an alternative to expansion or moving to a new facility.

10 There is a desire to save energy and be greener

Automated equipment allows companies to handle more items in a smaller footprint, which can save on cooling and other climatizing costs. Also, unlike conventional aisles where workers are present, automated storage areas eliminate the need for lighting.

