

How to Store More in Less Space: Smart Solutions You Can Use

Special Report

Manager's Guide for Productivity Problems



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AMH Special Report

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How to Store More in Less Space: Smart Solutions You Can Use

By Tom Jameson, President

AMH

Let's start this review of time & money-saving storage solutions by reviewing the persuasive reasons for storing as much material as possible in the maximum amount of floor space you have available.

First, of course, you're already paying for every square foot of your current warehouse or distribution center. With rent, construction costs, interest, etc., these expenses represent a substantial part of your operations budget.

Plus, your facility also consumes a sizeable sum each year in utilities and maintenance expenses, not to mention city, county and state taxes.

This means, to the extent that you can manage to store more merchandise, parts, equipment or supplies within the walls of your current building, **your operating efficiency goes UP because your cost per transaction goes DOWN.**

Figure 1



How to Spot Facility Efficiency Problems

Okay, so how do you evaluate the relative productivity of your warehouse operation?

Here's a list of questions to get your thinking headed in the right direction:

Dead, outdated inventory – This problem is easy to identify. old stuff stashed in out-of-the-way corners and covered with a thick layer of dust because no one's touched it for a couple of years or more. Question is: how soon can you sell it for what you can get or throw it out to make room for profitable materials?

Pallet Storage –

Do you have the most efficient racking type for your product lines? Is it properly installed to maximize usable floor-space? How many pallets can you store in a given area? How quickly and accurately are your pickers able to pull orders?

Figure 2



Shelving Storage –

Same questions as pallet Storage above.

Overhead Space –

What is your facility clear height? How much of your current clear height is used for material storage? How much holds nothing but costly air?

Access Aisles – Do size and orientation of your access aisles aid – or impede – your picking operation? Does aisle plan maximize storage space available?

Small Parts Storage – There are many specialized storage tools for small parts that can make a huge difference in storage and picking efficiency. Are you using the most appropriate shelving for your lines?

Office Space – Are warehouse personnel wasting time because there's insufficient office space dedicated to warehouse operations? How can you increase productivity without knocking out walls and constructing expensive building extensions?

Off-Site Storage – Are you storing overflow materials in a building other than your main warehouse or distribution center? If so, this is a sure sign you're probably paying more than should to accomplish your operational mission. The same applies to overflow storage in trailers, mini-storage facilities, etc. Have you considered all feasible internal solutions?

Space-Saving Opportunities

Now, let's look at a checklist of solutions you and your management team should consider to increase the productivity of your facility:

Increase pallet rack storage capacity by:

- Using full vertical height available in your facility
- Install racking over loading dock doors
- Build pallet bridges over existing bays
- Store pallets according to size
- Vary vertical beam spacing

Also consider additional higher-density rack alternatives such as:

- Active Rack
- Double-Deep
- Drive in-Drive thru
- Push Back
- Pallet Flow
- Carton Flow
- Multi-Level
- Cantilever (for long, oversize materials)
- Reel
- Drum

Figure 3



Figure 4



Top Options for Expanding Productivity

It's amazing how quickly a facility fills with equipment, materials, conveyors, maintenance areas, etc. then, you're faced with the question of "What are our best options for letting our business grow without exploding our budget due to facility expansion construction or expensive off-site locations?"

Here are some ideas to consider:

Shelving – there are many types of industrial shelving, some better suited for some jobs than others. Be sure you're using the most efficient shelving type for your materials. For example, moveable shelving is often the best way to make best use of available floor-space. (if you want expert input in determining which shelving type is best for your applications, call AMH toll-free at 800-838-0474. We'll be happy to help without cost or obligation.)

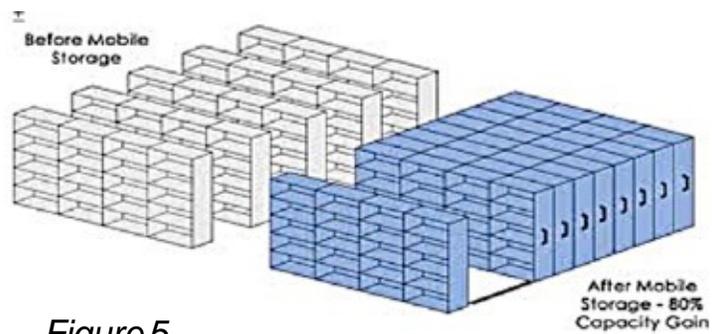
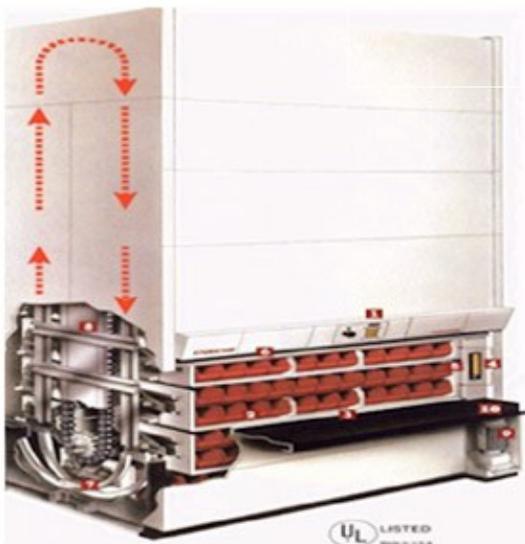


Figure 5

Modular Drawers – for small parts and tools, drawers and cabinets can be the most efficient storage units. In many cases, drawers can deliver floor space savings of 30%-50% over shelving. For example, you can store small parts from 3 to 5 shelving units in one 25" x 25" x 59" drawer module. It's also far easier to secure access to drawer modules than open shelving.

Figure 6



Vertical Lift Modules – these are called "high-density" storage systems for a good reason: Vertical Lift modules can store 50-75 sections of shelving in the space consumed by only 12 shelving sections. They do this by converting up to 40' of unused overhead space into productive storage space. Used with smaller parts, they also speed part-picking and cut picking errors substantially.

Figure 8



Mezzanines—This is another highly effective way to use overhead space productively. In most cases, only 15'-17' clear height is needed to make productive use of mezzanines as low access storage, office, lunchroom, assembly area and more. Free-standing mezzanines are especially flexible, and cost much less to install than conventional construction.

FREE Needs Analysis & Recommendations

Finally, with all the traps and pitfalls involved in planning and implementing an efficient operating facility, it often makes sense to get professional advice on what you may be planning and the best, most cost-effective means of achieving your operational goals.

That's why my company, AMH, offers **no-cost space surveys, needs analyses and product recommendations** to qualified industrial companies. If you'd like the benefit of our expert input based on more than 30 years professional experience, call us **Toll-FREE** at **1-800-838-0473**.

Remember, this professional service is **absolutely free and obligates your company in no way whatsoever**.