CASE STUDY

CUSTOMER: Breakthru Beverage Illinois

CHALLENGE: Needed a solution to meet customer demands and foster long-term growth

SOLUTION: Warehouse Execution System powering a high-density AS/RS

Breakthru Beverage Illinois Invests for Long-Term Growth with Westfalia's Savanna.NET® WES

A family business, built on values and commitment to partnership, Wirtz Beverage Group , now known as Breakthru Beverage Group, was founded in 1945 by Arthur Wirtz. As one of the first multi-state distributors, Breakthru Beverage Group operates in Illinois, Nevada, Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa, with combined revenues of $1.8 billion annually and 2,500 employees.

THE CHALLENGE

Like many companies in the beverage industry, Breakthru Beverage Illinois needed to expand to support the increased demand. Understanding that it needed to invest for long-term growth, Breakthru Beverage decided to build a new facility in Cicero, IL. This reinvestment included redevelopment of the former Sportsman's Park. The 35-acre site lot was chosen to fit the 604,907 square-foot building. Standing 42 feet tall, the new distribution center included 555,449 square feet of warehouse, 106,409 square feet of office space, and 25,000 square feet of cooler.

However, simply having a larger, centralized warehouse is not enough. Today's modern facilities are required to process increasingly complex tasks and provide reliability and flexibility to meet future needs. To maximize its real estate investment, Breakthru Beverage looked to automation technology.

"With the growth of our business we started to see that we could be limited in our ability to service our customers during our high peak times," said Richard (Rocky) Ruane, regional director of warehouse operations, Breakthru Beverage. "We needed a warehouse which would give us the efficiencies that we needed

to match our go-to-market strategies as we continue to grow."

THE SOLUTION

Breakthru Beverage selected Westfalia Technologies, Inc., to automate its new, state-of-the-art warehouse. Westfalia installed a high-density automated storage/retrieval system (AS/RS), designed to store upto 10 pallets deep while maintaining a balance

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of inventory and movements across the system. The AS/RS utilizes the Westfalia Satellite® system, a fully automated rack entry vehicle, or storage/retrieval machine (S/RM), to store and retrieve pallets within the high-density configuration. Also, designed within the AS/RS are eight fully integrated pick modules with the company's highest volume product. The S/RM automatically replenishes the modules into the pick face via pallet flow lanes.

Bringing the solution together is Westfalia's Savanna.NET® Warehouse Execution System (WES). Built with Microsoft C# and .NET technology, Savanna.NET® powers the AS/RS, allowing Breakthru Beverage to direct and optimize all internal material flow and order


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FEATURES

- Savanna.NET® WES
- Top 780 SKU's are stored and picked (736 dedicated pick/64 cluster pick)
- 5 high storage in 42' clear traditional building (2,470 pallet positions/1,300,0000 C's capacity)
- 3 tandem cranes (200 pallet moves per hour)
- 8 intnegrated pick-to-belt modules
- 1.3 million cases stored in a 110,000 square foot system

BENEFITS

With Westfalia's Savanna.NET® WES controlling a high-density AS/RS, Breakthru Beverage has:

- Gained full control over material flow and inventory
- Optimized order picking productivity and accuracy rates
- Maximized overall efficiency and productivity
- Improved space utilization
- Increased throughput of the material handling system
- Reduced product damage
- Boosted truck loading productivity and efficiency
- Positioned itself for future growth and flexibility
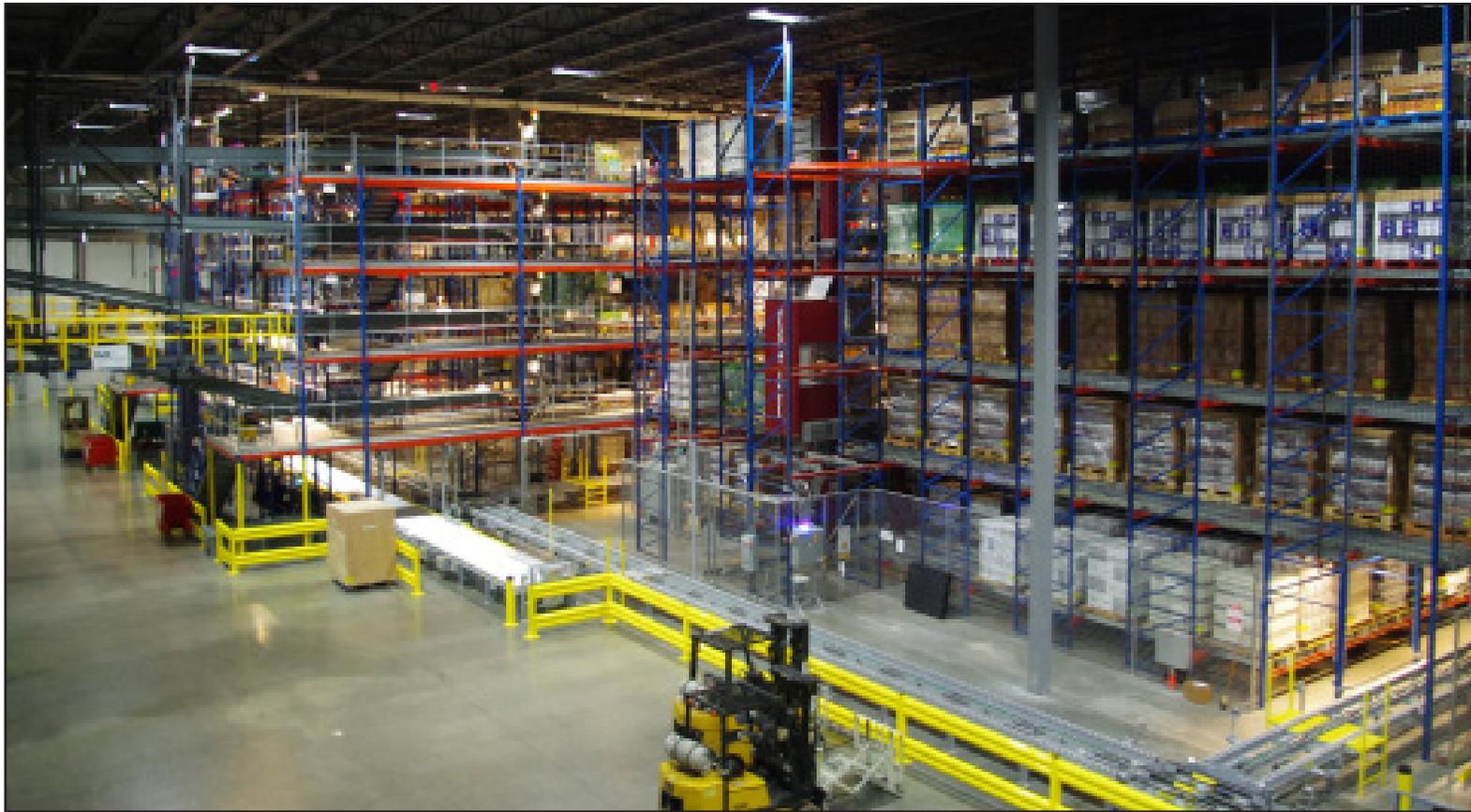
picking.

"Savanna.NET® pretty much takes all the pallets and keeps track of them as they come into the system on the conveyors," said Justin Soltis, WMS manager, Breakthru Beverage. "It reads the barcode and decides where it needs to go within the warehouse. It keeps track of pallets by date, LPN, SKU, and is pretty user friendly."

Savanna.NET® gives Breakthru Beverage complete insight into the inventory and its movement. Within the WES, a dashboard tool instantly provides operators with data on pallet movement and allows them to take action– they can re-warehouse pallets, send them to a different location, or send them to pick modules. In addition, Savanna.NET® can talk with Wirtz Beverage's other systems to automate requests for replenishments.

RESULTS

With Savanna.NET® powering the AS/RS, Breakthru Beverage has gained full control over material flow and inventory, optimizing productivity and accuracy in order picking. There is less of a need for human intervention, therefore reducing errors and expediting the time it takes to fulfill customers' orders. This level of efficiency is vital, as the company is now capable of moving 200 pallets per hour, carrying more than 1,000 SKUs and 2.2 million cases of inventory.

Breakthru Beverage Illinois has also cut the receiving time of primary product in half. Docks are set up in front of the system, so it is not necessary to drive through the warehouse to put away inbound product. Furthermore, the system takes up only 110,000 square feet, yet is able to store 1.3 million cases allowing Breakthru Beverage to improve space utilization and store inventory in about one third of the space of a conventional warehouse.

Soltis concluded, "Westfalia'a system has really enhanced how wed do business in ways I never thought possible. I don't know what we'd be doing without it.

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WAREHOUSE EXECUTION SYSTEM