

Simple Steps to Maximize Your Storage

By Joe Schodowski • Shelving, Inc.

For manufacturers, it seems there's never enough "space" to store materials, products and merchandise, or house machinery and equipment. When manufacturers run out of space, they typically invest in new storage facilities — a potentially costly proposition that can produce numerous logistical headaches. That's why it's essential for manufacturers to maximize their existing space before seeking alternative storage solutions. Here are four simple strategies to save yourself time and money while meeting your storage needs.

Take Inventory

Make efficient use of space by starting with a thorough audit of existing inventory. Identify inventory "dead spots" you can recycle or dispose of to free up space. This includes unusable raw material, substandard finished goods or obsolete products. Space is expensive. Don't pay to store what you don't need.

Rack 'Em Up

Look closely at how material(s) move through the facility and identify a storage system that fits those needs. Depending on the sensitivity, durability and lifespan of the product, you may select a first-in-first-out (FIFO) rack system that flows from the front to the back for easy loading and unloading. This requires more space but facilitates the constant stock rotation required for perishable or time-sensitive goods. Products with a long lifespan can be stored with a push-back high-density rack system for last-in-first-out (LIFO) product flow. Push-back racking only requires one aisle, and makes more efficient use of space. Consider carton flow racks — multi-shelf units with rolling conveyors that allow pickers easy access — for storing raw materials near the assembly line.



“When manufacturers run out of space, they typically invest in new storage facilities — a potentially costly proposition that can produce numerous logistical headaches...It's essential for manufacturers to maximize their existing space before seeking alternative storage solutions.”

Go Vertical

Maximize your vertical space by determining how high you can safely go. A new row of shelving can often be spliced onto existing racks, but if the shelving is outdated or cannot support additional weight, upright supports may need to be replaced. Don't let your equipment limit you: if investing in a forklift with a 15-foot lift height instead of a 12-foot reach allows for added storage, that investment could pay for itself relatively quickly. Aisle width also matters. Different types of forklifts/trucks require much less space and allow you to narrow aisles significantly.

Find Your Flow

Ideally, you want to establish a synchronized flow to move product throughout the facility, creating an efficient system for receiving, storage, retrieval, manufacturing and shipping. Consider the geometry of your space when designing the best storage setup. Racks set up haphazardly can result in small inefficiencies, which quickly add up to big delays. An efficient setup can create space, boost efficiencies, save time and, ultimately, have a meaningful impact on your bottom line. ⚙️



Joe Schodowski serves as ShelfEO of Shelving, Inc. Visit www.shelving.com for more information.