

Case Notes



New for Old at SFS

The problem

The increasing attractiveness of the UK market influenced the Swiss screw and fastening manufacturer SFS to increase their production facility in the UK and use this as a major export base. The Company decided to build a new manufacturing centre in Leeds and this led to the need for a complete re-design and upgrade of the warehouse. It was decided that it was time to leave behind their wooden shelving and lovingly maintained 1950s rail guided narrow aisle truck and take a big step forward. To help them do this THE LOGISTICS BUSINESS was commissioned to review SFS's requirements and develop plans for the future.

Our approach

We started by carrying out a detailed analysis of the business. Data extracts from the Client's computer system provided a detailed picture of past sales, orders and production patterns. and an analysis of marketing, sales and business targets allowed the team to develop a statement of the business requirements for the future. Once we had understood the business needs we were in a position to look at options and home in on the best way forward.

The solution

THE LOGISTICS BUSINESS team developed a number of possible solutions. This allowed SFS to visualise the new operation using manual, semi-automated and automated material handling equipment. The clients drive to be operating a world class facility as well as being able to show a clear financial and operational advantages led us jointly to home in on an automated mini-load solution. The final design uses standard pallet racking for goods-in/out and the bulk store, whilst the miniload handles slow moving, high value and very small volume products. THE LOGISTICS BUSINESS provided project managers to manage the installation and our IT experts worked with SFS's in-house IT team to develop the warehouse management system and interfaces to the miniload control system.

Attention to detail pays off

Initially SFS had been looking simply to replace their old manual storage and handling systems with the equivalent modern equipment. They had not even considered automation in the warehouse. The attention to detail given by our consultants combined with their wide experience of other applications allowed the manual options to be compared with automation and the facts presented to the Client. These showed clearly the advantages of an automated approach and it was then easy to put forward the case for capital approval. All agreed that the investment in consultants' time had undoubtedly paid off.

Successes and Benefits

- ☞ SFS has now replaced an outdated storage system with a modern throughput system designed to meet the exact needs of the business.
- ☞ Orders can now be picked more quickly at shorter notice and picking accuracy is very high.
- ☞ Storage now takes up less space than it did, even though the business is continuing to grow.
- ☞ The new computer system gives precise control of the warehouse and provides a high level of management information.