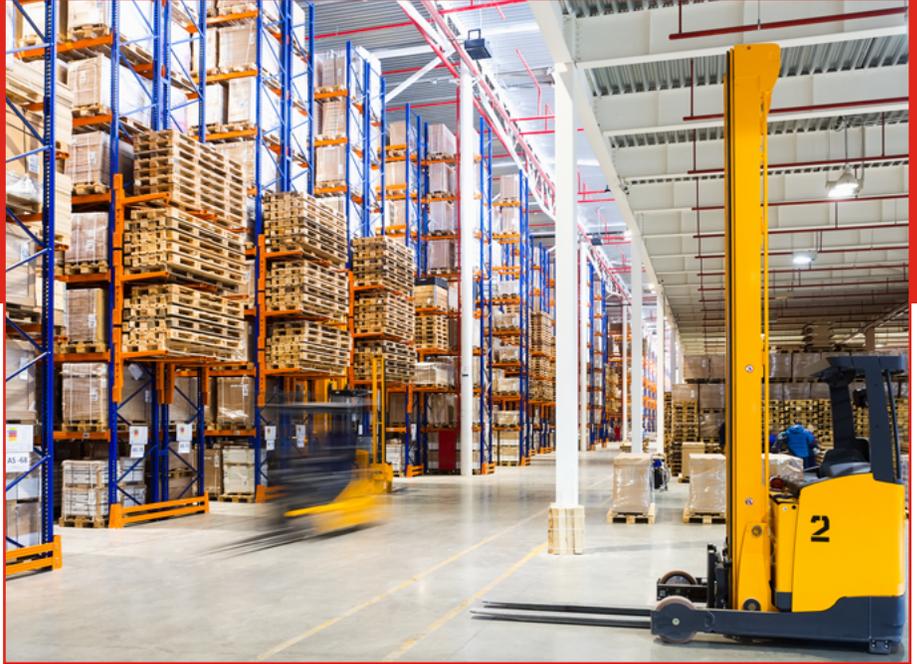


6 Indispensable Tips to know Before Choosing a WMS



When it comes to choosing the right WMS for your warehouse, there's a lot to consider and a lot of pressure. Selecting and successfully implementing the WMS that is the best fit for your needs can make you a company hero. Choosing the wrong system could have you searching for a new job. Finding the right solution and implementing it in a timely manner are both important, because just as picking the wrong system can cause major issues, delaying too long can also lead to lost revenue opportunities.

Let's apply the "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" principle: you want to find a WMS that fits "Just Right." Too big, and you might be paying a premium for the name and for features that you don't use. And you might end up working with a vendor who is too big, and you don't get the attention you need. Too small, and your solution might not meet your functional needs, or it could meet your needs today, but you might quickly outgrow it. So, finding the WMS that is Just Right for your operations will take a little research.

Here are 6 Key Steps to Choosing the Right WMS for Your Warehouse:



1. Spell out Why You Want a New WMS

The best place to begin your WMS selection is to research your business and understand why you're considering this investment. Do you have operational gaps? Are you running out of space? Not meeting your expected SLA's? Facing new demands from customers? Are high labor costs and overtime charges eating into profits?

Some of the more common reasons include:

- You see technology as a way to increase your bottom line by eliminating inefficiencies and reducing workforce-related costs.
- Warehouse problems exist, and you think they may be solvable using a WMS. For example, manual errors in data entry are causing inventory discrepancies.
- You are growing and looking for the best path to keep up with that growth while planning for future success through smarter processes and technology.
- You are shifting to e-commerce or other new distribution models, which change the way goods flow through your network.
- Your customers or suppliers are driving the requirement for more modern capabilities and technology.
- Inventory visibility is a struggle, so you don't have immediate knowledge of what is available to fill orders.
- Upgrading your current WMS will cost a fortune, so why not shop around for a new one.

Each of these reasons will cause you to look at the process slightly differently. A company who is growing and investing has different immediate needs than one who is hoping to gain basic operational efficiencies.



2. Review Your Workforce and Build Your Teams

After looking at your business, look at the people who will be working with the WMS. Be sure to consider warehouse, operations, IT and other departments, like finance, who may interface with and rely on the data.

Consider their expertise and knowledge with existing technology to see how much automation they may be able to support. Look for gaps in institutional knowledge and operations, with an eye toward where technology can help or where you might need additional support.

Touch base with your IT team to see how much they can support, or how much they do not know about automating parts of your warehouse. Technology can fill some skills gaps or provide better data and insight for your decisions, but you will want a system that leaders and boots-on-ground staff both feel comfortable using.

At the end of this process, build a list of the teams who are involved with the software and your leadership. Get a representative for each to become part of your WMS RFP review and implementation teams, so all parties can be a part of the process, decision and success.

3. Check Existing Software and Hardware

A warehouse management system can be an amazing tool when it works in conjunction with your existing software, like ERP, e-commerce platforms, Warehouse Control System, Labor Management, TMS, and other solutions. If there's a "must-have" system you need to integrate with, share this with potential vendors and ask about their experience.

But, don't just stop at software. Look at the hardware you're using right now, including mobile devices and barcode scanners, voice driven solutions, robotics, automation, PCs or Tablets, and other assets in your warehouse. Make sure the WMS you choose can support these as well as the tools you need to grow.

4. Create Your Requirements List

Now that you've looked at your team and tech, think about what happens each day, month, and quarter in your operation. Think about the things you are running manually today and are spending a lot of time on. Turn these tasks into a list of items to support. Build out lists for receiving, putaway, picking, packing, replenishments, task assignment, inventory counts, and more.

You're building a core requirements list to ask where the WMS can address steps in each activity, plus how it will be able to support your team and the tools they use. And think of how your needs will evolve in the foreseeable future. Add those capabilities to your requirements list, as well.

One important thing to consider in your requirements list is that you're looking a little beyond the warehouse. Consider how orders enter your supply chain, who needs to approve of inventory resupplies, how vendors and customers interact with you, and places where other business groups are involved. Think of the WMS as a tool to bridge gaps, especially with the information it captures and can share. Think about supply chain visibility within the organization.

5. Look for Unique Needs and Movements

Areas for special attention are inventory allocations or specific capabilities that are out of the norm for your industry. You may have unique, non-standard requirements from customers, especially if you're growing or expanding into e-commerce, like working with Amazon or other Big Box retailers. Ask how a WMS will handle these.

Some WMS will treat vendor returns as a non-standard movement because goods need to pass from you back to the original manufacturer. Another common issue can be associated with work orders and splitting lots and shipping different quantities, especially if you're kitting to sell a new group of items. Other times, it can involve differing storage requirements or specialized checks and verification before specific items are shipped.

Add any of these to your list for a better chance of picking the right WMS.



6. Review RFP Responses and Decision Criteria for Selection



The decision criteria for selecting your WMS is unique to you, because the “right fit” is different for everyone. The solution should meet your expected functional needs, and should also be adaptable and scalable, so it can meet the needs for tomorrow.

Here are some key criteria to help you score the various solutions and make the best decision:

- **FUNCTIONAL FIT** – how the WMS capabilities match up with your needs. Many WMS solutions have good built-in functionality for basic needs, so pay particular attention to how the solutions will meet your unique needs and processes. And keep in mind potential areas for growth over the next few years. How will the solution meet those functional needs?

More importantly, make sure that any work that needs to be addressed to meet your needs is accomplished with configurations as opposed to programming. This is key to saving costs in implementation and assuring seamless future upgradability and favorable Total Cost of Ownership.

- **INTEGRATION WITH EXISTING AND PLANNED TECHNOLOGY** – Existing, proven integrations with automation, robotics, ERP and other supply chain systems play into the time and cost of your implementation. Many factors go into the timeline and cost of your implementation, starting with the architecture and configurability of the solution. The ability to setup the system quickly and easily will impact both initial implementation costs as well as the long-term Total Cost of Ownership.
- **CONFIGURABILITY AND ADAPTABILITY** – Will the WMS evolve and grow with you as your needs change? Can you make changes to the system yourself, or do you need to keep going back to the vendor for changes, which can be time-consuming and costly? That can dramatically affect the Total Cost of Ownership.
- **USABILITY** – is it easy for warehouse staff to learn and use? Is the User Interface intuitive?
- **ARCHITECTURE** – A lot of WMS solutions are built on old, clunky architecture that do not meet today’s more modern technology. First and foremost, the architecture needs to allow for scalability, so your business does not outgrow the system. A WMS is a long-term investment, and as your business changes and grows, you want the system to adapt with you, so you don’t have to replace it in three years.

Also, with the right architecture that offers codeless implementation tools, you will be able to lower your support and maintenance costs, by owning the system internally and not being at the mercy of the WMS vendor.

6. Review RFP Responses and Decision Criteria for Selection (continued)

- **ROI AND TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP** – Price is a key consideration with a selection of this magnitude, and even more important is the total cost of ownership because this is a long-term investment. Will the solution require many modifications to meet your needs? What are typical timeframes for implementation? If your system is up and running faster, you will be gaining those benefits faster. How do deployment options affect the cost over time? How do integrations to other systems affect total cost and timeframe? Adaptability and configurability of the solution are key criteria to examine for long-term cost and ROI.
- **COMMITMENT FROM THE WMS VENDOR** – Your success is dependent on finding the right solution, executing a successful implementation and thriving with a reliable, long-term partnership. Do you feel that level of commitment from the vendor? Will you be a valued, long-term customer? We also recommend you look at the experience and life of the companies you're considering. You want a partner who is committed to your specific market and has a lengthy list of satisfied customers. It's perfectly okay to ask about customers and references, too.

We know you're here to get some answers about the WMS selection process. So, we invite you to take a minute and just ask us what's on your mind or request a demo to see what we offer. It will help you understand what's available and just might speed up your selection process. We are happy to help.



About Made4net

M A D E 4 N E T

MADE4NET is a leading global provider of best-in-class cloud-based supply chain execution and warehouse management software for organizations of all sizes to improve the speed and efficiency of their supply chain. The company's end-to-end SCExpert platform offers a robust WMS solution that enables real-time inventory visibility, labor management, and equipment productivity with performance analytics that drive faster, more accurate order fulfillment and improved supply chain efficiency. In addition to the best-of-breed WMS, the platform offers integrated yard management, dynamic route management, proof of delivery and warehouse automation solutions that deliver a true supply chain convergence. For more information, [visit www.made4net.com](http://www.made4net.com).