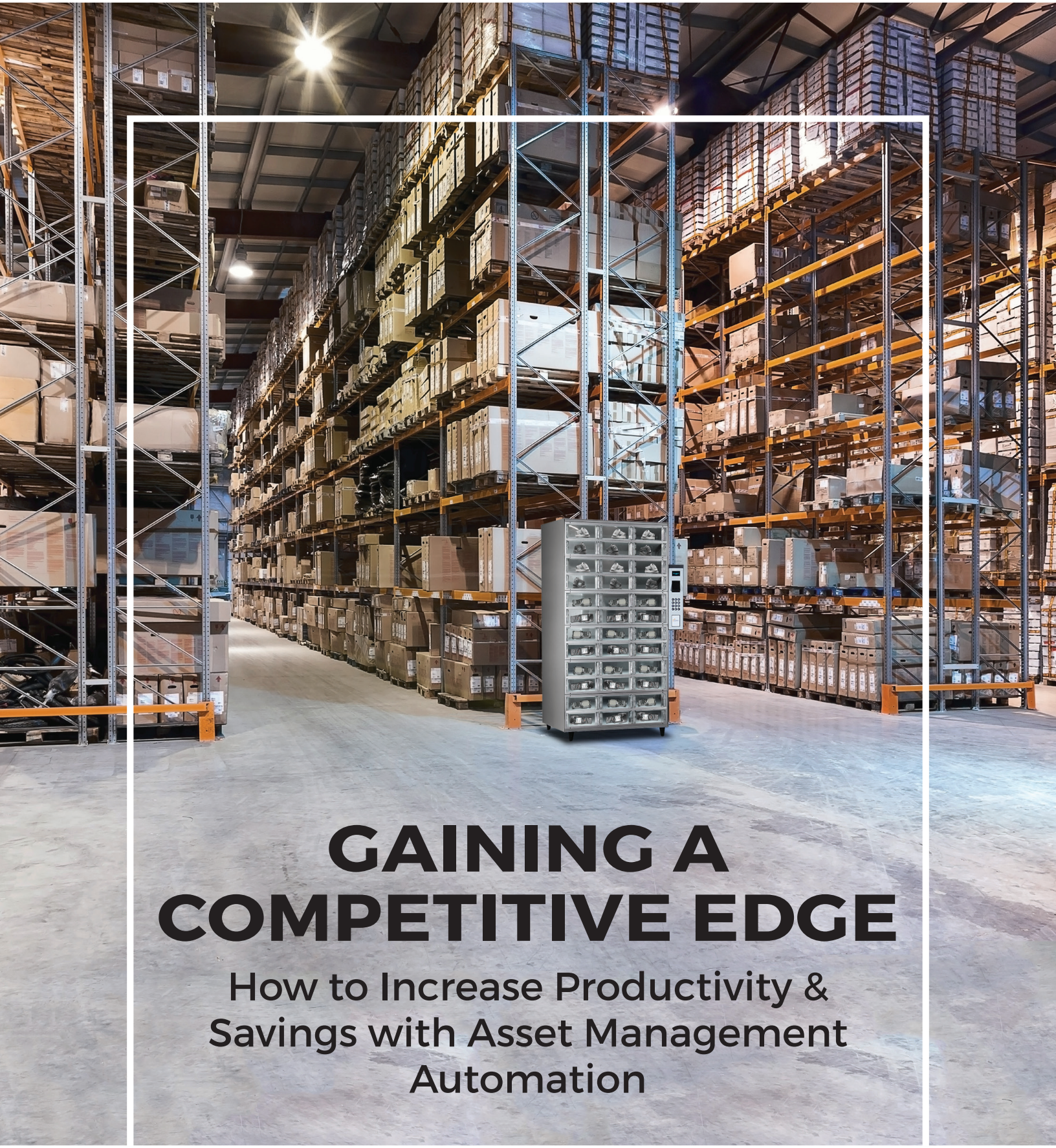


GAINING A COMPETITIVE EDGE

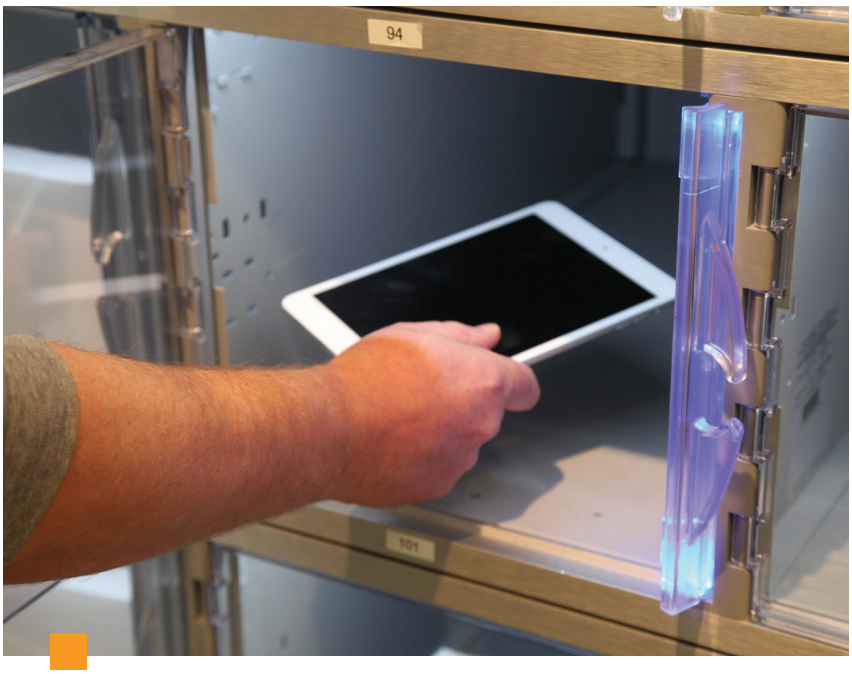
How to Increase Productivity & Savings with Asset Management Automation

BROUGHT TO YOU BY

SUPPLY CHAIN BRAIN
One Forum | One Focus | Many Minds

SPONSORED BY

apex®
Supply Chain Technologies



Automating the management of highly-valuable assets, including hand held scanners and other mobile devices, reduces operational costs and allows workers to focus on more important tasks.

Advances in technology have made each link in the supply chain more efficient, productive and responsive to customer needs than ever before. The impact has been especially powerful in the warehouse, where new material-handling systems and software have revolutionized how products are received, stored and shipped.

Nearly every one of these innovations, however, face a degree of initial opposition from warehouse workers. This resistance tends to reflect a fear of the unknown and the attitude of "we've always done it this way." This opposition is to be expected and, to some degree, is understandable. Research shows it's common to resist change – even when the benefits of it are exceptionally clear.

Unfortunately, this can slow the adoption of new and improved technology and automated systems.

MOBILE DEVICES ARE A BIG INVESTMENT WITH LITTLE SUPERVISION

Take the method by which many distribution centers issue mobile devices like scanners, printers, tablets and headsets, to their workers. These devices enable workers to do their jobs. They are mission-critical assets and represent a significant investment.

And while the devices may be state-of-the-art, the process of handing them out and ensuring their return at the end of a shift is often an archaic manual process, which is cumbersome, manual and ineffective. This also assumes there's a process for managing these assets in the first place.

Typically, mobile devices are housed in a centralized storeroom within the warehouse, staffed by one or more workers. They may or may not be relying on paper logbooks to note when equipment changes hands. Such an arrangement makes it difficult, if not impossible, to keep track on the thousands of devices that might be in use at any given time. Moreover, it slows the handoff process considerably.

Automating this process eliminates redundant or wasteful practices and allows workers to focus on more important tasks. So, one would assume that a self-serve, automated solution for managing these valuable assets would be warmly welcomed by any team. And to be sure, they do quickly embrace it upon implementation. Nevertheless, the prospect of changing a legacy business practice like asset management usually triggers an initial reluctance to embrace an automated way of doing things.

THE ALL-TOO COMMON ISSUES WITH MOBILE DEVICE MANAGEMENT

The first step toward overcoming this resistance to change is to better understand the issues caused by a facility's existing asset-management practices. Be on the lookout for five distinct warning signs that equipment is being mismanaged.

- **Walk & Wait Time:** Workers spend too much time off-task, walking and waiting to get the assets needed to start their shift.
- **Searching for Assets:** Workers and supervisors waste time locating missing assets.
- **Low Productivity:** Overall throughput is down as it is taking longer to move items through the warehouse because the correct equipment isn't on hand when needed.
- **Higher Labor Costs:** Poor asset management is creating a need for temporary labor which incurs the cost of lengthy training required to get new team members up to speed. Labor costs and overtime are unacceptably high as a result.
- **Replacements & Repairs:** Mobile device replacement and repair costs are high, signaling a need for accountability and a reduction in factors leading to missing and damaged equipment. The time it takes to setup each new or repaired device so it's online and ready to use is also an issue. This takes an average of 30 minutes per device and creates productivity-draining delays.

These issues can cost a facility millions of dollars in lost productivity over the course of a year, in addition to higher-than-necessary repair and replacement costs. By detecting and pointing out these egregious examples of waste and high cost, facility managers can convince workers a new solution is needed. It also helps to remind everyone this solution also brings productivity gains, damage reductions and improved device availability.

The Apex solution is controlled by a cloud-based data platform tracking equipment usage patterns in real-time and automatically notifying management of issues as needed.



MANAGE, TRACK AND CONTROL VALUABLE ASSETS

Such a solution is the AXCESS™ 6100 self-serve, automated locker from Apex Supply Chain Technologies©. The solution combines secure lockers with the Apex Trajectory Cloud™ software platform to automatically keep track of who checked out a device at any given time, when it's due back and its condition upon return. The data is cloud-based and available in real-time, giving management 24/7 visibility into equipment usage patterns while providing other insights and an audit trail.

AXCESS self-serve lockers create accountability for each device, making it easy to manage, track and control within even the largest of warehouses. And batteries can be recharged while the devices are in storage, ensuring that mobile equipment won't die in the middle of a shift.

"This technology is very easy to implement and to use," says Apex founder

and chief executive officer Kent Savage. "An electrical outlet and internet access are all that are needed to begin using the lockers. Once prospective users experience the self-serve process first hand, they see how fast and straightforward it is. Any concerns they have go away immediately."

That was the case with a leading U.K. grocery retailer, whose implementation of the Apex system in more than 350 stores was a rousing success with its associates. In fact, by ensuring they have the tools needed to do their job, they begin working immediately and save 30 minutes per associate, per shift. The productivity increase across all its locations adds up quickly.

What's more, the lockers improve morale. This is a common benefit of implementing Apex lockers for asset management. Once workers begin using the technology, they can't see doing their jobs any other way. "When you lay it out in very clear and concise terms," says Savage, "the impact is often dramatic."

Workers can begin their shifts immediately with a self-serve, automated asset management solution. Across employees, shifts and locations, the time savings quickly become significant.



MULTIPLE FINANCING OPTIONS MAKE LOCKER SOLUTIONS EVEN EASIER TO AFFORD

Depending on the company and its approach to procurement, financing an automated locker solution can be straightforward. But if management is concerned about upfront costs or a fast return on investment, the Apex Complete Technology Subscription (ACTS) model may be the best option. It eliminates the need for a capital expenditure and the additional effort typically involved with securing this funding. All Apex hardware, software and services are covered by the subscription. As a result, says Savage, the solution's return on investment is even faster.

Technology is transforming the supply chain to give companies a competitive edge. This benefit alone far outweighs the cost of change. Any fear of the unknown can be eliminated with just a few considerations to realize the benefits of asset management automation.

To learn more about AXCESS self-serve, automated lockers from Apex Supply Chain Technologies, visit ApexSupplyChain.com/AXCESS, email us at info@apexsupplychain.com or call 800.229.7912.