

UNEX CASE STUDY

The UNEX team is up for challenges. They work with you until they design a good, cost-effective solution."

- Frank Falter, CEO, George J. Falter Co., Inc.



customer: GEORGE J. FALTER CO., INC.
operation: Convenience store supplier
goal: Increase pick lines to accommodate new SKUs
solution: Roller Rack with Flow Bed from UNEX



Distributor Maximizes Space, Boosts Efficiency and Reduces Labor Costs with Roller Rack Solution from UNEX

Walk down any convenience store candy aisle, and you'll see a new product or service every other week. All that variety is great for consumers, but it can wreak havoc on the distribution center that has to store and pick the product and support the services - unless you have the perfect carton flow system in place.

In 2011, an inefficient and cumbersome pick line in an existing mezzanine area was undersized and falling apart and slowing workers down at George Falter in Baltimore, Maryland. "Our old system had lanes with plastic wheel tracks that would get busted up, and product would fall through or get hung up," explains Frank Falter, CEO of George J. Falter Co. Inc. "Plus, the layout of the area made it tough for employees to reach products easily and safely."

To address the problem, Falter turned to Werres Corporation, a materials handling solutions company based in Frederick, Maryland. "George J. Falter distributes a variety of products that go into small stores, from candy to food items," says Bill Costa, Vice President of Sales for Werres. "This type of distributor has to store a significant number of SKUs, and most of those products are going to have broken-case picking. Carton flow racking is the product of choice in this setting. We recommended UNEX's flow tracking because it's the best product for the job."



The Mezzanine Makeover

UNEX was no stranger to the folks at George J. Falter. “We had worked with UNEX a couple of years before,” says Falter. “Mark Neuwirth came up with some great ideas for how to reconfigure the flow pattern for our cigarette pick operation.”

So, when it came time to rethink the pick lines in a mezzanine area, Falter says he was confident that UNEX could come up with the right solution.

In the first phase of the mezzanine project, the team focused on the upper level, the pick point for grocery products and dry goods. “We had a combination of fast and slow-moving products on top of the mezzanine,” explains Falter. “UNEX designed two sides of Roller Rack with Flow Bed flanking both sides of standalone wire shelving for slower movers.”

“The finished area was the perfect combination of carton flow, static shelving and conveyor,” says Costa. “It was very successful.”

The makeover was so effective that Falter decided to work with UNEX to create a pick line under the mezzanine deck. “It’s cooler there, which is great for chocolate, and we figured we could model the flow upstairs to optimize the space under the deck,” says Falter.

The UNEX design incorporated 32 bays of carton flow and approximately 45 wire deck shelving units, resulting in three pick lines: two upstairs and one u-shaped line downstairs, housing 3,000 SKUs.

Hitting a Wall... a Column, Actually

Columns holding up the mezzanine initially presented a challenge to the design team. “We worked with UNEX to figure out a way to make sure pickers could work around the columns and maximize the use of the space,” says Costa.

UNEX customized its roller system so that shelving actually went through the columns. “That’s the thing about UNEX. The team is up for challenges,” says Falter. “They work with you until they design a good, cost-effective solution.”

Measurable Results

Falter says that Roller Rack and Flow Bed from UNEX have generated multiple benefits for the distribution center. Between previous improvements to the cigarette picking area and the mezzanine improvements, Falter says he’s been able to reduce the number of pickers by a third.

Neuwirth is quick to note that the Falter team’s hands-on approach was a key factor in the successful transition. The Falter team phased-in the additional pick lines, which

prevented interruptions to the day-to-day business. “Their commitment to the project played large for them and ensured the best return on their investment.”

Other benefits stack up well, too. According to Falter, UNEX solutions:

- Maximize the use of space. “Manufacturers come out with new SKUs every month. We’re always trying to use every square foot that we can. UNEX solutions help us maximize space because we can put any size box next to another, which creates more pick faces in the carton flow area.”
- Reduce walking time. “Having the product in a good spot where it can be picked efficiently can save you time and money. UNEX’s designs minimize walk time, and that means higher productivity.”
- Improve ergonomics. “Everything is within 5 feet with carton flow from UNEX. There’s less bending, reaching and walking so that pickers can do their work safely and quickly.”

“When I talk to customers, there are three key things they usually want to know: How to use their space better, more efficiently and with fewer people,” says Costa. “UNEX helped George J. Falter achieve all three.”



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