Do you have the right recipe and the ingredients to implement a Warehouse Management System (WMS)?

What is the recipe for success to implementing a WMS?
Proteus Software explains the importance of having the best WMS ingredients and the recipe that will help you streamline and grow your business in partnership.

Warehouses and distribution centres are at the core of the logistics industry to provide control, efficiency and rapidity of goods moving through your network. A successful warehouse will plan, implement and control the efficient flow for the storage and distribution of goods, which will be enhanced by using a WMS.

In today’s ever changing, challenging and demanding environment it is difficult to improve on the core competencies of a warehouse operation without having flexibility. You will not be able to meet the demands of your customers, or have the ability to proactively exceed and improve customer expectations. Service will be reduced and will not fit your business model needs. This is where a Best of Breed WMS can give you the opportunity to provide value added capabilities to your business and colleagues, to differentiate yourselves from your competitors and make yourselves more indispensable to your customers by providing the service they expect.

SO What is a Recipe?

Recipes are a set of instructions that can be simplified into five components. Firstly what is the purpose of completing a recipe, what will be the result or effect that you intend or desire to have? Secondly the description of the process or technique required to complete the recipe to its conclusion with the desired results. Thirdly the expected results and probable outcome of the recipe should aim towards meeting your business needs. Fourthly the expected time by identifying the achievable interval of time separating the start of the recipe to the completion of the recipe; allowing you to plan resource and budget for the time involved. And finally, the fifth component being the capabilities that are needed to successfully bring the recipe to conclusion, yielding the desired result.

What Ingredients will you need?

You can complete a WMS recipe and still not attain the desired results, due to the quality of the ingredients used. But the highest and freshest quality ingredients will be constrained by the allocated budget set by the business.

The key to any recipe is the ability to blend ingredients that complement each other to produce the final result, and setting the right level of investment suited to your business, and senior management sponsorship.
The Purpose

As a business you will need to ask yourself “Why Implement a WMS?”

WMSs are implemented for various reasons, but the prime reason still remains financial. Companies can no longer afford to have a culture of a “wait and see” due to the initial costs of implementing a WMS, but should rather look at the financial benefits the WMS will earn. For the financial rewards to be reaped a WMS must be able to provide better, faster, more accurate data in order to reduce inventories, optimising the use of warehouse space and maximising the efficiency of your warehouse operation.

This will save money and increase your service levels and in turn giving the business the ability to earn more revenue and grow its business.

The Recipe for a Successful Implementation of a WMS

Ingredients

- Take one WMS
- Add an Application Consultant/Technical Consultant
- Add a Customer Project Champion
- Add Internal IT Capacity
- Blend Together with Senior Management Support

Cooking Time

- Set Realistic Time Scales
- Check progress regularly
- When cooked take a nibble – test the system
- Do not eat before all the processes have been completed

Consume - Go live!

Digest the results

- Increased throughput
- Rises in accuracy levels
- Increased capacity
- Cyclical Automatic Stock takes
- Automatic Reporting
- Less staff to handle same or increased through put
- ROI achieved within 12-18 months
The Description

A WMS needs to be built upon an established and proven pedigree of scalable, high performance business application software. The latest releases utilise the ease of use and flexibility that modern technology delivers, maximise your efficiencies. With a full suite of WMS functionality all inbound receiving, utilised storage, optimise replenishments and putaways, Pick, Pick & Pack, Returns Process, Inventory Management are maximised. This also includes a Standardised Reports suite.

The Expected Results

A WMS must have the ability to integrate with your ERP system to ensure that customer orders are progressed into the WMS and processed. On completion of the order in the WMS your ERP systems inventory will be updated on confirmation. This integration between both systems must be a seamless process.

Having a WMS will produce results only if your WMS provider and you clearly identify where you are today and where you want to be tomorrow. Detailing finitely your current work processes enables you to recognise process changes that may need to be applied to get you to where you want to be tomorrow with a flexible WMS.

Your WMS will give you the capability on receipt to updated inventory in real time, allowing stock to be putaway immediately even prior to the completion of the receipt into the WMS. The putaway tasks will be systemically driven to the location by rules referencing product to location type, historical data and seasonal variances to identify the optimal staging point of inventory for the location to the nearest location to where the stock will be required for picking.

This will ensure that replenishments are completed in the quickest and most cost effective manner improving work flow. The flexibility within the WMS must provide the ability to override the systemically driven to location, but the operator must declare a reason, and the reason will have the ability to automatically freeze the location for further investigation if deemed by rules set up within your WMS.

Your WMS must be designed to allow the interleaving of tasks, meaning that the WMS will instruct a warehouse operative to complete an additional task during the main job role. This will be dependent on the location of the warehouse operative and the location of the additional task if required.

For example a warehouse operative completing a putaway task will be given a replenishment task in the same aisle. Once the replenishment task has been confirmed the colleague may be asked to complete a full pallet pick prior to returning to the receipts bank / goods in area to complete further putaway task. This will ensure the correct amount of product is in the right place at the right time, meeting the demands of your customer’s orders and decreasing order fulfilment time which will assist with reducing your transportation and distribution costs.

The WMS will ensure that your inventory will become more visible, enabling you to optimise product inventory. This will be seen on the bottom line through accurate inventory management. The system will strategically manage the movement and storage of materials or product which will improve rotation time on stock held within your warehouse.

©Copyright Proteus Software 2014
Overall a WMS will reduce operating costs, increase your capability to handle up to 40%-50% increased throughput with the same resource, and in turn will yield critical business benefits. It is possible to clearly demonstrate a full return of the capital outlay within an 18 month period.

**Expected Time to Complete**

From initial commitment and initial project meeting through to post implementation review, as a customer you will want a fast implementation of your WMS, so that you are able to reap the benefits on your investment in a WMS sooner rather than later, but the implementation must be set within a realistic time frame. A detailed and proven project plan will give structure to the WMS project, detailing milestones, task that are dependent upon each other and the resource applied to each step of the project plan. Implementations can be completed within a short time scale, but will require committed resource from the customer and the WMS provider, and will increase the initial budget assigned to the implementation.

**Required Capabilities**

The question you have to answer is, do you have the specialist skills, and the budget within your business to 1. plan, 2. design, 3. build, 4. test, 5. implement, 6. functionality test, and continually support and update your WMS? If the answer is no, then financially you will want to outsource for product, resource and continual support with upgraded functionality in partnership, in order to gain an effective solution that enables you as a business to be ahead of your competitors and fulfil your business growth plans.

Having the specialist resources within your implementation team you will immediately gain expertise & experience, complementing your business and in partnership keeping you on point and on the path to growth with minimal cost.

Using a Best of Breed Warehouse Management Solutions company such as Proteus Software will give you cost and service advantages without having to build, maintain and support a WMS on your own.

**Marc Jarvis**  
**Senior Application Consultant**  
**Proteus Software**

**About Proteus**

Proteus provides Best of Breed Warehouse Management Solutions, available in Paper, RF and Voice operational modes, and can be on premise or a Cloud solution. Proteus WMS is suitable for any warehouse environment, on any type of mobile device i.e. handheld scanner, voice picking equipment or PDA. The system manages all warehouse processes through to point of despatch.

Proteus Voice WMS increases efficiency as operatives have both hands free, can concentrate on the task in hand, without the handling of cumbersome hand held scanners or fumbling with paper pick and put-away notes.

Call Linda on 0121 717 7474 to find out more.