

Zebra Robotics Automation™



Photography by Zebra Technologies

SUMMARY



Customer

Waytek Inc.
Chanhassen, MN

Industry

Distribution/Fulfillment

Challenge

Increase daily order output in existing facility in a challenging labor market; replace aging fixed conveyor system; gain flexibility and scalability for distribution operations

Benefits/Outcomes

- 25% increase in daily throughput
- 13% facility space recovery
- 5 Years added to facility lifespan

Solution

- Autonomous Mobile Robot (AMR) system
- FetchCart Industrial Carts
- FetchCore Enterprise Software
- Fetch100 Connect
- Zebra Symmetry Software

Waytek Improves Throughput by 25% with Autonomous Mobile Robots

By replacing its fixed conveyor system with AMRs, Waytek was able to fulfill more orders, reclaim 13% of its distribution center space for product storage, extend the life of its facility by five years and free workers from certain manual tasks.

Prioritizing Customer Experience in Times of High Demand

Waytek, a leading distributor of automotive electrical components, had been facing an increasing demand for its goods across the manufacturing sector. To meet this high demand, Waytek deployed Autonomous Mobile Robots (AMRs) from Zebra Technologies which enabled the company to fulfill 1,000 orders per day compared to its previous limit of 800 orders.

About Waytek

Waytek, headquartered in Chanhassen, Minnesota, is a family-owned distributor of electrical components to manufacturers and upfitters specializing in wire harnesses and mobile equipment, and has been in business since 1970. With a mission to provide an exceptional customer experience, Waytek is committed to making it easy for its customers to source electrical parts.

With a rise in component demand across the manufacturing sector combined with the worker shortage, Waytek found itself in the midst of challenging times starting 2020. Over the previous year, its order volumes had multiplied as a result of growth in e-commerce, however, the company struggled to meet this new demand with its existing fixed infrastructure. To keep up with its core mission of providing exceptional customer service, Waytek decided to deploy AMRs.

Challenges:

Managing Order Fulfillment with Limited Warehouse Capacity

In 2007, Waytek had moved into its 100,000 sq. ft. distribution facility to scale its operations and installed a sortation conveyor system that could handle its increased volumes. This fixed conveyor system helped the company order, sort and manage 800 orders per day for 13 years.

However, around 2019, order volumes were approaching 800 per day and its conveyor wasn't going to be able to handle the increased volume. In addition, the conveyor ran through the building occupying significant floor space which made it difficult to expand storage capacity for the additional inventory needed to support its customers.

As a result, Waytek started looking for a flexible solution that could enable the company to meet customer demand as well as scale operations within the same facility.

Solution:

Improving Throughput With Autonomous Mobile Robots

When Waytek started looking for options, it weighed two possibilities—making major modifications to its conveyor system or any new automation solution that would enable the company to fulfill orders from the same facility.

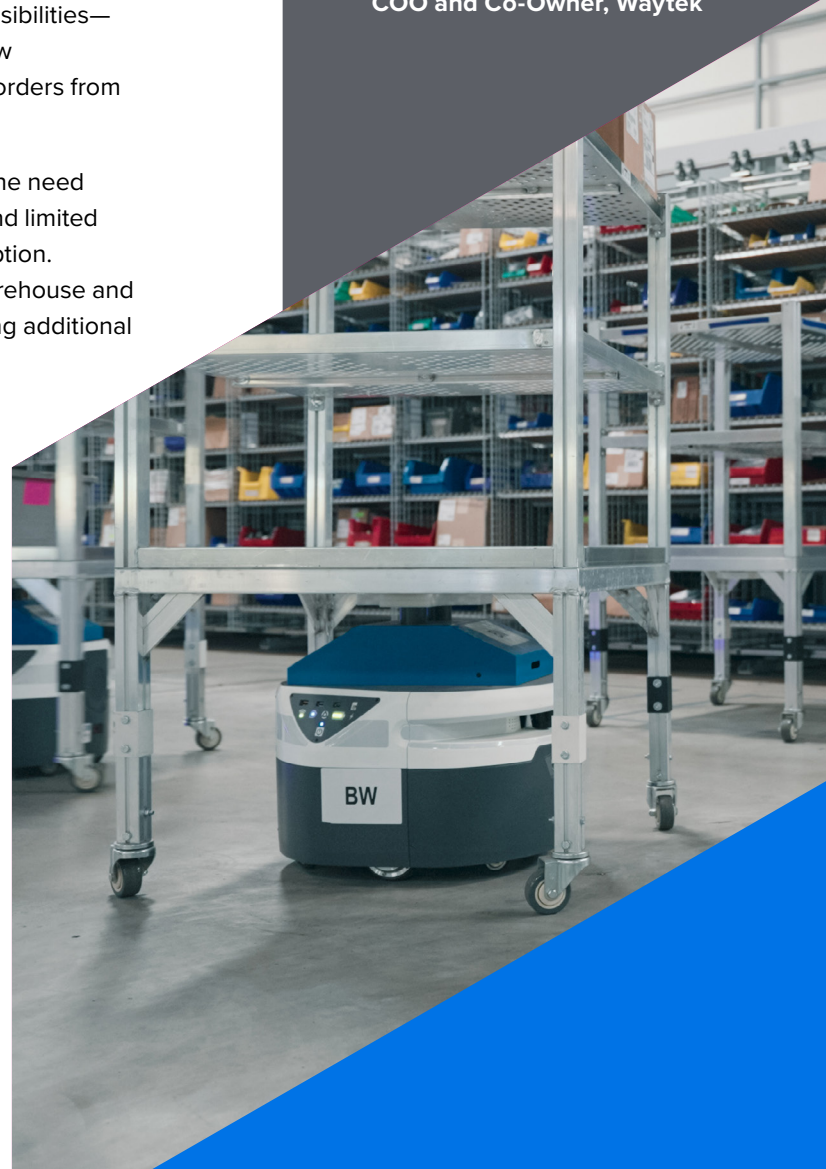
As conveyors come with their own challenges, for instance, the need for continuous maintenance, extensive floor requirements, and limited flexibility, Waytek wasn't keen on moving forward with this option. Moreover, it wanted to elongate the lifespan of its current warehouse and any modifications to its conveyor system would mean blocking additional floor space.

While considering its options, Waytek came across AMRs and decided to evaluate the benefits of modifying its conveyor system vs. deploying AMRs. Compared to conveyors, Waytek found that AMRs save floor space and provided flexibility to scale. With AMRs, warehouses can also scale effortlessly as you don't need to remap your whole facility. If your order volumes increase, you can add more robots.

Due to the low capital investment and the ability to quickly scale, Waytek selected AMRs to fulfill more orders, make its distribution facility more efficient and free its workers from certain manual tasks.

“Amongst all our technological implementations until now, Zebra was the easiest to deploy and it took us only three days to become operational with their AMRs. These AMRs are very easy to work with and rarely have any downtime. The Zebra team also consistently maintains and updates the robots, so we don't have to worry about any breakdowns.”

Mike Larson,
COO and Co-Owner, Waytek



Results:

Enhanced Throughput, Worker Efficiency and Space Utilization

After deploying the AMRs, Waytek not only improved its throughput but also realized that its workers were much happier as it reduced their workload and enabled them to focus on value-added activities to support their customers. Let's see how AMRs were a game-changer for Waytek.

- With AMRs, Waytek is now able to fulfill over 1,000 orders per day compared to 800 orders per day previously. This change has helped the company to improve throughput by 25%.
- By replacing its conveyor system with AMRs, Waytek was able to reclaim 13% of its distribution space in the warehouse. Waytek can use this extra space to store more goods and expand its operations as well as extend the lifespan of its facility by five years.
- Since robots have been added to Waytek's workflow, there has been a significant reduction in manual walking. This enables its picking team to stay productive and focus on customer orders.
- Waytek is also using these AMRs to recycle corrugate which was earlier done manually. Eliminating these manual movements across the facility has improved worker efficiency significantly, saving employees over 300 ft. of walking on each trip.
- What really stood out for Waytek was the super-fast deployment of AMRs in its facility. The company was able to implement and integrate these systems within three days.
- Because of the Symmetry™ software, Waytek employees are able to operate the robots by using their tablets or mobile phones. As this software is maintained completely by the Zebra team, the addition of these robots didn't add any workload to Waytek's IT team.

With low capital investment, Waytek was able to resolve its challenges and meet customer expectations in no time.



To learn more about how Zebra Robotics Automation can help your operations, scan the QR code



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