



Case study

Nature's Best



Health and pharma



Warehouse trucks

Added 33-45% more pick positions and decreased operating costs by 25%



Customer

As one of the largest privately owned wholesaler distributors of natural and organic products in the United States, Nature's Best is deeply committed to customer satisfaction and operational sustainability.

Founded in 1969, the family-owned company is the only dedicated distributor to the natural products industry today. Headquartered in Brea, Calif., with distribution centers in Chino, Calif., and Flower Mound, Texas, Nature's Best delivers grocery, refrigerated, frozen, bulk, supplements, personal care, herbs, medicinal and pet products to retailers throughout the Western, Central and Southern regions of the United States, as well as Hawaii, Alaska and Asia.

Challenge

Threatened with a costly warehouse expansion to house their growing business, Nature's Best was exploring how to accommodate more SKUs without increasing its footprint or compromising throughput. The company was aware that their current materials handling equipment was limiting their ability to optimize supply chain and, therefore, turned to Yale for warehouse expertise and product assistance.

Solution

After consulting with Yale Materials Handling Corporation, Nature's Best decided to re-think its slotting strategy and utilize a variable height picking process made possible by the Yale® M055 low-level order picker.

The company was able to increase their pick height from six to ten feet. This strategy placed slower-moving SKUs above faster-moving items, allowing more frequently picked items to be in the most accessible location. Slower-moving items could then be stored and picked within the same aisle for optimized integration of the pick process.

Most conventional pallet trucks would only allow us to slot from concrete to six feet. But by using the Yale M055 forklift, we have increased our pick faces significantly and driven many ancillary benefits.

Brian McCarthy

Senior Vice President of Operations, Nature's Best

Yale's M055 forklift made this enhanced pick process possible, allowing operators to pick from multiple levels and build the entire order often within the same aisle, eliminating unnecessary product touches and travel time.

It not only eases picking in the "Golden Zone" (floor to 72"), but permits picking to occur in a secondary zone from 72" to 120" through its lifting platform. In addition, the truck's operator sensing floor mat, adjustable power steering and stable cornering help increase operator productivity and enable seamless picking, packing and shipping.

"The Yale® M055 forklift allows us to go vertical with our pick faces, nearly doubling the space in our cooler and freezer areas, resulting in improved productivity and additional storage space to support our growing business," said Brian McCarthy, Nature's Best Senior Vice President of Operations. "Yale's solution gives us the ability to create a one-touch system for the six-to-ten foot pick zone while consolidating and elevating slow-movers. This enables us to meet our aggressive productivity goal of 144 cases per hour and get products to market much more quickly and efficiently."

Impact

Leveraging Yale's expertise and high-performing M055 lift truck, Nature's Best added 33-45 percent more pick positions. By doing so they increased the number of SKUs per square foot, enhanced revenue per square foot and significantly reduced product touches, motion and travel time—all without the burden of a costly warehouse expansion.

The unique capabilities of the M055 also mean that no additional equipment is needed for higher-level picking and no merge areas or processes are required—one pick vehicle completes the entire order process.

To date, the facility has decreased operating costs by 25 percent and saved more than \$500,000 by minimizing the amount of steel racking needed. Thanks to improved throughput, Nature's Best requires seven fewer operators and lift trucks. These reductions are expected to save the company \$2 million in labor alone over the next five years.

