



# Best Practices in Tackling Distracted Warehousing

## Improving Warehouse Operations for Scalable Growth

We all talk about distracted driving and modern technology has made distracted driving more common. None of us talk about distracted warehousing, and we need to. And like driving, sometimes technology has gotten in the way of task focus. Other times, technology lulled us into thinking the dangers of distracted warehousing were easily solved.

# The Challenge of Distracted Warehousing

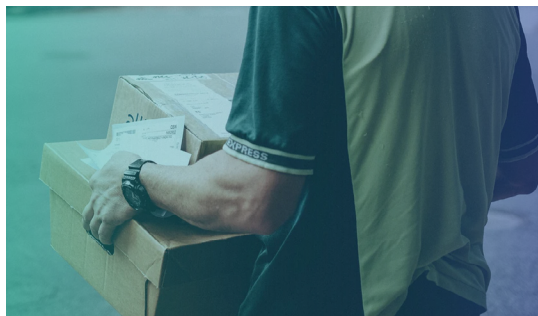
Distracted warehousing is a significant operational challenge impacting productivity, staff safety, and overall supply chain performance.

## The real costs of distraction in the warehouse include:

- ◆ High staff turnover
- ◆ Workers' comp claims and sick leave
- ◆ Compromised inventory accuracy
- ◆ Reduced staff productivity

## Sources of distracted warehousing include:

- ◆ Physical clutter and noise
- ◆ Inefficient processes
- ◆ Poor storage layout
- ◆ Unclear task communication
- ◆ Training gaps
- ◆ Plant safety
- ◆ Suboptimal technology



Distractions slow down work, produce errors, compromise safety, and impede the ability to meet customer expectations.

These distractions slow down workflows, lead to errors, compromise worker safety, and impede the ability to meet customer expectations. Given the growing demands and worker shortage in warehouse operations, addressing Distracted Warehousing is urgent.

Operational excellence goes beyond customer satisfaction and must encompass employee satisfaction. Eradicating the distractions in our warehouses improves staff loyalty, reduces direct costs, improves inventory accuracy, and better meets customer expectations.

## Physical Distractions

Physical distractions range from noise and visual clutter to environmental conditions that divert workers' attention. These distractions hamper productivity and also result in unsafe work environments. Warehouses are noisy environments due to the operation of machinery, forklifts, and other equipment. These factors lead to communication errors and safety hazards. Physical clutter results in increased danger to staff and equipment.

**Best Practice:** Round the warehouse, track priority lists of physical distractions to address. Follow-up on the list with warehouse staff.

## Operational Distractions

Operational distractions come from factors such as inefficient processes, poor warehouse layout, and equipment breakdowns. These distractions hinder productivity, increase errors, reduce inventory accuracy, and affect customer service. An inefficient warehouse layout produces wasted steps and long task times. This not only reduces productivity but can also lead to increased injury and liability. Equipment breakdowns cause significant disruption to warehouse operations, leading to downtime and delays.

**Best Practice:** Measure task turn-around time, then redesign layout and workflows to reduce cycle times.

## The Human Factor

Human factor distractions consist of training gaps, communication barriers, and personal issues. Lack of proper training leads to confusion, delays, and mistakes, all of which distract workers from their core tasks. Communication barriers, such as unclear or incorrect instructions, lead to errors, repeated tasks, inefficiencies, and missed deadlines.

**Best Practice:** Use honest staff feedback and proficiency checks to improve training. Periodically evaluate the clarity of communications. Use staff huddles to improve communications.

**A global aerospace leader with a \$500M warehouse operation deployed Mobilium™ with positive ROI in <12 months.**

What did its users have to say?

*"...best thing that ever happened to this warehouse!"*

*"Potential of the new system is limitless....a safer process than what we have now."*

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## Safety Concerns

Safety concerns are distracting and disconcerting to your workers and management, impacting productivity and employee retention.

**Best Practice:** Round the warehouse, track priority lists of safety concerns. Open communication with staff about safety. Active safety team.

## Inventory Management Challenges

Poor inventory management is a source of significant distraction. Overstocking, understocking, and misplacement of items divert attention from meeting promise to ship targets. Overstocking leads to excessive capital tied up in inventory, while understocking results in missed sales and disappointed customers. Misplacement of items leads to wasted time and frustration as workers search for products in the warehouse.

## Technological Distractions

Technology vendors have introduced a wide array of software and hardware to warehouse operations. This tech explosion was supposed to improve productivity, efficiency, and employee satisfaction. However, these tools are among the biggest distractions to our warehouses. Outdated technology, slow systems, poor integration, and cumbersome workflows hinder operations, increase errors, and frustrate warehouse staff.

## Bottom Line Impact

In the face of increasing competitive pressures and ever-evolving customer expectations, the need for efficient and distraction-free warehouse operations has never been greater. Streamlining workflow through better ERP integration reduces costs and allows operations to scale to meet demand.



## Software Challenges

ERPs like SAP have delivered profound improvements to supply chain planning, procurement, and sales operations. However, connecting these systems to **the minute-by-minute** operations in warehouses remains incomplete. Applications that push ERP screens to frontline staff require too many steps to be useful and delay task completion. Applications that don't work offline have too many hiccups on shop floors that have notoriously poor cellular and Wi-Fi coverage. ERP reporting and dashboard are, at best 24, hours old and are sometimes a week old. **No warehouse can run effectively on yesterday's data.** Staff and supervisors lack the real-time, accurate data needed to effectively do their jobs.

## The Right Software to Use *Inside* the Warehouse

Getting workflow software into the warehouse needs to assess and define what the benefits that are needed from that software. The following criteria provide a good starting point:

- ◆ Accurate and efficient workflows
- ◆ Easy-to-learn, easy-to-use workflows
- ◆ Operates connected and disconnected
- ◆ Fast, flexible workflow configuration
- ◆ No middleware required

The Mobilium™ platform from Moviynt delivers industry-leading software solutions that improve the performance of frontline staff *inside the warehouse*.

## Composition for Accurate and Efficient Workflows

Mobilium™ provides inventory management, warehouse management, and work order management applications. Our standard applications are rapidly configurable using our workflow studio to deliver frontline workflows that accurately capture any customizations. This ensures that all the details that are required for an operation are accurately captured as staff complete their assignments.

**Best Practice:** Select software that can extend and compose the APIs from your ERP platform to adapt to your organization's custom processes.

## Software that Doesn't Get in the Way

Every time frontline staff members must key in data means they have to look down at their devices—not just a time-consuming distraction but also potentially dangerous. Mobilium™ applications minimize the amount of data to enter and leverage haptics and audible queues to allow staff to keep their eyes on the tasks at hand.

Mobilium™ applications run natively on an OS. Native applications run much faster and when completing a backlog of transfer orders, each fraction of a second matters to frontline staff.

**Best Practice:** Select software that doesn't require your staff to enter too much data, leverages verbal and haptics cues, runs natively on any OS, and that supports all types of data capture.

## Redundant by Design

Loss of connectivity to back-end systems is the source of numerous inventory accuracy errors. Staff think they have completed a goods receipt, but the connectivity was lost, and the post was never completed.

Unlike costly edge strategies, redundancy is standard on Mobilium™, providing reliability for all sites and all staff. Mobilium™ securely caches data on any device, e.g. a full shift for all staff members. When connected, Mobilium™ frees staff from waiting for transactions to post to the ERP platform, because Mobilium™ manages the posting of transactions on each device back to the ERP. Staff don't have to stop what they're doing to make sure the software does its job.

**Best Practice:** Select software that guarantees posting of transactions to ERP, continues operating offline, and monitors for any errors posted so they can be resolved.

It's not the staff; it's the tools we make them use.

## Fast, Flexible Workflow Configuration

Mobilium™ provides a powerful studio to tailor and configure workflows to meet any customization required for:

- ◆ Warehouse management
- ◆ Quality management
- ◆ Inventory management
- ◆ Work order management
- ◆ Asset management



The benefits of a studio are speed to deployment and speed to adjustment. With the Mobilium Studio™, production applications are tailored and deployed in weeks, not months.

**Best Practice:** Select software that has an integrated studio to allow for quick configuration, quick adjustment, and tailored optimization.

## No Middleware Required

Mobilium™ requires no middleware and no changes to IT networks or data centers. By avoiding middleware, Mobilium™ leverages an organization's authentication systems, ensuring that updates posted to the ERP reflect the staff members that actually completed them. Also, because there is no middleware, there are no performance bottlenecks in Mobilium™ deployments.

Picking errors cost as much as **\$300** each to correct, totaling a loss of **11-13%** of annual profits<sup>1</sup>

Workplace injuries cost warehousing companies **\$1.79B** in **2022**<sup>2</sup>

The use of platform agnostic, RESTful APIs - like used by Mobilium - have been proven to cut picking time from **45 seconds** to **3-4 seconds** on average

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<sup>1</sup>Dudek, B. Mar. 31, 2021. Order Picking Accuracy: Why the 3PL You Partner with Should Prioritize Optimization. <https://www.jaygroup.com/order-picking-accuracy/>

<sup>2</sup>Improper Ergonomics When Handling Objects and Awkward Postures Cost Employers Billions Annually in Workplace Injuries. (Sept. 15, 2022). MHI Ergonomics & Safety. <http://materialhandlingsafety.org/improper-ergonomics-when-handling-objects-and-awkward-postures-cost-employers-billions-annually-in-workplace-injuries/>

# Mobilium™ Best Practices Approach to Tackling Distracted Warehousing

The following table provides a high-level crosswalk for how Mobilium™ includes benefits addressing each of the major points of distraction that may be found in a warehouse environment.

Distractions		Benefits of the Right Mobile Warehouse Management Solution	
Physical	Noise	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Alleviates issues with the use of mobile notifications, including leveraging haptic and audible alerts.</li> <li>◆ Important messages, instructions, and updates are delivered directly to workers' mobile devices, ensuring critical information is received and understood, regardless of the ambient noise level.</li> </ul>	
	Visual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Addresses this issue by digitizing many aspects of the workflow.</li> <li>◆ Tasks, schedules, and inventory are organized and displayed digitally, reducing the need for physical paperwork and clutter.</li> <li>◆ Workers can quickly check their tasks and priorities on their devices, streamlining their workflow and reducing distractions.</li> </ul>	
Operational	Inefficient Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Provides a platform for process standardization and optimization, ensuring all staff members follow the same efficient process.</li> <li>◆ Use of data analytics helps identify bottlenecks and unnecessary steps in the workflow, enabling managers to make data-driven decisions to streamline operations.</li> </ul>	
	Poor Warehouse Layout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Managers can optimize layout based on real-time data analysis.</li> <li>◆ Analytics provide the most efficient placement of items based on frequency and promote optimal travel paths to minimize movement.</li> <li>◆ Optimizations designed into workflows on mobile devices, ensuring efficient navigation of the warehouse while completing tasks.</li> </ul>	
	Equipment Breakdowns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Predictive maintenance modules within SaaS solution can help mitigate this issue. These modules use data from sensors installed on machinery to anticipate potential failures and schedule maintenance before breakdowns occur.</li> <li>◆ Proactive approach to maintenance reduces downtime and ensures machinery operates at optimal efficiency.</li> </ul>	
Human Factor	Lack of Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Incorporates training modules within the platform, providing on-demand training, ensuring workers understand roles and responsibilities.</li> <li>◆ Training content can be easily updated to reflect changes in procedures or regulations, ensuring the workforce is up to date.</li> </ul>	
	Communication Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Facilitates clear and effective communication through messages and instructions delivered in a standardized format within the platform, reducing the risk of misinterpretation.</li> <li>◆ Platform can support multilingual communication, breaking down language barriers in diverse workforces.</li> </ul>	

Distractions	Benefits of SaaS-Based Mobile Warehouse Management Solution	
Safety	Accident Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrates safety modules providing regular training and reminders about safety protocols. Platform also incorporates reporting features allowing workers to quickly and easily report potential hazards, ensuring timely resolution.</li> <li>Data analysis to identify patterns and implement preventive measures, further enhancing safety of the warehouse environment.</li> </ul>
	Lack of Proper Safety Equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrated inventory management feature can ensure necessary safety equipment is always available.</li> <li>Tracking the usage and availability of safety equipment allows the platform to trigger alerts when stock levels are low, prompting timely reordering and preventing shortages.</li> </ul>
Technological	Outdated Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offers access to the latest technology without the need for significant upfront investment.</li> <li>Solution provider manages the underlying infrastructure, allowing warehouses to benefit from cutting-edge technology without the burden of maintaining it. Result is faster, more reliable systems that enhance productivity rather than distract from it.</li> </ul>
	Frequent Software Updates or Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Updates are typically managed by the solution provider and designed to be as seamless as possible to minimize disruption.</li> <li>Solutions feature intuitive user interfaces and offer user training to ensure smooth transitions. As a result, employees can quickly adapt to new features or changes, reducing downtime and potential distractions.</li> </ul>
Inventory Management	Overstocking or Understocking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mitigated through real-time inventory tracking and intelligent demand forecasting.</li> <li>Provides real-time visibility into stock levels and predicts future demand based on historical data, helping manage stock levels effectively and reducing likelihood of overstocking or understocking.</li> </ul>
	Misplacement of Items	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporates RFID or barcode scanning technologies to track the location of items in real-time.</li> <li>Workers can use their mobile devices to locate items quickly and accurately, reducing the time spent searching and minimizing the potential for distraction.</li> </ul>

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*Moviynt accelerates business transformation by giving frontline staff tools that connect them to SAP without getting in the way of what they need to do. Our applications are easy to learn, easy to use, and fast. Our solution, Mobilium™, securely runs on a wide range of industrial mobility devices whether they are running Android, iOS, or Windows, or whether they are handheld or wearable. Staff can work online, intermittently online, or fully offline - critical when WIFI is unavailable. Using our native client, our customers' teams get all their device benefits: Bluetooth printing, image capture, signature on glass, RFID, OCR, GPS, and more. Mobilium™ is SAP certified and seamlessly deploys to cloud or on-prem SAP with no middleware and no new servers. Our robust solution studio allows our deployment teams to rapidly configure any workflow, quickly integrate that workflow to SAP, and get it in the hands of our customers' staff. Warehouse Management, Quality, Work Order Management, Production, Pick by Vision/Voice, and handsfree workflows are all available and fully integrated to SAP. Visit us at <https://www.moviynt.com>*