

CASE STUDY

RADWELL INTERNATIONAL LUMBERTON, NJ (USA)



REDUCING PICK TIMES AND ENABLING GROWTH WITH AUTOSTORE

THE CUSTOMER AND THEIR REQUIREMENTS

Radwell International sells new and surplus industrial automation, MRO, pneumatic, motion, electronic, hydraulic, HVAC and electrical control equipment for plant floors and facilities. The company also provides full component-level repair for all industrial electronic and electrical equipment, and buys new and used surplus for resale.

All products are covered by a two-year warranty and the company maintains an inventory of thousands of specialized test assets with support from hundreds of highly trained technical team members.

Radwell has major distribution hubs in New Jersey and the U.K., with plans for a third in Texas. These hubs support the bulk of product shipments and also include production facilities for repair. The hubs are supported by a network of satellite facilities that focus on repair and localized sales.

"Our goal is to be the go-to source for our customers," said Todd Radwell, Senior VP of Operations and Engineering at Radwell.

"That means we have to be very active in the used equipment market and maintain a large inventory of new and used products, including items you can't find anywhere else."

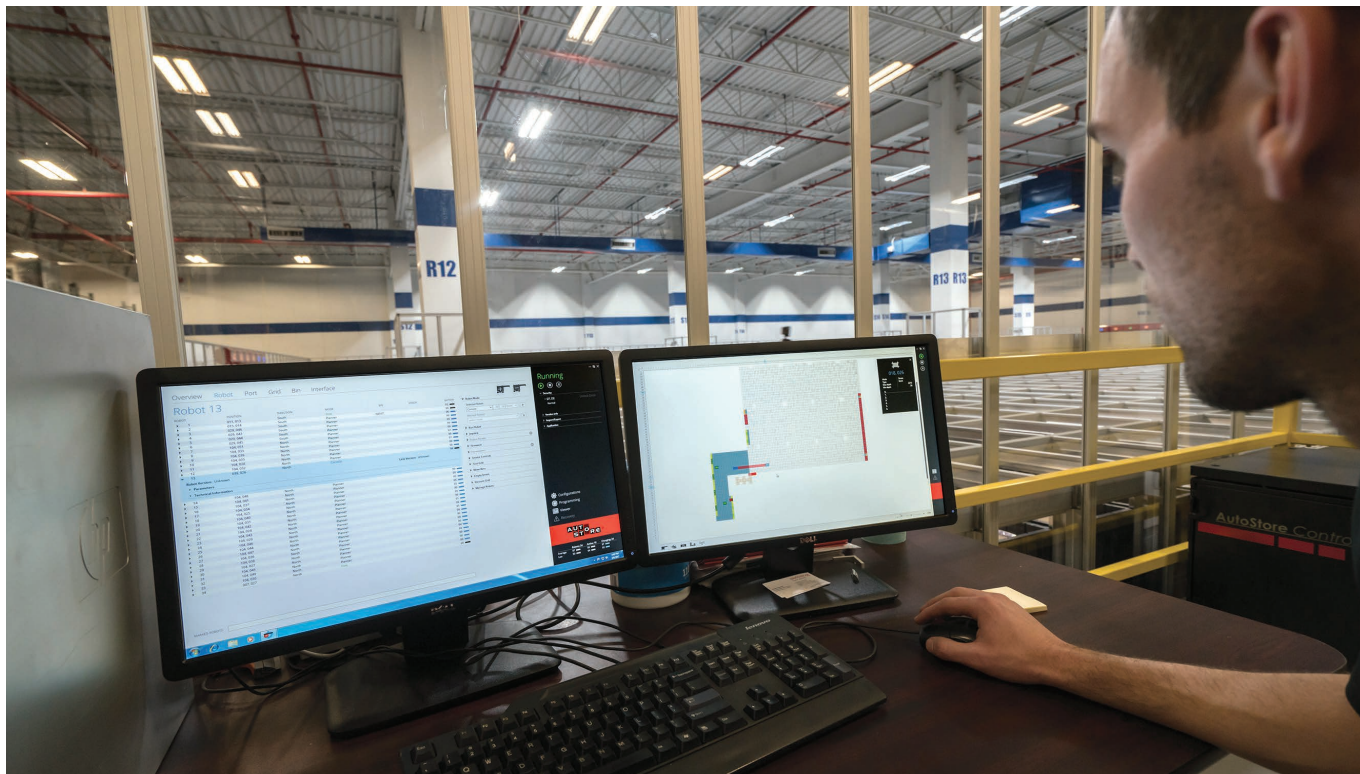
The company identified the need for automation based on the continued expansion of the number of products being supported and consistent growth in the business. "We understood that our ability to maintain our growth rate was limited if we didn't automate our fulfillment processes," Radwell said. "The question for us wasn't if, but how."

SEEING IS BELIEVING

"When I bring visitors into our automated distribution center, at first they can't believe what they are seeing. They are just amazed at how smart, efficient and reliable the robots are. You really have to see this system in action to appreciate how well designed it is and how well it operates."

-Brian Janusz
Global Program Manager
Radwell International





THE CHALLENGE

Once the decision to automate was made, the company needed to identify a solution that would allow it to efficiently pick from its huge inventory while maintaining the flexibility to adapt to continued growth and other business changes.

"Because we support both new and used equipment, the way we store inventory is a little different than other fulfillment centers," said Brian Janusz, Global Program Manager at Radwell. "Rather than storing products by type, we store products by when they are purchased. This means we may have multiple types of products in one bin and quantities of the same product spread across multiple bins. That works well to support our business model, but it complicates picking."

The company chose its New Jersey hub for the first phase of the automation initiative, but their current distribution center wasn't well suited to support automation. The company acquired a former pharmaceutical distribution center close to their New Jersey headquarters and developed plans to consolidate repair, testing and distribution in the new facility.

"We not only needed the right technology, we needed the right partner with the experience to ensure the investments we made in our new facility met the needs of our business," said Radwell.

THE SOLUTION

Radwell evaluated several automation solutions before selecting the Swisslog Click&Pick® goods-to-person solution powered by AutoStore.

"While we evaluated multiple vendors, we locked into Swisslog pretty early in the process," said Janusz. "Their combination of technology, process expertise and customer support gave us the confidence that we could achieve dramatic improvements in pick efficiency and space utilization without disrupting our day-to-day operations."

AutoStore is a small parts storage system that stores bins in a stacked configuration and automatically retrieves parts based on instructions from Swisslog's SynQ software. The SynQ platform provides warehouse management, material flow and automation control system functionality in a single, modular platform that integrates easily with host systems and other warehouse software.



The company worked closely with Swisslog to deploy the technology in the new warehouse and migrate product from the existing warehouse to the AutoStore system.

"Swisslog consultants and trainers played a huge role in our ability to stay on schedule and deploy a solution that met our requirements and exceeded our expectations," said Janusz. "Their experience was invaluable in refining our processes and helping us avoid mistakes. The trainers consistently brought a positive attitude that significantly reduced the learning curve of adapting to new technology."

The company was able to move more than 1,000,000 ready-to-sell products into 24,000 bins of the AutoStore system within just four months of start-up. "The user friendliness and simplicity of AutoStore allowed the induction process to move much quicker than we expected," Janusz said. "Our people picked it up intuitively. I even had the president and senior vice president inducting product one night to get them familiar with the system and they picked it up easily."

"Swisslog consultants and trainers played a huge role in our ability to stay on schedule and deploy a solution that met our requirements and exceeded our expectations."

-Brian Janusz
Global Program Manager
Radwell International



FACTS AND FIGURES AT A GLANCE

SWISSLOG CLICK&PICK® POWERED BY AUTOSTORE

Robots	34
Pick Ports	4
Replenishment Ports	5
Storage Capacity	49,867 bins
Picks per Hour	450
Software	SynQ platform





THE RESULTS

"We love the space the AutoStore system has provided for us," said Janusz. "The more products we can store, the better we can serve our customers and we have doubled our storage density with AutoStore. That allowed us to make more effective use of the available space in our new facility."

The AutoStore system has also taken what was a complicated picking process and made it simple, dramatically improving picking efficiency. "With AutoStore, our people can now pick 9-10 products in the time it took them to pick one using manual processes," said Janusz.

The increased productivity has enabled greater workforce flexibility, allowing the company to redeploy personnel to more strategic tasks. "We've been able to shift people from the back end of the operation to the front end where they can focus on bringing in goods and helping us grow the business."

Flexibility was a primary factor in selecting Swisslog technology and the Click&Pick system has delivered it. The hardware provides the company with multiple options to scale the system as the business continues to expand and the SynQ software

platform gave Radwell the flexibility to choose a new ERP system without worrying about integration issues with SynQ.

"One of the most impressive things about this technology is its reliability," Janusz said. "The simplicity and redundancy of the system ensures we have very few interruptions and when we do have an issue it can be resolved in minutes."

"Our overall experience with Swisslog has been very positive. This was our largest automation project so far and our first time working with Swisslog. The expertise and support Swisslog provided throughout the process helped us manage the transition to a new facility on schedule and without disrupting our operations."

-Todd Radwell
Senior VP, Operations
and Engineering
Radwell International



swisslog

Member of the KUKA Group

www.swisslog.com