

# These Routes Were Made for Walking!

## How one company achieved a 750%+ productivity increase by implementing Keymas K-Store.

**Keymas** have recently heard from two separate companies with sizeable warehouse operations that their pickers walk 18 miles during a single shift. 18 miles - or nearly 30Km! A figure that deserves some analysis.



If the average shift is 8 hours, that equals an average, non-stop speed for that shift of 2.25 M.P.H. As you know, no one spends an entire shift walking. A picker might spend 15 minutes on comfort breaks and another 45 minutes on admin duties and sorting out queries, etc., making a productive day of 7 hours. That means an average speed of getting on for 2.6 M.P.H. over a whole shift. One result of all this, at the very least, will be fit pickers!

So, on average, those pickers are walking 9 miles every day with empty hands. Or from another perspective, they are carrying your goods 9 miles every day. This raises numerous issues:

1. Do operators really want to pay their pickers to walk empty-handed for half their working day?
2. Is it best health and safety practise to have pickers walking so much with loads?
3. What effect does carrying goods so far have on damage to them?
4. Do such arduous distances have an impact on picker staff retention?
5. How have pickers' working days become so unproductive?

We'll suggest some answers:

1. No, of course not! However, unless warehouse operators undertake such analyses, they might be doing just that...
2. Again, no. In the **HSE** document, "Warehousing and Storage - A Guide to Health and Safety", slips and trips and manual handling are identified as the causes **of 44% of major injuries** (broken bones, injuries requiring hospitalisation for more than 24 hours, etc.) in storage and warehousing in 2005/6. Also, **63% of >3-day absences** that year were down to the same causes. Having pickers walk 9 miles handling goods isn't best H&S practise. These litigious days, paying compensation to accident-at-work victims doesn't make good sense either.



3. If the goods are damaged/fragile or high value – or both – losses could soon mount up.
4. An educated guess would be that staff are going to vote with their (sore) feet.
5. There could be a variety of reasons:
  - a. A warehouse has simply become disorganised.
  - b. The initial design of the warehouse layout was badly thought through.
  - c. Picking routes are poorly planned.
  - d. A company may have simply added extensions onto existing warehousing, resulting in a system that has evolved to be inefficient.
  - e. A combination of all of the above.

So, how can warehouse operators reduce excessive walking time? Common sense is one answer and would entail planning warehouse layouts well, organising picking routes efficiently, reducing manual handling of larger items and integrating new warehousing effectively into existing systems.

[Keymas' K-Store](#) is how warehouse operators can achieve this. With guidance from Keymas' experienced engineers, warehouses can be laid out so that picking routes are optimised; e.g. by using zones, thus dramatically reducing picker walking distances and per-item picking times. Larger operations will benefit from automation systems that take goods to workers and not vice-versa.

One Keymas customer went from a system with **18** pickers picking **10,000** goods per shift, to one using **7** pickers to pick **30,000+** goods per shift. A **750%+** increase in productivity! Management had the foresight to implement a new warehouse regime that exponentially increased overall productivity.

Dramatic as it is, what was achieved there is easily in the reach of other companies. Warehouse Managers should frequently appraise their operations and be prepared to accept that efficiency levels may not be what they expected.

Keymas will help with an initial appraisal as the first step towards upping productivity and efficiency. Rest assured that our appraisal will be realistic and the solutions we offer will be what is best for your operation. There will be some investment required, of course, and working practises might need to change, but the ROI period will be short and the efficiencies achieved will reap long-term dividends.

This is good news for a company's bottom line and is why many companies are now closely examining their warehousing operations. Benefit from Keymas' 25 years industry experience by contacting us now. Your accountant will thank you and, even more importantly, your customers will thank you (**and** come back to you) when they get their orders delivered reliably, promptly and with their goods intact.

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