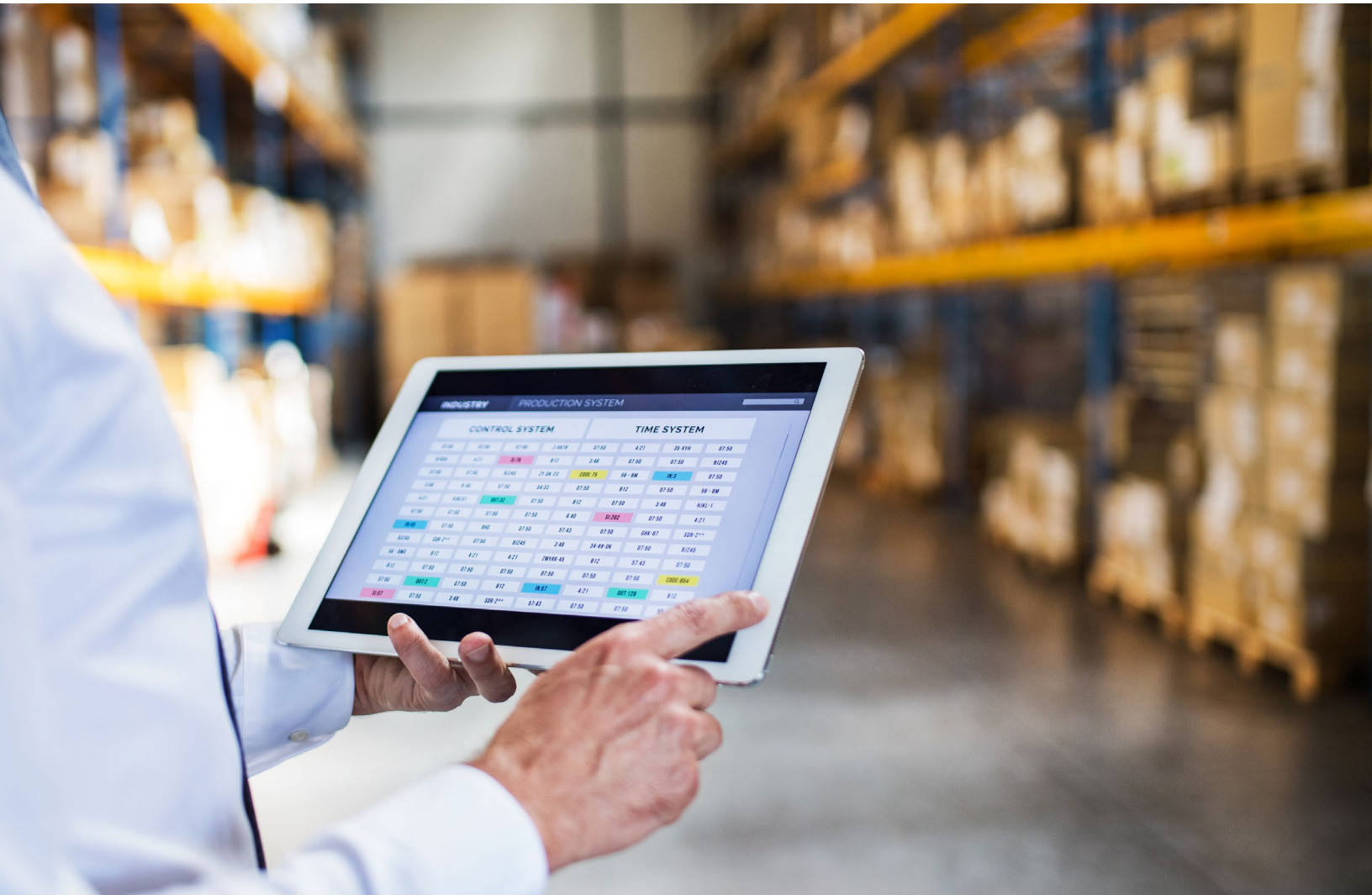


5 WAYS A CLOUD WMS CAN PROPEL YOUR ORGANIZATION AHEAD OF THE COMPETITION



If your company still uses an on-premise warehouse management system that's 10-20 years old, you could be losing valuable time, money, and customers.



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The modern warehouse is a pretty busy place. Booming e-commerce sales, the growth of omni-channel distribution, and ever-changing customer preferences all converge in this fulfillment space, where warehouse management systems (WMS) serve as the lynchpin of the supply chain for manufacturers, distributors, and retailers alike.

Long heralded as the software platform that can transform warehouses into well-oiled machines, WMS is currently being used by 67% of companies, according to *Modern Material Handling's* "2019 Materials Handling Technology Study" survey. While 60% of companies are using more software in the warehouse than they did just two years ago, nearly 20% of them still rely on a WMS that was installed over 15 years ago.

This puts the modern shipper in a challenging spot and unable to take advantage of cloud-based and mobile applications. Users want quick access to information without having to go into the office or log into a terminal to get it. They want to be able to grab their phones, request data from the system—be it an ERP, a TMS, EDI, or an external system—and then use that information to keep their own employees and customers informed.

To achieve that goal, a growing number of companies are implementing software as a service (SaaS) WMS models that manage all fulfillment-related steps while also sharing data with existing ERP systems. Those enterprise systems utilize accurate, reliable data to manage invoicing processes, update inventory counts, send out shipping notices, and handle a myriad of other tasks.

MANAGING SUPPLY CHAIN COMPLEXITY

For organizations with complex supply chains and distribution networks, including multi-site and multinational environments, having a robust, scalable, and configurable WMS has become table stakes. The same companies require end-to-end visibility and flexible control over the full scope of their warehouse operations—a level of visibility that not only empowers employees but that also helps optimize warehouse space, improve inventory accuracy, and maximize throughput.

Add SaaS to the equation, and the idea of implementing a modern WMS becomes even more compelling. Defined by Gartner as software that's "owned, delivered and managed remotely by one or more providers," SaaS is based on a set of common code and data definitions that are used by companies on a "one-to-many model." Put simply, all users can access the platform at any time on a subscription basis.

"With SaaS, companies can completely offload the responsibilities of application management, upgrades, patches, and other activities that require IT resources," says Ann Yates, solutions consultant for irmsl360 Warehouse Management, an Aptean company. "Then, all you need is a device and a web browser to use the system."



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5 REASONS TO SWITCH TO A MODERN, SAAS WMS

With expectations around order accuracy and speed of delivery also in flux, a growing number of companies are exploring SaaS options that support higher levels of operational agility. Here are five reasons why:

- 1** You can stay up-to-date on the latest version of your WMS. Focused on getting the right shipments to the right place at the right time, many manufacturers and distributors lack the bandwidth to allocate IT resources to their warehouse systems. Because of this, major upgrades are often put off until the time and resources are freed up (or, just never happen at all). There's a real cost associated with maintaining and upgrading an on-premise system, not to mention the initial cost of licensing and installing the software. By off-loading these responsibilities to an application service provider like Aptean, companies can avoid this trap and remain up-to-date on the latest versions of their warehouse management software.
- 2** You don't need server rooms or monitoring systems. Companies using a WMS solution that's 15+ years old probably have specific areas for storing servers, hardware, wiring, and electrical systems. Those spaces have to be temperature-controlled and require employee oversight to ensure optimal system uptime. Companies that opt for the SaaS-based software delivery model don't need any of these resources because their systems are run in the cloud. Instead, they can use that valuable real estate for product storage and fulfillment activities, while allocating the labor to more important projects. This is a major win for companies whose IT gurus are "aging out," and taking their tribal knowledge of the WMS and its intricacies with them. If those experts decide to retire or leave, companies are left without anyone to run the system.
- 3** Patchworked systems come with security risks. Many companies are running software that's been patched together over time as new applications were introduced and added to the "pile" of existing systems. The end result is a highly disjointed IT infrastructure where few (if any) applications integrate with one another—something that modern SaaS systems do naturally. Along with many other drawbacks that patchworked technology presents, security is a major risk. "The more systems you have that are patched together, the more security holes you're going to have," says Yates. For most organizations, the cloud offers the most effective and affordable way to manage an enterprise data security strategy. When buying into a SaaS solution in the cloud, for example, you invest in a team of experts that can isolate environments and ensure you recover quickly with minimal data loss. The economies of scale that come with cloud hosting also allow you to take advantage of cutting-edge hardware and security protocols that would otherwise be impossible to maintain internally.



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- 4** You'll be able to take advantage of the cloud. With advanced technologies like artificial intelligence, machine learning, and the Internet of Things (IoT) all making their way into the warehouse, it won't be long before older, on-premise WMS solutions become obsolete. Most cloud software is now built with application programming interfaces (APIs) that enable integrations with outside platforms. This virtually ensures that companies can take advantage of emerging technology opportunities without having to resort to the patchworked systems that they once relied on. "Moving to the cloud is opportunistic because it's not only going to make today's technology more accessible," says Yates, "but it will also allow you to make that 'jump' to technology that 10 years from now is going to look very different than what it does today."
- 5** Your younger employees and customers will love the modern technology. As if the challenges weren't enough reason to explore SaaS WMS options, any younger employees that you're recruiting, retaining, or trying to keep engaged want to work with modern technology. They want to be able to check stock from their mobile phones, review reports on their iPads, and upload data into their ERPs from their laptops. None of this is possible using older, on-premise WMS solutions that lack modern bells and whistles. "Younger managers and employees are way more comfortable using technology in the warehouse," says Yates. The same goes for customers, who are all accustomed to placing orders and checking shipment statuses on the fly from their mobile devices. "Having an up-to-date, functioning WMS will not only help you attract a younger workforce," says Yates, "but it will also help you land new business."

DON'T WAIT UNTIL DISASTER STRIKES

Many companies have to suffer a major system failure, critical data loss, or disgruntled customer before they start exploring their SaaS WMS options. This is the wrong approach, and one that will quickly find a company running behind the 8-ball, trying to catch up with the rest of its competitors.

To future-proof your organization, consider taking a more proactive approach. If you're dealing with one or more of the challenges outlined in this white paper, then it's probably time to replace that on-premise, homegrown, or legacy WMS with a leaner, modern SaaS option. Whether you are managing a single distribution center or a global enterprise, SaaS drives efficiencies and helps you get the most out of your resources, people, inventory, technology, and space.

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ABOUT APTEAN

In a world of generic enterprise software, Aptean provides hyper-niche software solutions that deliver more results instead of more workarounds.

In today's fast-paced, highly competitive economy, organizations don't have time to waste forcing homegrown software, spreadsheets, and one-size-fits-all solutions to do things they were never designed to do. Aptean is on a mission to end those workarounds—with industry-specific solutions instead of generic software, expert support instead of making you go it alone, and a steady influx of new ideas instead of the status quo.

That's why over 4,100+ highly specialized organizations in more than 20 industries and 54 countries rely on Aptean to streamline their everyday operations.

Headquartered in Alpharetta, Georgia, Aptean has offices in North America, Europe, and Asia-Pacific, as well as an extensive partner channel. Our customers are located across Europe, Latin America, Asia-Pacific and North America.

For more information, visit www.aptean.com