

BEST PRACTICE

kardexremstar

Putting the Auto in Automotive

One of the world's leading global manufacturers and suppliers to the independent automotive aftermarket relies on Kardex

For over 160 years, the independent family-owned company, Febi Bilstein, has always been recognised for its high quality service, reliability and innovation. Today its products are delivered, on time, to over 130 countries from over 69 local warehouses. In the UK alone the company estimates that stock levels will double within the next five years, so, with static location already reaching its maximum capacity level at the Featherstone warehouse in Yorkshire, Febi Bilstein needed to find a space saving solution that would increase efficiency and cope with variable storage demands.

Paul Dodgson, Operations Manager at Febi Bilstein, was given the task of updating the way stock was stored within their busy warehouse which was, in turn, increasing its stock lines by a thousand each year. "Our demand is very variable and we simply ran out of room. We needed to find an automated storage system which allowed for multiple locations. There was no previous storage system implemented in the warehouse, it was a random, chaotic system which needed updating quickly" he explained.



There was only one solution

"We wanted a solution that was high quality, tried and tested and that would work with our existing order processes. Kardex is a well trusted brand and after visiting a couple of reference sites using the Kardex technology, I knew the Kardex Shuttle was exactly



what the company needed" Paul Dodgson, Operations Manager continued. "Admittedly I explored other options which were less expensive but the risk of failure was outweighed by the cost of repairs. When it came to quality I wasn't prepared to compromise."

In order to meet the company's growing space demands, and with a limited time period in which to install a new automated solution, specialist consultants from Kardex visited the Featherstone warehouse to discuss Febi's operational needs before suggesting and providing the optimum solution. In October 2009 the company installed three Kardex Shuttle XPs.

Up and running within three days the Kardex Shuttle XP's with their high density storage and unrestricted flexibility in height provided Febi Bilstein with its much needed affordable storage solution.

The company also opted to have the Kardex Shuttle XP units driven by PowerPick software. The fully automated and intelligent software that works alongside the Shuttle XP was also programmed to simultaneously measure and weigh each product before they are allocated to the most efficient space location within the shuttle.



A new warehouse

Febi Bilstein's Shuttle XP units are seven and a half metres high – making full use of the roof height within the facility. “Within each unit we keep the equivalent of 350 lines worth of static racking and shelving which means we are saving around 80% of the original floor space” continued Paul Dodgson, Operations Manager. Alongside the benefits of space savings, having the Kardex Shuttle XP systems consolidated into one area has doubled the company's pick rate whilst at the same time, saving 25% on retrieval time and leading to five-fold productivity increases.

“It didn't take long to experience the benefits of the Shuttle XP units – within a short space of time our pick rates increased as each shuttle does the same amount of picks with just two people as 11 people would when manually picking; an increase of 500%. It was great to finally have a sense of space efficiency and after the installation we also immediately looked more

professional. We were proud to invite our customers to see our warehouse facility and show off our new range of technology.”

Since installing the Shuttle XP units, Febi Bilstein has also discovered that the number of pick errors has dramatically been reduced. “Before we installed the Kardex units we had plenty of pick errors on a daily basis whilst today we very rarely get an error. On the off chance that we do, the automated system simply tells us where the problem location is. It's that simple and is therefore fixed extremely quickly.”

Following the implementation of the Kardex Shuttle XP's, Febi have enjoyed improved levels of health and safety and benefitted from a motivated and happy warehouse team.

Looking to the future

Of course one of the most challenging financial factors affecting manufacturing companies within the automotive industry is the cost of warehousing space and it's critical to ensure that any investment can be justified. Febi Bilstein has estimated that the total cost of the three Shuttle XP's will have paid for themselves within a year.

The benefits that the Kardex solution has brought to Febi Bilstein mean that the company is already looking to install additional Kardex Shuttle XP's, with integrated barcode scanning. The Febi Bilstein staff have been fully trained on the system and are completely engaged with the technology. Generating improved efficiencies has not meant a reduction in the work force either; instead it has simply enhanced revenue turnover figures and created greater quarterly targets for the team to meet!

“Kardex is a very professional company. You know instantly you're dealing with a company that can deliver on the promises they make. The quality of the product is clearly excellent and the Kardex team members are very personable and are always there to answer any questions. Overall it's been a hugely positive experience. The installation of the Kardex Shuttle's has more than met my high expectations” concludes Paul Dodgson, Operations Manager.

