

## Measures of Success

### General Medical Corporation: Effectively Consolidating Local Distribution Centers Into A Regional System

*The system needed to handle a wide variety of merchandise*



Having decided to consolidate their 54 full service local distribution centers into a system of centrally located regional distribution centers, General Medical Corporation of Richmond, Virginia selected Automotion to provide the automatic conveying systems.

As one of the three largest distributors of medical/surgical and health care products in the country, General Medical distributes over 110,000 different items to hospitals, physician offices, clinics, nursing homes, home health care agencies, and home infusion therapy companies.

This diverse marketplace requires merchandise in lots ranging from pallet loads down to single units. Some orders may consist of a soli

tary bandage with a patient-specific label. As a leading supplier to this market, General Medical provides value-added service by breaking down bulk orders of merchandise into full case, split case, and individual unit orders. As a result, the automatic conveying system has to allow for the wide variety of merchandise being handled and the wide range of order sizes.

#### **Delivering a Fully Functional System on Time was Essential**

Because hospitals and patients cannot tolerate back orders, the challenge for Automotion of installing picking/distribution systems for General Medical in Atlanta, Detroit, Columbus, Chicago, and Orlando has been to have an installed, de-bugged, and

running system in place before the move-in weekend. That's when General Medical shuts down their existing local distribution centers, moves all stock into the new regional distribution center, and starts filling orders on Sunday afternoon. All without missing a single order and maintaining 99.9% order fulfillment accuracy. "Automotion has made every schedule date or beat the dates on every project," says Jim Minklos, Director of Field Operations for General Medical.

#### **Streamlining the Operation**

The new warehouse uses a pick-to-tote method of order fulfillment that features a zero pressure accumulation conveyor to route the totes to the different picking zones. Flanking gravity lines pull the orders off the main line into the pick



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### SYSTEM SUMMARY

**Facility:**

General Medical Corporation

**Size:**

100,000 Square Feet

**Products:**

Medical/Surgical and Health Care Products

**Pick Accuracy:**

99.9

**Shipping Method:**

UPS, FedEx, LTL

**Shipping Destination:**

Hospitals, Physician Offices, Clinics, Nursing Homes, Home Health Care Agencies and Home Infusion Therapy Companies.

**System Integrator:**

Automotion, Inc.

**Types of Conveyor Utilized:**

Gravity, Zero-Pressure Accumulation, Roller Bed Belt, Transportation.

**Integrated Equipment:**

Barcode Scanners, Pack Stations, Scales, Mezzanine Structures and Storage Medium.

**Sorter:**

Automotion Pop-Up Wheel Sorter and Right Angle Pusher Sortation Device.

zones. Clip-on plastic flags indicate either the next pick zone or that the order is complete. Multiple tote orders stay together through the picking process to the packing area. Full cases travel directly to the shipping sorter.



The picking system included nine separate pick modules consisting of four pick zones in each module. It also features a packing area with eight pack stations. The order flow to each pick zone is controlled manually with hand operated case stops. A single station pop-up sorter sorts most cases from the picking traffic before the order reaches the pack area. Previously, a worker traveling the rack aisles on a lift truck picked each order. "This new picking method greatly improves efficiency and stream-

lines the packing operation," says Miklos.

The shipping sortation system includes an automated in-feed with bar code directed sortation, a packing list line, and a re-circulation line. The overhead scanner directs sortation to six lines using Automotion's pop-up sort station and one air operated right angle pusher for a "wrong side" sort into the packing list lane. Customer orders are consolidated onto pallets next to the six shipping lanes. Two of the lines also have expandable conveyors for fluid truck loading.



"The new regional distribution center system supports General Medical's plan to increase the efficiency and accuracy of our customer service system and to bolster growth into the next century," say Miklos. "Automotion is an important partner in this effort."

