

How a Fashion Retailer Improved Distribution Efficiency Through Network Optimization

1 Introduction

A leading women's fashion retailer is known for its personalized styling experience and community-focused sales model, supported by a nationwide network of independent stylists. Serving customers across the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, the company relies on a highly time-sensitive fulfillment model to deliver seasonal collections efficiently. As rapid business growth, shifting customer demographics, and rising service expectations placed increasing pressure on its distribution network, the company partnered with Alpine Supply Chain Solutions to develop a long-term supply chain strategy that would improve efficiency, reduce costs, and support future growth. .

2 Challenges

As the company's customer base expanded geographically and order profiles evolved, its West Coast distribution center became increasingly expensive and difficult to scale.

Operating a single fulfillment center on the West Coast resulted in longer transit times, higher transportation costs, and limited flexibility—particularly during seasonal product launches when order volumes peaked and fast delivery was essential.

The warehouse itself was also experiencing operational inefficiencies. Existing layouts and discrete order-picking processes required multiple product touches, increased labor dependency, and made it difficult to scale staffing during peak periods.

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Solutions

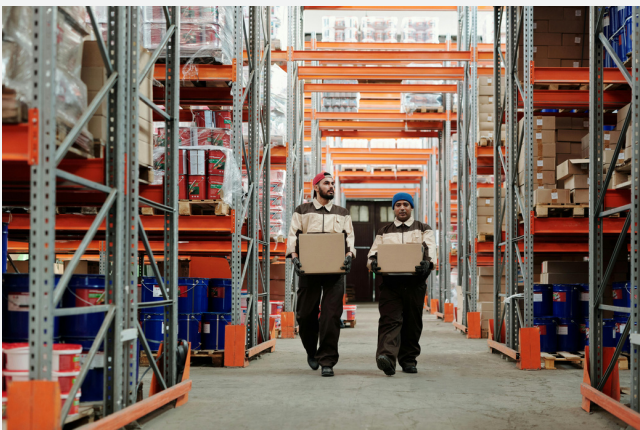
With the distribution center lease approaching expiration and pressure mounting to improve delivery performance, leadership needed a solution that would lower costs while supporting future growth and maintaining high customer service levels.



Alpine partnered with the company to develop a comprehensive Strategic Master Plan that evaluated warehouse operations, storage strategies, and distribution network design. The objective was to identify a future-state solution that balanced throughput, transportation costs, operational efficiency, and customer service while supporting continued business growth.

Through detailed analysis, Alpine evaluated multiple network scenarios and developed four viable distribution strategies. After reviewing the operational, financial, and service tradeoffs, the company selected a centrally located, self-operated distribution center supported by warehouse automation and redesigned operating processes.

The strategy focused on optimizing facility layout, improving storage utilization, reducing product touches, and increasing order processing efficiency while creating a scalable foundation for future expansion.



4 Implementation

Alpine began the engagement with a detailed analysis of warehouse operations, reviewing SKU velocity, inventory profiles, product dimensions, inventory turnover, order characteristics, and seasonal demand patterns. The team conducted an onsite operational assessment to observe receiving, storage, picking, packing, and shipping processes while identifying opportunities to improve workflow and productivity.

At the same time, Alpine completed a high-level distribution network analysis that evaluated customer demand, transportation costs, and service implications associated with relocating the distribution center.

Financial modeling supported each recommendation, ensuring the selected strategy balanced operational improvements with long-term return on investment.



Working alongside automation partners, Alpine helped guide the relocation to a new 125,000-square-foot distribution center while supporting the implementation of automation technologies, including batch picking, put-to-light sorting, warehouse execution system (WES) integration, and conveyor-supported packing processes. The entire transition was completed within an aggressive 12-month implementation timeline to support critical seasonal product launches.



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Results

The new centralized distribution center and redesigned warehouse processes delivered significant operational and financial improvements. Overall warehouse productivity increased by 50%, while the time from order receipt to shipment improved by 40%. Transit times were reduced by 35%, resulting in improved customer service and generating more than \$1 million in annual transportation cost savings.

The redesigned operation also improved labor stability and long-term scalability. Peak temporary staffing requirements were reduced from approximately 40% to 15%, storage utilization increased by 25%, picking accuracy improved, and new employee training time decreased due to simplified workflows.

Together, these improvements created a flexible, automation-ready distribution network capable of supporting future business growth, evolving customer expectations, and continued operational excellence.

