

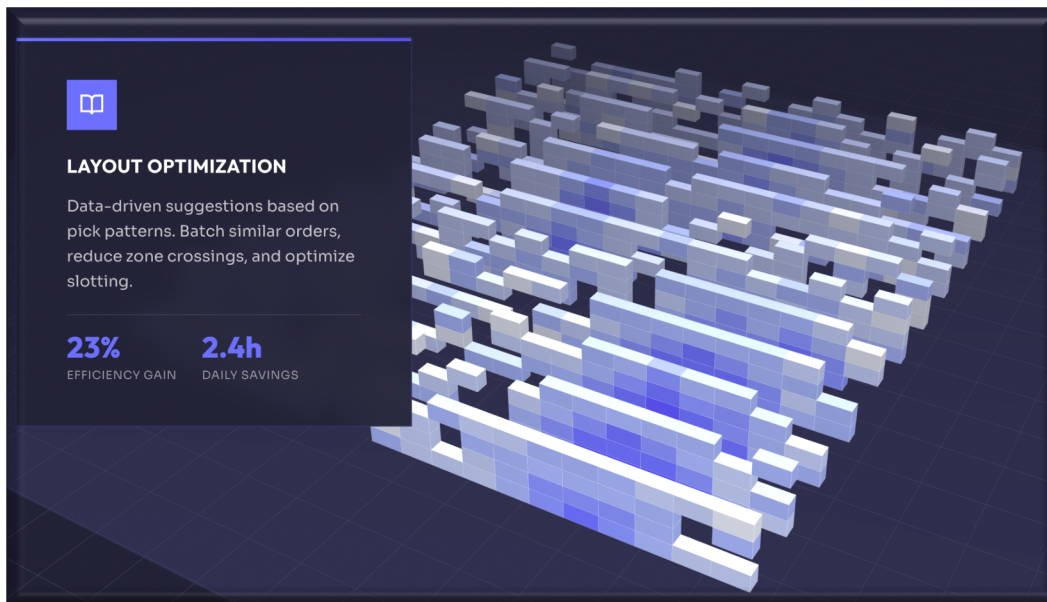


Using Heat Maps to Reduce Warehouse Travel Time

Warehouses that outperform their peers do not move faster—they move less.

Written by: Chuck Feldman & Steven Sharp. 03-05-2026
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Reducing travel time in a warehouse is one of the fastest ways to improve productivity and lower labor costs. By placing high-activity items closer to pick, pack, receiving, and shipping areas, companies can move product faster and reduce wasted steps.



Reducing Order Picking Costs by Eliminating Travel

Order picking is the single largest cost driver in warehouse operations, accounting for approximately **55% of total operating costs** in most distribution and 3PL environments. Any meaningful improvement in warehouse efficiency must begin here.

A closer look at order picking reveals a critical insight:

- **55%** – Traveling to pick locations
- **15%** – Searching for items
- **10%** – Extracting product
- **20%** – Paperwork and other activities

The majority of picking costs are not picking—it is **movement**. Every unnecessary step is paid for in labor, time, and lost capacity.

The Core Problem: Travel Time

Travel time represents the highest controllable cost inside the warehouse. Unlike labor rates or facility leases, travel inefficiency is largely driven by internal decisions: **layout design, slotting logic, and picking processes**.

Reducing travel time delivers immediate, compounding benefits:

- Lower labor cost per order
- Increased throughput without additional headcount
- Improved service levels and consistency
- Faster scalability during peak demand

Three Strategic Levers to Reduce Travel

1. Warehouse Layout

Layout determines how far work must move before value is created.

Key actions:

- Slot high-velocity SKUs near packing and shipping
- Design pick zones to limit cross-warehouse travel
- Align storage strategies with pick frequency, not just cube utilization

A warehouse optimized for storage efficiency is rarely optimized for labor efficiency.

2. Picking Process

Process design determines how often travel is repeated.

High-impact improvements include:

- Batch, wave, or zone picking to consolidate movement
- Optimized pick paths to eliminate backtracking
- Task interleaving to reduce non-productive travel

Process discipline turns layout improvements into sustained results.

3. Automation

Automation creates the greatest return when it **removes travel**, not just speeds up individual picks.

Effective applications include:

- Pick to Light
- Smart Glasses

Automation should be justified by steps eliminated and labor hours avoided.

Executive Takeaway

If order picking represents over half of warehouse operating costs, and travel represents over half of picking time, the conclusion is clear:

The fastest path to lower costs and higher capacity is reducing travel.

Warehouses that outperform their peers do not move faster—they **move less**.

Learn More About WarehouseBridge

WarehouseBridge helps warehouse operators stop guessing and start seeing what is really happening inside their facilities. From visual heat maps to practical warehouse tools, WarehouseBridge gives teams a clearer view of space utilization, activity, and operational opportunities.

Visit www.warehousebridge.com to learn how better visibility can lead to better warehouse decisions.