



Dairy Distribution-Center Case Study: Experience – the author of maximized space

Founded in 1983, Fisher & Thompson is one of the largest milking equipment dealers on the East Coast. Carrying a variety of animal health and dairy supplies, the company's Pennsylvania headquarters was at the breaking point in terms of having enough room to store its parts and products serving 13 locations in Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, New Jersey, West Virginia and New York.

Inventory Manager, Dave Wentzel, had been with the company for 7 years and his department was the primary parts' distribution center that farmers in seven states had come to rely upon.



Dave said, “We needed more space—when we expanded our footprint into Virginia, we increased in size by 30% and we had to house parts to supply those locations. We knew we needed to utilize our space better.”

“There were four of us who defined the problem, so when our team approached the General Manager with a plan we had all agreed upon, he got behind it. We worked with Indoff storage professional Tim Stine who brought in Western Pacific Storage Solutions' engineering staff. Initially, Fisher & Thompson thought about doing the project itself, but the outcome would have been very different and the time that it would have taken to do it ourselves was not acceptable to us. Based upon my online research, I knew that Tim was the guy to design and spec our final solution. Tim was able to refine our ideas—he designed what we were looking for.”

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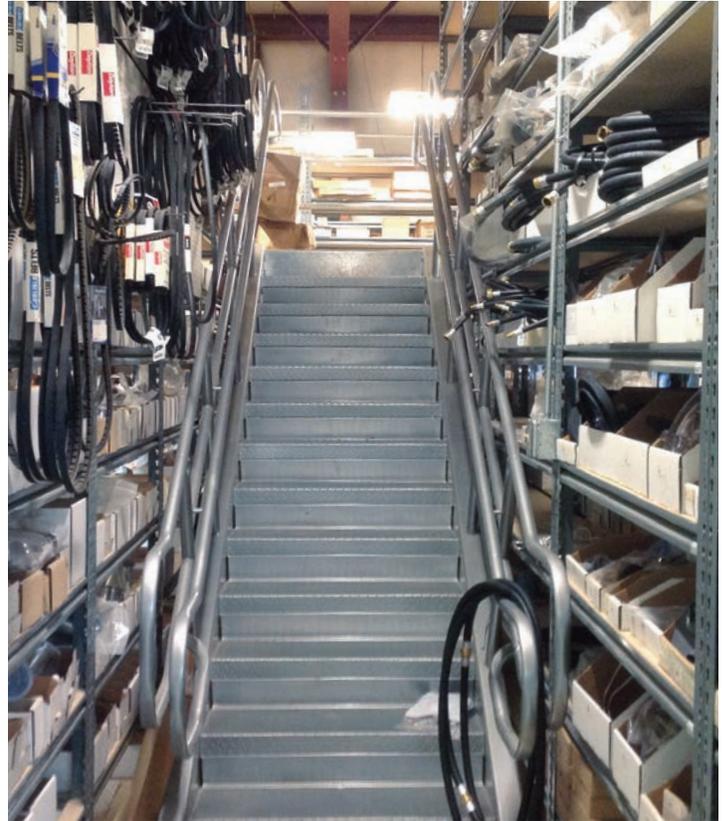
Tim Stine commented, “When I first arrived, I could see that Fisher & Thompson had a small-parts storage problem that was going to continue as their business expanded. We saw wasted space and opportunity about 8-10 feet off the ground.

The ceilings were not super high. Some were only 16’7” at the lowest point of the tapered ceiling. They did not want to build another building and had no room to expand—they were essentially land-locked. I then spoke to Bruce Marks, Western’s East Coast sales representative who listened to what Fisher & Thompson hoped to accomplish and then suggested the shelf-supported work platform.”

“Western’s Bruce Marks then lined up a site visit close to Philadelphia. Dave and his team took pictures—they saw how well the space was utilized. By placing slower-moving product on the 2nd level, they began to see an economical 700 sq. ft. solution emerge.” said Tim Stine. “Western’s shelf-supported mezzanine (an Industrial Structures’ work platform) employing RiveTier boltless shelving allowed us to address the height constraints.”

Fisher & Thompson’s Dave Wentzel continued, “We wanted to leverage the vertical space as much as we could, but doors and beams were in the way and we were in danger of hitting our heads on the second floor. The engineers at Western Pacific Storage Solutions and Tim Stine did a great job of working with us to help us figure out how to get the most storage for the space we had. The job went pretty smoothly; we started in June and it fell together the way we wanted. Tim’s spec-ing experience was a true asset.”

Indoff’s Tim Stine shared a detail: “After you get the approval drawings, you gotta go back to the job site and do your due diligence. It was a tight fit on the lower level; we had to lay one bay out so that people could come out of an office under the platform—and we had a second door that had an approach to the office. We had to keep all of those little things in mind to make this system fit their facility.”



Stine went on, “I wanted a shelving-supported system for Fisher & Thompson because of its cost effective nature. The value is there—you’re gaining a level without having i-beams and big costs. We could have done it with a free-standing mezzanine (work platform), but we probably wouldn’t have gotten the same amount of storage—you would have to support the deck.”

“Western Pacific has the engineering talent to figure it out. I like to email sketches, talk with them on the phone and engage in good dialogue. Western Pacific staff are very timely. I’ve been with Indoff for 20 years. A lot of my business is about one-on-one customer relations—it is application driven. I give them their options and lead them in a direction I know they will be satisfied because everything will fit inside their space and provide years of service-ability.”

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Fisher & Thompson’s service department maintains a range of milking equipment. They are dedicated to working to reduce energy costs and improve the profitability of dairies. Inventory Manager Dave Wentzel concluded, “My advice for a business colleague who has a lot of parts is to make sure you look at all your options and utilize all the space you have to the fullest. We did look at high-bay shelving ideas, but utilizing the mezzanine (work platform) was smart.”

“Without Tim at Indoff and the Western Pacific engineering team, we would have had a very different outcome—it’s a good idea to involve storage professionals in your projects to save space.”

ABOUT WPSS: For over twenty years, Western Pacific Storage Solutions (www.WPSS.com) has established itself as a premier supplier and manufacturer of industrial shelving and work platforms (mezzanines) to some of the world’s largest corporations. Serving the smartest links in the supply chain, the company’s operations in California, Texas, and Kentucky include two state-of-the-art manufacturing plants, and three strategically-located distribution centers.



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