



Optimize Warehouse Operations with Rugged Technology



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Customers across all sectors are more demanding than ever, putting additional strain on a global supply chain still in recovery mode after pandemic-related chaos. At the same time, the labor market remains tight, with open positions taking longer than normal to fill.

The challenge of meeting ever-tighter shipping schedules with a stagnant (or even shrinking) workforce is leading many companies to look for ways to make their supply chain more efficient. One important way to accomplish that tricky feat is by using technology to its full potential, adding more mobility throughout the warehouse.

But any old technology won't do in a warehouse environment. Whether it is dust, heat, cold, and the occasional drop, bump or spill, devices used in supply chain facilities have to be extra sturdy to stand up to extreme conditions – without adding so much weight to the device that it's no longer comfortable for workers to handle.

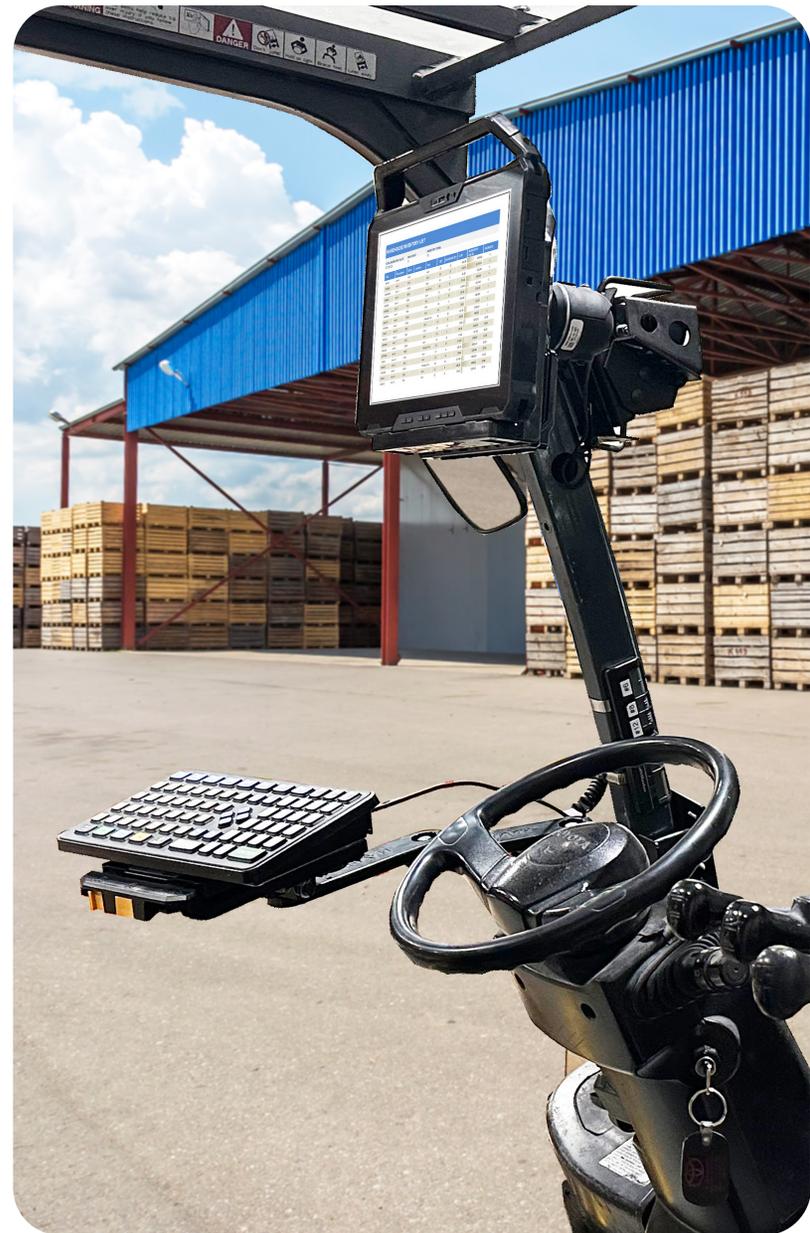
In this playbook, we'll discuss the importance of mobility in inventory management and beyond – and why it's crucial to use rugged mobile devices and docking stations that don't sacrifice ergonomics for durability.

Supply Chain Challenges Remain Post-Pandemic

Labor is one of the biggest challenges facing all industries, and supply chain is no exception. According to a survey of 2,000 supply chain executives, 57% are having trouble hiring and keeping qualified employees. With consumer demand for fast delivery always growing, supply chain organizations have to find ways to get more done with the same – or even fewer – employees.

Technology can meet that challenge – if it can stand up to demanding warehouse and yard environments and offering a user-friendly experience for workers who have to interact with it.

It's an important balance to get right. Employees are far more likely to stick with your business if they feel empowered and accomplished in their position. Technology that enables them to do their job faster, more efficiently and with a minimum of stress can help you keep the workers you already have and attract new talent. Devices that are unintuitive, heavy or require more legwork to return to a fixed location to enter information can discourage workers from using it – or even drive them away.





Labor's not the only worry supply chain leaders have to contend with. The Covid-19 pandemic shone a light on some of the biggest shortcomings of the supply chain, including communication (whether it's between workers in a warehouse or answering customer inquiries) and gaining real-time insights.

“Whether you're in the back office or out on the floor, having access to the same, real-time data is essential for running an efficient operation.” – Jason Franz, Global Product Planning Manager, Rugged Products, Dell.

That real-time visibility is crucial for multiple functions throughout the warehouse: troubleshooting issues, accessing the right data when and where you need it and sharing data between different teams in different parts of the facility (or even different parts of the company).

Benefits of Embracing Rugged Mobility in Supply Chain

With the labor market presenting such a challenge, finding ways to help your existing team get their job done faster, easier and more efficiently is key.

The average warehouse is at least the size of a football field, and some are several times larger. An inefficient order picking process may send a forklift driver from one end of the facility to the other and back, many times per day. That forces the driver to waste a lot of time just sitting on the vehicle.

Many organizations cut down on this problem using mobile devices – a rugged tablet mounted to the forklift, for example. Now, instead of having to return to a terminal or office to grab the next pick and pack order, an employee can see a list of orders and even batch them for more efficient picking. By eliminating the trip back to base between every order, that employee saves a ton of driving time. Multiply that saved time by every product picker in the facility, and you've saved a ton of time and money on empty labor hours.





Another area for saving employee time is in cases where a product isn't in the place a picking order says it should be. Instead of a lot of driving around and involving other employees to track down the wayward product, a mobile device offers immediate identification of the issue and communication with back office systems and other team members. Real-time problem solving and easier collaboration help solve problems faster so employees can get back to their regular duties.

“Improving efficiencies and wringing out waste within your warehouse is the name of the game.” – Sam Barall, Director of Enterprise Sales, Havis, Inc.

Real-time monitoring of your operation helps you spot inefficient processes and other areas for improvement. This kind of visibility is far easier when employees have rugged mobile devices on which to instantly enter data and share it with stakeholders across the organization.

But any technology you add to a warehouse or other supply chain environment has to face harsh conditions its consumer-grade cousins don't. From traveling outside to a cold, hot, rainy, or bright sunlit yard and back inside to an environmentally controlled facility to encountering dust and general rough handling, these devices must be rugged, durable and reliable enough to get the job done without causing their own downtime issues.

Rugged Docks Protect Your Mobility Investment

Better visibility, more efficient workflows, better employee satisfaction: mobile devices deliver many benefits to your supply chain operation. But it's critical to choose the right devices for this environment – consumer-grade tablets with no IP or drop ratings can't stand up to harsh conditions and will cost you more in replacements over time than an investment in rugged mobile technology.

Another reason to invest in rugged docks for your mobile devices: better flexibility for workers performing multiple tasks. If your workflow requires tools like a keyboard, scanner, printer or other accessory, it's time consuming to disconnect all those accessories (for example, to perform a maintenance task between picking orders), then reconnect them. With a dock, your employee can leave all the accessories connected and just pick up the device, then drop it back in the dock to resume their previous work.

Enter the rugged dock. Offering added protection and more flexible connectivity to your mobile devices, a dock also provides hands-free operation for the device when mounted on a forklift or other equipment.

But just like consumer devices can't stand up to most warehouse conditions, docking stations also need to be purpose-built for this environment. At a minimum, you need an IP-rated dock paired with an IP-rated device to reduce your chance of tech-related downtime. While most rugged mobile devices have an IP65 rating, not all docks do – so be careful when choosing a dock that can offer the same durability as your rugged tablets.

“If your docking station isn't IP rated and gets exposed to rain and dust on a regular basis, it'll be ruined in less than a week.” – Sam Barall, Director of Enterprise Sales, Havis, Inc.

Other Rugged Mobility Considerations for Supply Chain

As noted earlier, demanding supply chain environments can quickly eat through a lot of cheaper, consumer-grade mobile devices. Rolling out cheap technology can end up costing you more in the long run, as you replace failed devices more frequently and run into soft costs to administer these replacements. Replacing devices more often also defeats the purpose of adding mobile technology to your warehouse: improved efficiency and productivity.

But that's not the only thing to think about when you're investing in mobile technology. You also need to bear in mind the ergonomics and safety surrounding that technology.





“The ecosystem around the device is what enables it to do the job while remaining ergonomic and safe to use.” – Jason Franz, Global Product Planning Manager, Rugged Products, Dell.

For example, consider screen sizes and capabilities when choosing your devices. Do you have some tasks that require a larger screen (such as diagnostics or inspection that may require large, detailed photos)? Or would smaller screens work better? Do your team members need to be able to view the screen in bright sunlight, or be able to work and interact with the screen while wearing gloves? Will the required mounting location on a forklift block the driver's line of sight? Is the larger device too heavy for comfortable carrying when not docked?

One final word of caution: encouraging employees to use your rugged mobile devices goes beyond the devices themselves. The software environment is just as important, with a familiar user interface that employees can master quickly. The highest-end device with every bell and whistle can't work miracles if no one wants to use it.

Conclusion

If you're like the vast majority of supply chain leaders looking for ways to enhance the productivity, safety and employee satisfaction in your organization, IP-rated rugged mobile tablets and computers paired with IP-rated rugged docking stations are a great start. Able to meet the challenge of harsh working conditions while improving communication and collaboration, these solutions offer attractive benefits to any supply chain operation.

With downtime-resistant devices providing the assist, your supply chain team will be empowered to save time and energy, all while meeting faster fulfillment windows fueled by consumer demand. And that's a recipe for long-term supply chain success.



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Dell Latitude Rugged laptops and tablets are built to bring powerful productivity into the field. Dell Rugged devices feature bright, outdoor-viewable and glove-touch capable screens, powerful performance, Wi-Fi, optional mobile broadband, dedicated GPS as well as built-in security. The portfolio is complemented with a robust ecosystem of purpose-built, versatile accessories that further enhance productivity.

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Ultimate field productivity

You need to stay productive and work efficiently even when the elements are working against you. Dell Rugged laptops and tablets are designed for the way you work with features like outdoor-readable, glove-touch capable displays, legacy IO capability and advanced connectivity options.

About Havis

Havis revolutionizes industries by unlocking the full potential of technology to drive productivity and enhance safety through innovative mobility solutions. We take pride in being the trusted partner of choice for technology providers, enabling them to move business forward in a wide range of industries, such as Warehouse & Distribution, Retail & Hospitality, Transportation & Logistics, Public Sector, Energy & Utilities, Field Operations, Healthcare, Military, Defense, & Aerospace, and more.

Our engineering and product development centers serve as the backbone of our commitment to excellence. With a team of highly skilled engineers who have a deep understanding of design, manufacturing processes, and cutting-edge technologies, Havis consistently delivers products that set our market and industry standards and exceed customer expectations. Our state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities complement our engineering capabilities, allowing us to bring our design concepts to life with precision and efficiency. With a focus on quality and rigorous testing protocols, we ensure that our products are built to withstand the demands of real-world applications.



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Reliable Stability

Intel vPro® Enterprise Windows OS-based PCs undergo rigorous testing to help ensure a stable foundation for smooth fleet management. Plus, the Intel® Stable IT Platform Program (Intel® SIPP), provides platform validation that aims for zero hardware changes throughout the buying cycle, for at least 15 months or until the next generational release. Fewer hardware changes mean fewer hassles, especially when it comes to PC image deployment.

Delivering What Mobile Users Want

Intel vPro® is built for what IT needs. And Intel® Evo™ laptops deliver what mobile users want. Together, they create a new class of stylish, thin-and-light laptops that combines key features for IT—multilayer security and complete manageability—with a premium user experience that includes remarkable responsiveness, instant wake, intelligent collaboration, and longer real-world battery life.

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