

UNEX CASE STUDY



customer: PINE STATE TRADING CO.

operation: Convenience store products distributor

goal: Maximize space and flexibility for a diverse inventory in a new facility

solution: Flow Bed and Span-Track systems from UNEX



Go With the Flow

Leading Distributor of Convenience Store Products Maximizes Space and Flexibility with UNEX Systems

With a warehouse space crunch jeopardizing growth opportunities, Pine State Trading Co. decided to make a big move and flex for the future.

More than 5,000 convenience stores in the New England region and New York depend on Pine State Trading Co. to deliver a variety of products to fill their shelves – from salads to cigarettes. “We distribute items of all shapes and sizes, and our stock can change frequently,” says Steve Mitchell, Director of Operations at Pine State Trading Co. “To keep up with customer demands, our distribution center must run efficiently and flawlessly.”

Out of Space

Founded in 1941 as a small family-owned business, Pine State Trading Co. has evolved into a prominent distributor for the region’s convenience stores. In 2011, the company faced a significant challenge: “We were completely out of space at our distribution facility and were even renting additional storage facilities,” says Steve. Meanwhile, the company was projecting a 50% increase in volume. “We needed a place where we could grow.”

In 2012, the company located a larger facility in Gardiner, Maine, and brought in St. Onge, a supply chain and engineering logistics firm, to design the ideal warehouse system. Pine State Trading Co. also brought in Mark Goldstein, President of Coastal Equipment Corporation, to help select the right equipment to accommodate the existing 10,000 SKUs and leave plenty of room for growth in the future.



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Flow Bed and Span-Track from UNEX turned out to be critical pieces of the puzzle.

Finding a Flexible Solution

Pine State Trading Co.'s list of inventory is extensive and diverse. Candy, beverages, paper products, automotive supplies, deli sandwiches, dairy, and health and beauty items are among the company's growing list of stock.

"Storing and picking such a wide variety of products can present a number of challenges," says Mark. "We had to find the right mix of carton flow systems to optimize space and allow us to quickly respond to customers' needs."

That "right mix" included a full-width roller carton system for products that have consistent carton sizes, such as cases of cigarettes, and a highly flexible, universal wheel bed carton flow solution that allows workers to quickly slot products of varying sizes, such as candy and grocery items, into any location without having to change or move equipment.

On the Right Track

After looking at a number of carton flow systems, Mark recommended UNEX's Span-Track and Flow Bed, offering considerable benefits for Pine State Trading Co.

Ultimately, UNEX installed 561 levels of Span-Track and 568 levels of Flow Bed at the Pine State Trading Co. facility. UNEX also reused hundreds of lanes of Span-Track that had been in place for years at the previous facility and remained in great condition.

Reusing existing Span-Track created cost-savings for Pine State Trading Co., and so did the structural integrity of Flow Bed. "Without the strength of the Flow Bed side channels, we would have had to install intermediate support beams, which would have been costly and taken up much-needed space," Mark explains.

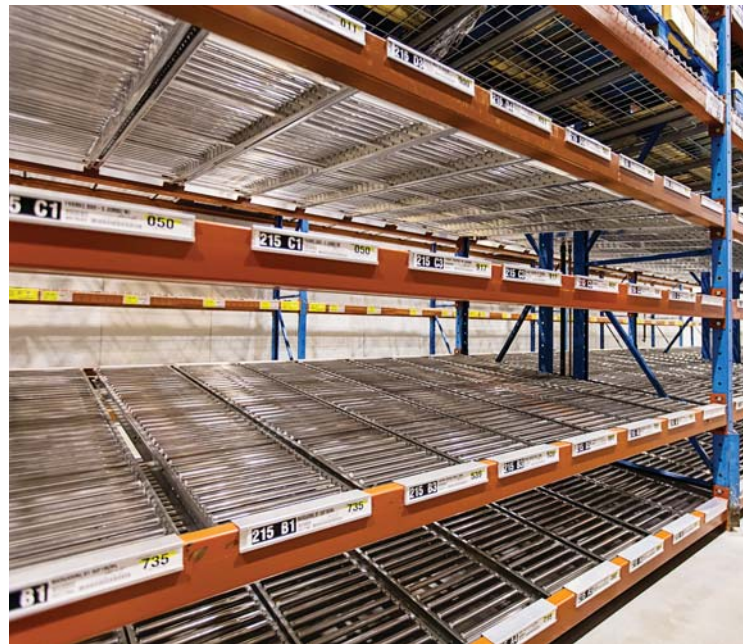
Flawless Implementation

Steve says the design and implementation of the Flow Bed system was "flawless – we did not have a single issue during the process."

Products were shipped on time, materials were well-packaged and easy to unload. "UNEX delivered as promised," says Steve. "Now, if our sales reps come to me with a new product line for our customers, I have the space and the flexibility to turn things around quickly."



UNEX developed this unique label holder for Flow Bed lanes because stock can change so quickly at Pine State Trading Co. The labels allow order pickers to clearly see which items are stored in various lanes, and the labels can be switched out easily as SKUs change.



Benefits for Pine State Trading Co.:

- Installation is easy because of the drop-in design.
- A variety of product sizes can be slotted in, giving Pine State the flexibility to adapt to changing customer product demands.
- Tracks are designed to maximize the conveying surface and eliminate product hang-ups that can slow down or bring picking to a halt.
- The rugged design of the Flow Bed carton flow panels provides excellent support for up to 50 pounds per foot of load.



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