A refreshing upgrade

Know the signs, seize the moment—why upgrading your warehouse hardware now can boost performance, reliability and team satisfaction

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Updating and scaling your processes is essential to stay competitive and meet rising customer expectations. Finding cost-effective, adaptable hardware is key—but so is knowing when to implement them.

Purpose-built, durable hardware—whether wearable, automated or autonomous technology—can drive measurable gains in both safety and efficiency on the warehouse floor.

So, when's the best time to upgrade? While experts often recommend a hardware refresh every 5–7 years, the real answer depends on the unique challenges and demands of each warehouse.

When you are... coming up short

The exponential rise of e-commerce continues to place growing pressure on supply chains to deliver fast, accurate service that meets evolving customer expectations. Beyond SKU proliferation and rising return volumes, one of the most pressing challenges for modern warehouses is a persistent labor shortage.

Recruiting and retaining skilled workers remains a serious issue across the global logistics sector, especially in picking operations. The work is widely viewed as physically demanding and high-risk, particularly in facilities that haven't modernized their technology to keep pace with demand.

This challenge isn't going away. As e-commerce growth accelerates, the available labor pool continues to shrink.

"Labor challenges are a problem for everyone we speak to, and it's a problem that will continue. Picking is one of the biggest pieces in the warehouse puzzle. Trying to find good people, keep them happy and get them to stay is essential. Providing people with the tech that makes their jobs easier helps."

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When you are... dealing with a legacy OS

Many warehouse managers delay hardware upgrades until equipment fails completely or replacement parts are no longer available. While hardware may be built to last, the technology behind it can quickly become outdated. A key vulnerability is the operating system (OS). For example, warehouses still running Windows CE are now being forced to refresh their hardware as the OS is no longer supported—leading to software incompatibilities, Warehouse Management System (WMS) disruptions and increased operational risk.

One of the most effective ways to future proof is by adopting hardware built on Android OS. Now the leading choice for supply chain technology, Android offers speed, flexibility and broad compatibility—making it the closest thing to a universal OS.

Legacy hardware is often limited to the solutions it was originally designed for. Android's multi-modal capabilities support a wide range of devices and integrations—from handheld RF scanners and tablets to wearables, voice technology and Autonomous Mobile Robots (AMRs).

When you are... putting your team first

Whether you're focused on improving conditions for your existing workforce or attracting and retaining new talent, investing in technology that enhances safety and ease of work is a strategic move.
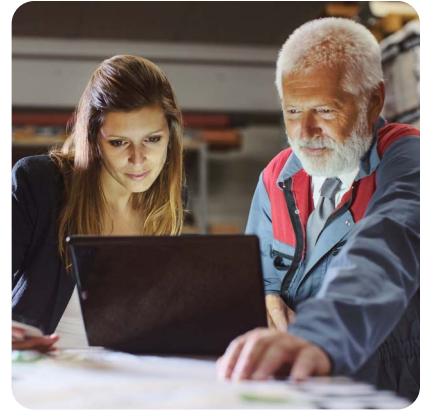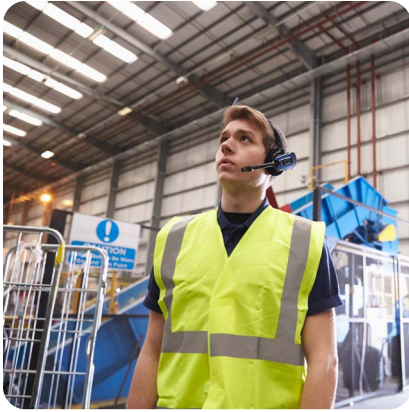
Wearable hands-free and eyes-free technology—such as voice solutions—helps simplify traditionally labor-intensive and high-risk tasks, increasing both safety and efficiency. Autonomous Mobile Robots reduce

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A move to Android gives you the freedom to run multiple processes on a single device. And, as you can integrate other technologies as well, the ROI is even faster.

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time spent walking or searching, allowing employees to focus on higher-value tasks.

When used in isolation or as part of an integrated solution, these technologies increase overall productivity and help offset labor shortages. They also streamline onboarding and reduce training time for seasonal or new staff—even in environments using multi-modal devices.

Failure to refresh

If it's been more than 5–7 years and legacy hardware still dominates your warehouse floor, the risk of failure—and its consequences—rises sharply.

Devices and accessories will eventually break beyond repair, and without support for outdated operating systems, your WMS may no longer integrate with other critical technologies, causing operational disruptions.

Avoiding unplanned downtime or rushed fixes requires proactive planning. A well-timed hardware refresh allows for due diligence, testing and full implementation of the chosen hardware—minimizing disruption and accelerating ROI.

Conclusion

As the supply chain becomes more multi-modal, so should the warehouse floor. Delaying hardware upgrades means missing out on the productivity and efficiency gains that modern technologies—like voice-enabled solutions—can deliver across teams and processes.

"Warehouses will become more multi-modal as time goes on. Soon you'll see AMR, voice and traditional scanning work together. Ultimately automation will make the lives of the workers better."

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With over 20 years of experience in warehouse optimization, Infios helps you implement voice and other advanced technologies into your operation and existing systems. Our team works closely with you to identify what's needed now and what will support long-term performance—so you can get ahead of downtime, not just react to it.

Find out more about how Infios voice solutions can optimize your warehouse operations

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