



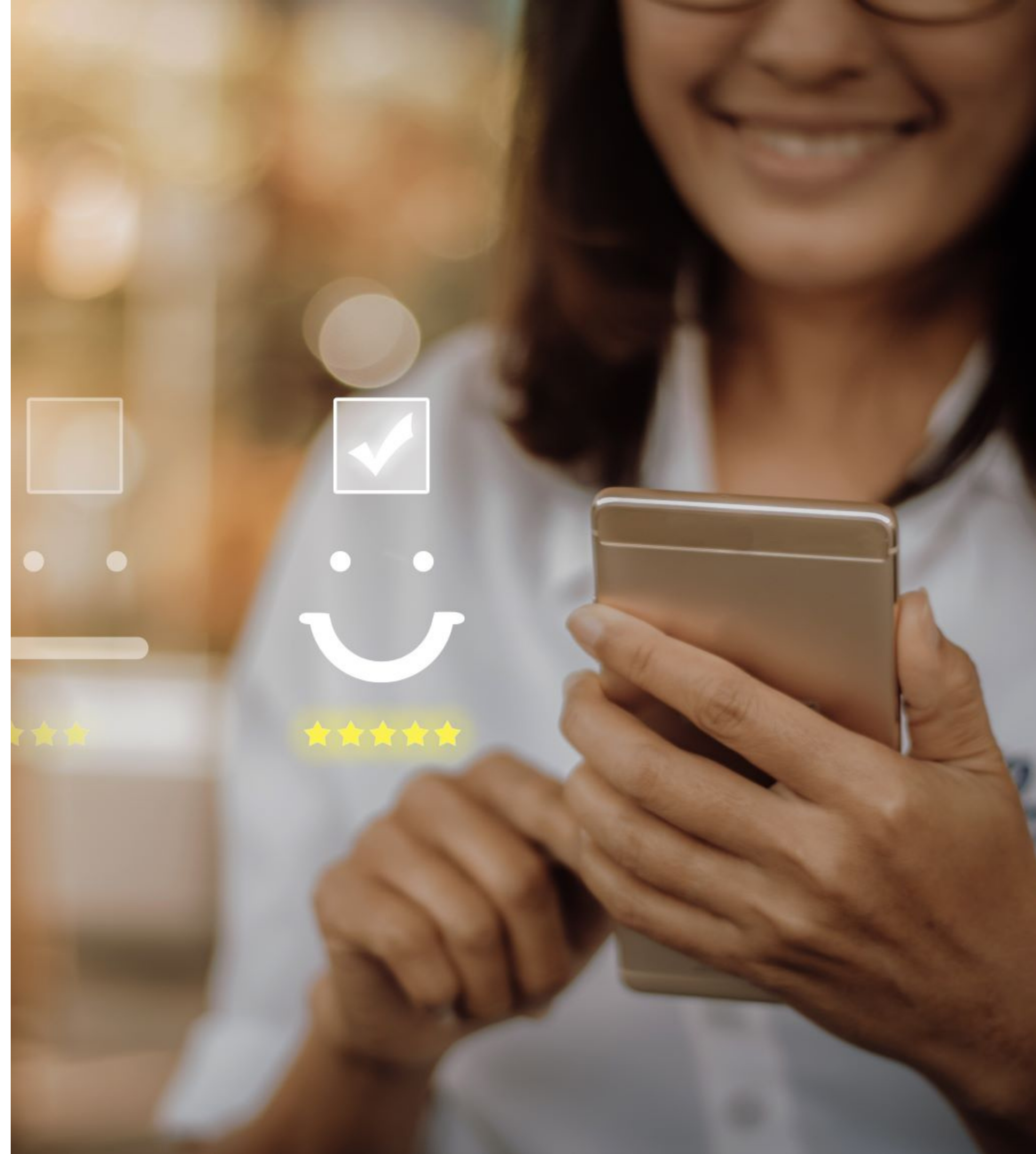
5 TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR WAREHOUSE RETURNS PROCESS

Reverse Logistics

A COLLABORATION WITH:



Quick and efficient returns management *(or reverse logistics)* is a must for companies striving to be leaders in customer experience and satisfaction.



"Our returns process is messy, expensive and hard to manage to customer expectations."

If yours is like numerous other businesses around the world this year, you probably can check off at least one of these statements:

- *We had to figure out how to do e-commerce for the first time.*
- *We previously dabbled with e-commerce, but suddenly had to get good at it.*
- *We've been doing e-commerce for a while, but this year broke all our records.*
- *Our returns process is messy, expensive and hard to manage to customer expectations.*

If you've checked off either of the first two boxes, you probably needed to check off the last box, too.

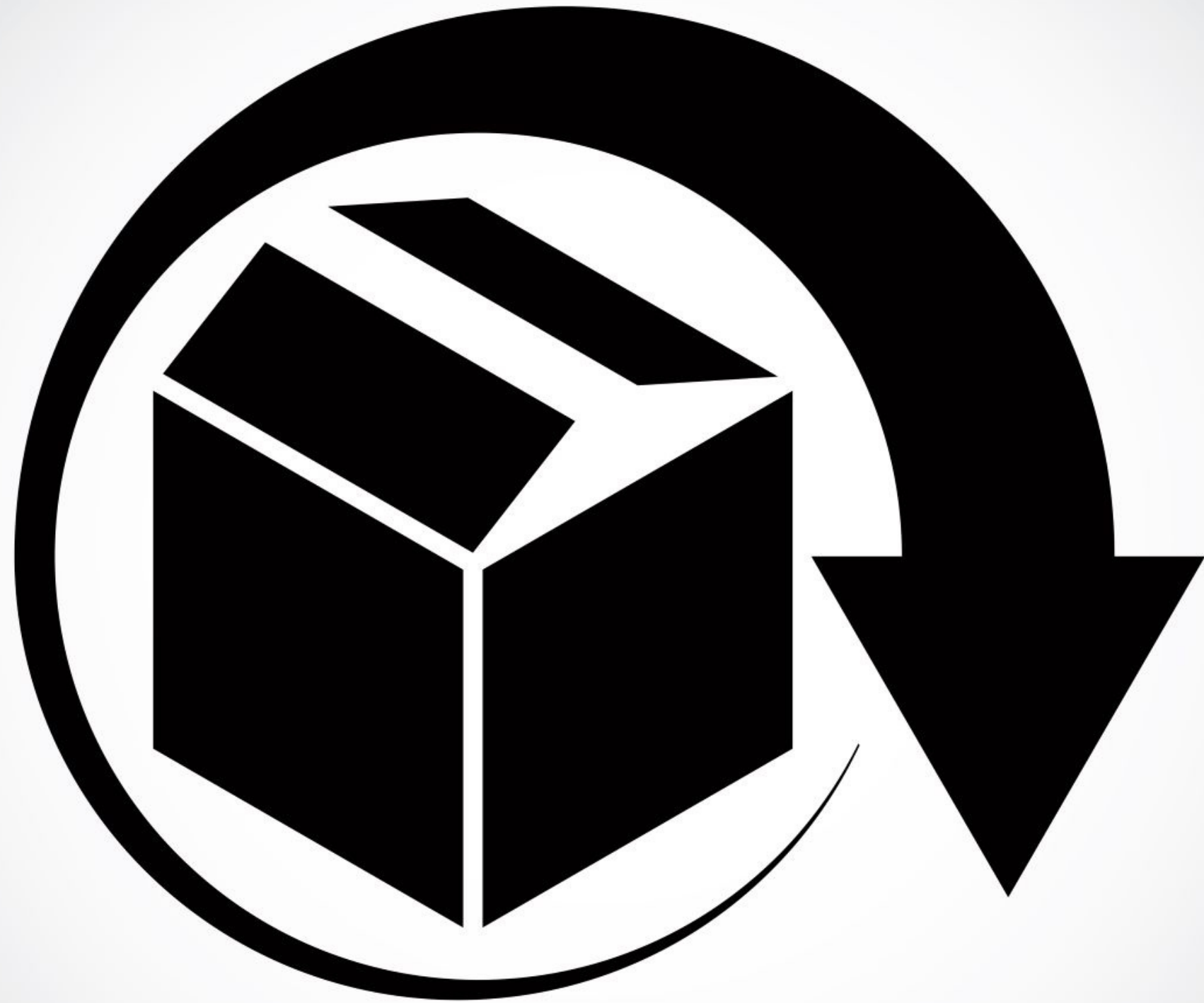
5 Practical Tips to Improve Your Warehouse Returns Process for Competitive Advantage

1. Plan for "crazy."

While we happily watch a truck departing from the shipping dock, two more are likely returning orders at the receiving dock!

But you can plan for that "crazy." We frequently see returns areas zoned and organized to accommodate surge capacity, yet left underutilized 80% of the year. Or, they're zoned and organized for a typical day while creating major pains during peak seasons.

Instead, plan for "typical" with the ability to quickly flex up to meet surge capacity - including how you will temporarily use additional areas of the facility and shift staffing.



2. Look for the value.

Returns and quality areas are often the overlooked and undervalued part of a facility.

Distribution teams blame manufacturing, merchandising or sales for large influxes of non-revenue related work, but can fail to see returns processing as a competitive advantage.

Consumers and omni-channel retailers are increasingly expecting faster turnarounds on returns processing for higher inventory accuracy and efficient refunds. Forward-thinking businesses have tapped into this and are reaping the benefits.

3. Implement flow for efficiency.

Batching of work and waiting to process returns typically adds steps and additional movement of material. These additional steps add confusion to operations which can result in mixed up inventory at different stages of the process.

Take advantage of any opportunity to reduce waiting -- whether that's **people waiting on information** or **product waiting on people**.



4. Have things ready.

A solid returns space needs to be equipped with the right technology and materials to process returns quickly. In scenarios where product identification or quality tests need to occur, having the tools at the station or a solid triage process in place will enable fast turnaround of returns.

Think of a returns space as a manufacturing assembly cell, where all the parts and tools need to be within reach, and travel of the operator minimized.

A mobile powered return station lets your team meet the product right at the receiving dock, where it's processed and directed to the right location ASAP.

Mobile-powered carts can help your returns area:

- **Have real-time access** to inventory, accounting, orders systems and data capture – eliminating tedious paperwork.
- **Take pictures** to provide proof of condition for return records.
- **Credit customers** immediately.
- **Quickly update returns** in the inventory system so that new orders can be fulfilled.
- **Remove** motion, waiting and transportation waste.



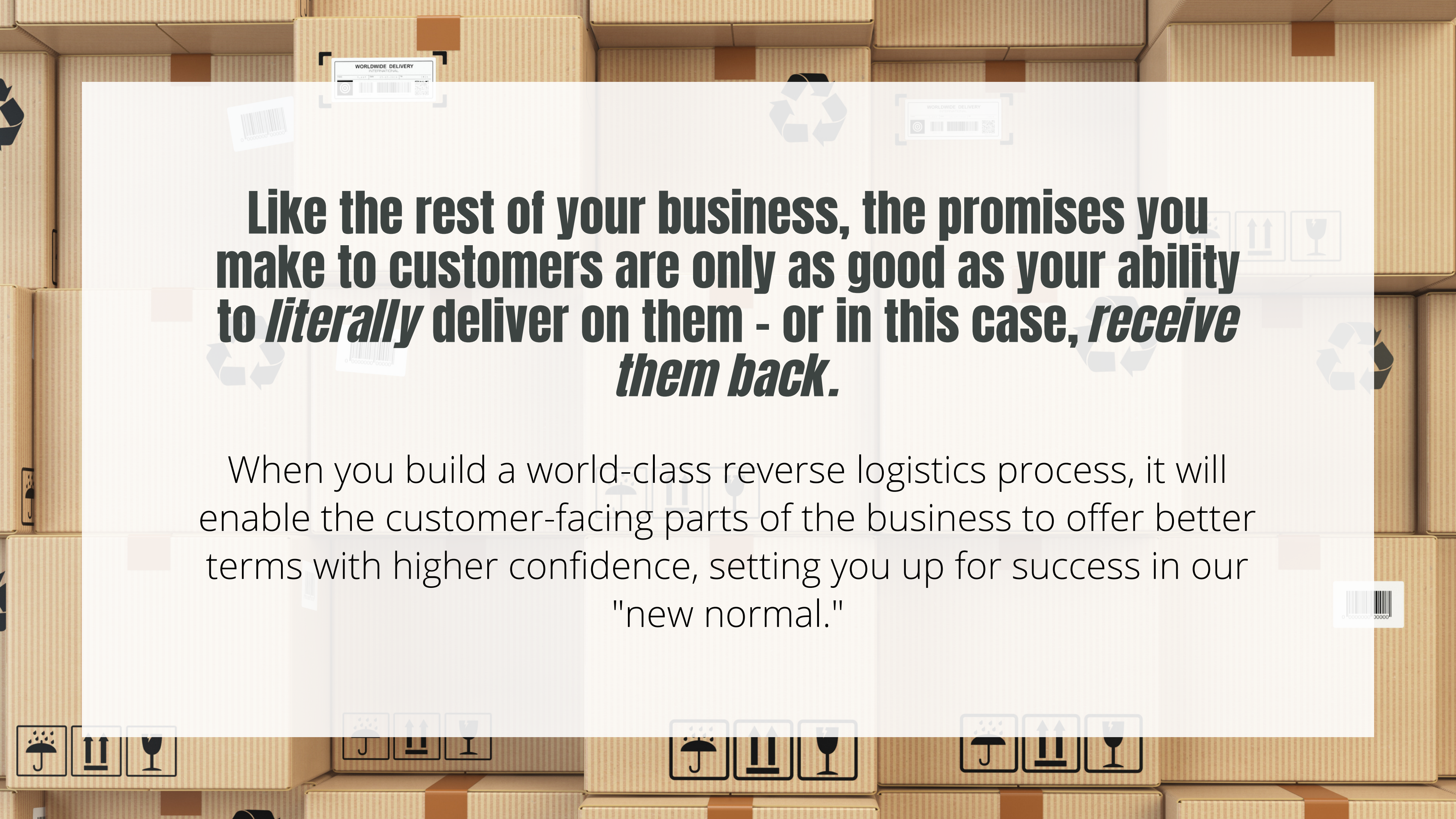
Newcastle Systems' Mobile Receiving Station



5. Make returns part of the overall system.

Every facility operates with regular ebbs and flows of inbound, outbound, replenishments, repacks and value-added services. When any of these services are managed independently, it sub-optimizes the system.

As an example, look for opportunities to cross-train inventory staff on returns, as both positions require knowing how to identify product when labelling is not always usable.



Like the rest of your business, the promises you make to customers are only as good as your ability to *literally* deliver on them - or in this case, *receive them back.*

When you build a world-class reverse logistics process, it will enable the customer-facing parts of the business to offer better terms with higher confidence, setting you up for success in our "new normal."



5 TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR WAREHOUSE RETURNS PROCESS: CHECKLIST

1. Plan for "crazy."
2. Look for the value.
3. Implement flow for efficiency.
4. Have things ready.
5. Make returns part of the overall system.



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Save Steps. Increase Productivity.

Newcastle Systems is the recognized innovator of mobile powered industrial carts and portable power systems specifically designed to make warehouses, manufacturing facilities and retail floors more efficient. Its extensive customer list is a who's who of successful global companies that thrive on continuous improvement to separate themselves for the competition.

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