

Title:

Rack Up the Value

Word Count:

1025

Summary:

As an inside sales representative for a major material handling company, half of the phone calls I receive start the same way: "I'm looking for racking." It's a promising start, but it's usually followed by, "I'm not sure how much I need," "I don't know what kind I need" or "I am new to this."

Keywords:

pallet rack, storage rack, warehouse storage, drive-in rack, static rack, industrial storage racking, pallet storage

Article Body:

**The way you set things up can pay off greatly**

As an inside sales representative for a major material handling company, half of the phone calls I receive start the same way: "I'm looking for racking." It's a promising start, but it's usually followed by, "I'm not sure how much I need," "I don't know what kind I need" or "I am new to this."

I could be hundreds or even thousands of miles away from these potential customers and their problems, but with the help of faxes, email, the Internet and digital cameras, we are usually able to share enough information to develop a proposed layout and a request for quotation.

People new to the warehouse or purchasing start out knowing that they have product sitting on the floor taking up space needing to utilize their vertical space better. After all, they are not just paying for square footage; they are heating, cooling and maintaining a three-dimensional space. Even more importantly, that vertical space is a wasted asset that could be used to store needed inventory and can free up floor space for more productive uses.

What else do you need to know? In just a few minutes, you can gather all the information you need before calling your sales representative. This includes:

The length, width and height of a single pallet that has product on it.  
The weight of the pallet with product.

The clear height on the warehouse - that is, the actual usable inside height of the warehouse at its lowest and highest points.

Your forklift's specifications, especially dimensions and lifting capacity.

The length of the rows of racking you wish to create.

The number of pallets you wish to store.

Decide whether you want used, renewed or new material.

**Drive in for More Space**

Let's start with the last one first. Face it, racking is racking. It rarely becomes obsolete because of new technology. If your needs can be met by quality refurbished racking, you will save money. However, in order to be certain that your needs will be met, make certain you trust your supplier and the refurbishing process they employ.

Most material handling vendors that deal in used and renewed equipment have finely tuned their methods of pricing in order to give you a quote based on the information listed above. Let's use drive-in racking as an example.

Drive-In racking is a type of "last in, first out" (LIFO) racking meaning product is loaded as far back in the rack as it will go. When unloading, the nearest available pallet is selected from the same side, as opposed to a FIFO (first in, first out) system where you usually load the product from the rear. In FIFO applications, product either flows to the forward of first position on a conveyor or it will be driven through the system.

Drive-in systems are widely used throughout the warehouse industry in places that have large volumes of pallets to store and seek an affordable, dense pattern. If you have a warehouse with clear floor space, high ceilings and hundreds of pallets to store on a tight budget, the choice is simple. Instead of creating a maze of rows and aisles, as you would with standard selective pallet racking, you create one large grid with access on a single side to drive in.

Keep in mind that the space savings are not the only benefit you will realize, although an estimated 80-85% space utilization can be achieved. Another factor in calculating your return on investment (ROI) is the potential savings in labor, equipment, product damage and operating costs.

Even so, gaining 50% more capacity to store your loads in an existing space can be very attractive when you consider the cost of additional warehouse space. Instead of figuring out which direction you are going to grow and how big an addition you will need for your building, you will instead think of the things

that you can do with the space left over after consolidating.

### <b>Advantages of a Clean Floor</b>

After doing away with selective pallet racking and consolidating into one easy to access area, you will soon realize the rest. You will instantly notice that you are no longer driving down aisles to find product, turning corners and dodging the pallets that have been left on the floor, obstructing your path. Another noticeable difference is that there are fewer upright frames that can be damaged. Once you turn into the drive-in system past the front uprights, your forklift is between a set of drive-in rails on which the pallets rest (except the bottom one). The product is further protected if the system is designed to allow only pallet loads that are confined to the size of the pallet. Systems designed for product overhang are still able to provide a certain level of protection.

Usually, the forklift that operated within the structure will be the same unit that loads and unloads freight from a truck. The distance traveled by the forklift decreases per pallet retrieved or stored, reducing wear and tear on the unit. The ability to access the pallets faster and safer means that you can also increase your rate of picking per man hour, again increasing your ROI.

Another way to save your company money by using drive-in racking is to double-stack your pallet loads on the bottom level. This will increase the maneuverability of the forklifts and will systematically reduce loading and retrieval time by carrying two pallets at once. This can only be done where identical SKU's are stored and cubed loads of the same items are forecasted for shipment. Pallet loads must be stable and free standing while you double-stack them, without causing damage to the product. The total combined weight of the double stack must not be more than what the forklift is able to handle.

These are just a few of the things you can think about before calling your sales representative. Other issues will come up before you make your purchasing decision, but a little planning can save a lot of time.