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The Joey and the rise of the omni-channel

By 2017, 10% of all retail purchases in the United States will be made online, accounting for over \$370 billion in sales. [1]

Retailers are fundamentally changing how they get goods to market and to their customers.

Omni-channel retailing seeks to provide consumers a consistent high quality experience regardless of how they choose to shop or receive their purchases. While one customer may prefer to shop online and have goods brought to their home, another may wish to go to a brick and mortar location to pick-up their online purchases at an assigned time.

Growth in online shopping has changed the playing field for retailers and will continue to do so far into the future. However, a few things are clear already. In the digital age, consumers want to choose how they interact with a retailer, and show preference to outlets that best suit their need for variety, price, speed, or convenience.

To respond to the needs of consumers the retail supply chain is adapting to bring a wider selection of products to consumers more quickly and more efficiently than ever before.

Strategies now being implemented by traditional brick and mortar retailers employ store level order picking, small format distribution centers close to urban centers, and new concepts like “dark stores” which are retail facilities closed to the public that exclusively support direct home delivery.

In these smaller more nimble fulfillment operations different procedures, technologies and material handling equipment are required compared to what may be found in a traditional distribution center.

In 2013, Big Lift LLC introduced a new vehicle to address a wide variety of tasks where a stock ladder may commonly be used called the J1-Joey.

Given this unit's ability to support piece picking, case picking and tow carts, it is exceptionally well suited to emerging applications in the retail supply chain driven by omni-channel initiatives.



The Joey can turn in as little as a 72" aisle, lift an operator up to 162", and transport up to 3,000 lbs.

Compared to bigger distribution center equipment, this may not be all that impressive. However, given the compact size of the Joey it is a perfect fit for facilities where individual orders are picked and shipped in less than full pallet quantities.

Whether a retailer employs a dark store to support an urban center or downscales a hypermarket to incorporate a small distribution center – small, flexible, and capable equipment is a key to success.

At "click and collect" operations where online customers pick up their purchases at a prescribed time and location, the ability of the Joey to pull a cart also provides a unique value. Relative to the use of a pallet or a vehicle designed to handle a pallet, a tote and cart system is clearly more efficient.



Material handling efficiency is a huge factor in omni-channel retailing, since retailers are now taking it upon themselves to help make that last move for their customers. It is there at the tail end of the supply chain after-all where the biggest costs reside in the form of manual labor.

Currently many retailers are making initial attempts to learn and get ahead of their competitors with omni-channel strategies, and with good cause.

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With much of the growth coming from brick and mortar retailer support of online shoppers, equipment like the Joey is part of a strategic initiative now being taken by Big Lift LLC.

Currently the company is developing a wide range of e-fulfillment and last mile delivery equipment in support of the changing needs of retailers.

For co-development opportunities or to participate in field trials of new equipment currently in development contact

[1] Source: Forrester Research Inc.

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