

# Case Study

## Custom Marketing Services, Inc.

Location: Calera, Alabama

Industry: Third Party Fulfillment Services

Application: Order Fulfillment

Lightning Pick Solution: LP PICK



### Company Profile

With a reputation for outstanding service, Custom Marketing Services (CMS) is one of the leading third party logistics companies in the Southeast. With more than 1.3 million square feet of facility space in Calera, AL, CMS provides services that include warehousing, transportation, pick/pack and ship fulfillment, display design and manufacturing, product development and sourcing, and complete integrated logistical support.

Their facilities meet a wide spectrum of fulfillment requirements for their customers, from a manual pick-and-pack operation to a complete enterprise automation system designed to process thousands of packages a day. CMS is a true one-stop-shop for all of a supplier's logistical needs, allowing their customers to concentrate on sales instead of warehousing operations.

### The Challenge

Started in 1991, CMS initially provided repackaging services to the supermarket promotion industry. Growth has always been part of CMS' business strategy, and by 2000 they built a 150,000 sq. ft. facility on their campus and started providing order fulfillment services to the direct selling/party plan industry.

In 2001, CMS began working with one major direct selling/party plan provider of home décor and entertainment products who required approximately 10,000 sq. ft. of the new facility. Within 18 months, the customer's growth had exploded so much that CMS needed to use all 150,000 sq. ft. to manage their order fulfillment. However, this still was not enough. To continue to provide the level of service they had been, CMS needed to grow along with their customer.

"Lightning Pick's Pick-to-Light system has increased throughput and quality, shortened order cycle times and reduced costs.

Best of all, Lightning Pick's flexible and scalable solution helps Custom Marketing Services to provide our customers with fantastic order fulfillment services, no matter how explosive their business growth may be."

Dennis O'Brien  
President  
Custom Marketing Services



**LIGHTNING PICK**



“The Pick-to-Light system from Lightning Pick provides reliable daily performance, no matter how high our order volumes are.

Fully integrated with our Manhattan Warehouse Management and other automated warehousing systems, Lightning Pick gives us deeper visibility into the productivity of our order picking process, and greater control to optimize it.”

Walter LaGroue  
Chief Operations Officer  
Custom Marketing Services

## The Solution

CMS partnered with FORTE™, a supply chain consulting and integration firm to build a new 500,000 square foot facility that would enable them to effectively meet their customers’ needs today, and have room for future growth. FORTE needed to streamline and transform CMS’ original operations, which included very labor-intensive manual methods for order picking, quality control and packing/shipping processes.

Because CMS’ major direct selling customer was highly seasonal in business, FORTE designed a highly configurable system with an emphasis on flexibility. FORTE consolidated all bulk storage, picking and packing operations for CMS’ direct selling business under one roof and applied automation to fulfillment to improve efficiency and allow CMS to do more with less labor. FORTE also assisted in the selection and implementation of a new best-of-breed warehouse management system (WMS) solution.

The project also included the addition of four pick modules to accommodate increasing demand. During their direct selling customer’s peak season from September through December, all four modules are used to handle 20,000 boxes per day or 80,000 picks per day.

To improve productivity and accuracy over the existing manual order picking process, FORTE added a new Pick-to-Light solution from Lightning Pick. Due to the seasonal fluctuations in staffing, Pick-to-Light was the most flexible methodology compared to RF picking or other approaches. With Pick-to-Light, very little training is required to get new or temporary workers up to speed.

Before relocating to the new facility, CMS relied on paper pick tickets to direct operators to the right area, which they then added the items to shopping carts. For larger orders, operators would sometimes have to chain carts together.

Now, a central conveyor brings totes to two pick lines on either side. Bar code labels on the totes (generated by Manhattan’s WM) are scanned with hand held RF units to launch the order in the Pick-to-Light system. Whenever product is needed from a particular location, the corresponding light module turns on, drawing attention where action is required. The operator picks the product quantity displayed and adds it to the tote. The operator then confirms the pick by pressing the lighted button. A bay display directs the operator on what to do with the tote next, such as passing it to the next zone for more items, or to place it on the conveyor if the order is complete.

Once the orders are picked, WM routes the totes to quality assurance or packing through in-line scanners on the conveyor system. FORTE’s Automation Director Warehouse Controls System links the WMS and the material handling processes.



## Lightning Pick Advantage

When it came to Pick-to-Light, the LP Pick solution met and exceeded CMS' requirements.

Lightning Pick Technologies has a proven interface with Manhattan Associate's WM for Windows to provide seamless integration between the two systems. Lightning Pick also has extensive experience optimizing order selection processes for numerous direct selling companies and knows the industry's process challenges.

The LP Pick system also features a cable-free, bus-based light module hardware design that was ideal for CMS' flexible environment. Light modules can be easily moved along a track-light style duct for convenient re-slotting, and to easily add product locations. The system is also easily expandable to meet CMS' aggressive growth rate.

The Lightning Pick software enables CMS to easily adjust work plans and staffing in the pick module based on the order volume demand. Lightning Pick also balances the work load through the Pick-to-Light zones for maximum productivity.

After completing the new automated facility, CMS had the capacity they needed to ship more product. A 100% increase in throughput was realized with a 30% reduction in labor, and a 50% increase in order volume. Also, their accuracy level jumped to 99.5+%, a major increase from CMS's earlier order quality rate.

"During peak times with the the older paper-based picking method, all we could do is add labor to get orders out the door.

Lightning Pick light-directed method can flex with the seasonality of our customers' direct selling business.

We can easily adjust work plans and staffing based on the order volume demand, and Lightning Pick balances the work load through the Pick-to-Light zones for maximum productivity."

Ty Hill  
CIO  
Custom Marketing Services

[lightningpick.com](http://lightningpick.com)

For more than 30 years and across 500 installations worldwide, Lightning Pick has delivered advanced light-directed technologies on time, on budget, every time. Our best-in-class pick-to-light, put-to-light, pack-to-light, pick carts and other solutions optimize material handling processes — from manufacturing through order fulfillment. Today, we're the number one provider of light-directed solutions in North America, providing our customers increased productivity, higher quality and improved process efficiency.



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