NUCLEUS
RESEARCH

Accelerating time to value in warehouse management with Savant Software WMS

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The Bottom Line

Nucleus found that while the long-term ROI of modern warehouse management systems is well understood, deployment speed and payback period have become critical decision drivers as supply chain complexity, labor pressure, and execution risk continue to rise. Across end-user interviews, Nucleus observed that traditional WMS deployments typically require eight to 14 months, delaying when organizations begin recovering their investment despite clear value on paper. In contrast, organizations selecting Savant Software emphasized its land-and-expand deployment model, which enables faster initial implementation of core execution workflows and reduces upfront risk. Based on customer evidence, Nucleus found that organizations deploying Savant typically complete initial deployments in the three- to six-month range, representing an approximate 50 to 60 percent reduction compared to traditional WMS timelines. In several cases, faster deployment and earlier labor efficiency gains translated into payback periods as short as six months, with organizations pulling productivity improvements forward, reducing manual intervention sooner, and accelerating time to value relative to all-at-once WMS rollouts.

Overview

Warehouse and distribution organizations continue to invest in modern WMS platforms because the long-term ROI case is well understood. Improvements in inventory accuracy, order fulfillment, and labor productivity typically result in measurable cost reductions and enhancements to service level performance. However, through end-user conversations, Nucleus found that many WMS initiatives delay those outcomes due to extended implementation timelines. Traditional WMS deployments typically range from eight to 14 months, and in some cases, longer, depending on the complexity of the warehouse and network. During this period, organizations incur software, services, and internal project costs while continuing to operate with the same labor inefficiencies and manual execution risks that initially justified the investment.

Nucleus found that traditional WMS deployments typically take eight to 14 months to deliver meaningful operational impact, delaying financial relief despite clear long-term ROI.

As a result, Nucleus has long viewed payback period as a complementary metric to ROI when evaluating software investments, particularly warehouse management systems. While ROI reflects the magnitude of the eventual benefit, payback period reflects how quickly organizations begin recovering their investment through productivity gains and cost avoidance. Payback periods provide finance and operations leaders with a tangible, time-bound metric that can be planned for, modeled, and actively managed alongside broader ROI objectives. In execution-intensive environments, extended deployment timelines push payback further into the future, delaying when organizations begin to experience meaningful operational and financial relief and increasing short-term financial exposure, particularly for organizations facing margin pressure or labor constraints. These dynamics are driving demand for WMS providers that can shorten deployment cycles and accelerate the path to payback, ultimately enabling faster time to value.

This shift in buyer expectations provides context for Savant Software's approach to warehouse management. Savant is positioned as an Accelerator in the 2025 WMS Technology Value Matrix, recognized for supporting both SMB and enterprise manufacturing and distribution environments (z189 – WMS Technology Value Matrix 2025 – November 2025). Savant's platform is designed around a land-and-expand adoption model, allowing organizations to deploy core execution capabilities first and expand functionality over time on a single code base. Rather than requiring a broad, end-state implementation to unlock value, customers can focus initial deployments on high-

frequency warehouse workflows that directly influence labor efficiency, order accuracy, and shipping execution.

Through end-user conversations, Nucleus found that organizations deploying Savant Software's WMS typically completed initial deployments in the three- to six-month range, representing an approximate 50 to 60 percent reduction compared to traditional WMS deployment timelines. Analysts observed that one supplement manufacturer completed its Savant WMS deployment in four months (x206 – Anatomy of a Decision: Savant Software – November 2023). In another case, an international industrial parts distributor achieved a payback period of approximately six months and realized an ROI of 204 percent, reflecting how faster deployment and earlier labor efficiency gains accelerated cost recovery and amplified overall financial returns (z12 – ROI Case Study: Savant WMS at an International Industrial Parts Distributor – January 2025). By shortening deployment timelines and pulling payback forward through reduced manual intervention, improved shipping accuracy, and faster operational stabilization, organizations also realized faster time to value, reinforcing the financial case for phased adoption over all-at-once WMS rollouts.

Based on customer evidence, organizations deploying Savant typically deploy within three to six months, representing an approximate 50 to 60 percent reduction compared to broader WMS deployment timelines.

Why it matters

For organizations operating on legacy or heavily customized warehouse systems, the challenge is no longer limited to functionality gaps. Many older WMS environments technically support core warehouse processes, but they struggle to scale as supply chain networks become more complex. Growth in SKU counts, higher order velocity, tighter service expectations, and increased integration requirements across ERP, transportation, and manufacturing systems place pressure on execution layers that were not designed to evolve incrementally. In these environments, WMS modernization decisions are often delayed not because the value is unclear, but because the perceived cost, disruption, and implementation risk of a complete replacement outweigh the expected near-term benefit.

This is where a land-and-expand deployment model materially changes the decision calculus. Rather than forcing organizations to commit to a broad, end-state WMS deployment upfront, Savant's approach allows teams to modernize execution in controlled phases aligned to operational priorities. By deploying core warehouse workflows first and expanding functionality as complexity increases, organizations reduce the risk associated with large-scale cutovers while still addressing the execution constraints that most directly impact labor efficiency, service

levels, and cost control. For legacy WMS users, this lowers the barrier to modernization by separating immediate operational stabilization from longer-term platform expansion.

A land-and-expand WMS deployment model with Savant Software reduces modernization risk by allowing organizations to stabilize execution first while aligning investment timing with realized value.

The financial implications of this approach extend beyond faster go-live timelines. Earlier deployment of execution capabilities accelerates the point at which organizations begin offsetting implementation costs through productivity gains and headcount avoidance. It also reduces the duration of parallel system operation, reliance on temporary labor, and the need for manual workarounds that often persist during prolonged WMS implementations. In effect, the land-and-expand model shifts WMS investments from a large, deferred-return project to a sequence of smaller, validated investments with clearer, earlier returns on investment. This structure is particularly valuable in environments where capital allocation decisions are scrutinized every quarter, rather than over multi-year transformation horizons.

As supply chain networks continue to evolve, this flexibility becomes increasingly important. Warehouses are no longer isolated execution nodes; they are tightly coupled with upstream manufacturing activities, downstream transportation constraints, and customer-specific fulfillment requirements. A WMS platform that can expand in scope without re-platforming enables organizations to respond to these changes without repeatedly resetting implementation timelines or absorbing new rounds of disruption. In this context, the value of Savant Software's approach lies not only in operational improvement but in its ability to align execution modernization with financial discipline, allowing organizations to scale warehouse capabilities at the pace their networks and economics demand.

Highlighted use cases

Through end-user interviews, Nucleus examined how organizations across manufacturing, distribution, and e-commerce are approaching WMS modernization.

Foodservice brand

Nucleus interviewed a long-established U.S.-based foodservice brand with a national footprint supporting hundreds of franchised locations across nearly 20 states. The organization operates two primary distribution centers that service the majority of its store network, supplemented by a third-party logistics provider for a smaller portion of outbound distribution. From a supply chain perspective, the organization manages approximately 400 distinct food and ingredient

SKUs, servicing store locations with multiple deliveries per week, which consistently places pressure on warehouse accuracy, order sequencing, and outbound execution.

Nucleus interviewed a national foodservice distributor that deployed Savant Software WMS in 3 months, replacing paper-based warehouse execution workflows.

Prior to selecting a modern WMS, the organization operated without a dedicated warehouse management system. Warehouse execution relied heavily on printed documents, manual data entry, and paper-based workflows, with no barcode scanning or automated traceability in place. Inventory accuracy and shipment verification were managed manually, and core processes had remained essentially unchanged since the 1980s. While the team had become adept at resolving issues as they arose, leadership recognized that this reactive model would become increasingly difficult to sustain as regulatory requirements, service expectations, and operational complexity continued to increase.

A key catalyst for modernization was the need to prepare for upcoming federal traceability requirements related to food distribution, including end-to-end tracking of certain ingredients. Although compliance deadlines were still several years out, the organization chose to act early, using the regulatory mandate as an opportunity to standardize warehouse workflows, introduce barcode-based traceability, and replace manual execution processes with a more scalable foundation. The organization initiated a formal evaluation of both ERP and WMS platforms, supported by an external consulting partner, to consolidate multiple business units under a single technology stack.

During the evaluation process, the organization selected Acumatica as its ERP platform and Savant Software as its WMS provider. Savant was selected based on its alignment with the organization's operational requirements and its ability to support a phased deployment approach. Leadership placed particular value on Savant's ability to standardize core warehouse workflows without requiring extensive customization, as well as the implementation team's focus on configuring the system to support existing processes with minimal disruption during initial rollout.

The organization deployed Savant WMS over a period of approximately three months. The initial deployment scope focused on establishing standardized execution workflows, introducing barcode scanning, and improving inventory control and outbound loading accuracy. One area of particular focus was outbound truck loading, which had previously relied on manual diagrams and individual judgment to sequence pallets across seven to eight nightly delivery routes. With Savant in place, the

organization has digitized and standardized this process, reducing the time required to build loads and improving consistency across shifts.

By digitizing outbound truck loading and inventory execution, the organization reduced reliance on manual judgment and improved consistency across 7 to 8 nightly delivery routes.

While the organization is still early in its post–go-live phase, leadership expects improved execution stability to translate into fewer warehouse errors, reduced manual intervention, and more consistent store deliveries. Rather than measuring success solely by immediate cost reduction, the organization emphasized eliminating preventable execution "fires" and establishing a repeatable warehouse operating model that can scale over time. Management noted that even incremental improvements in accuracy and truck-loading efficiency represent a meaningful improvement over the prior manual environment and position the organization for further operational gains as adoption matures.

E-commerce distributor

This U.S.-based specialty e-commerce distributor serves the general aviation market. Founded more than four decades ago, the organization evolved from a small mail-order operation into one of the largest suppliers of aviation-related products, including equipment, training materials, and educational content. Today, the company operates multiple brands, fulfills orders directly from its own warehouse, and ships daily using a mix of national parcel carriers. While its physical distribution footprint has remained stable for many years, order volume, product mix complexity, and system integration requirements have increased significantly. For much of its history, the organization relied on a proprietary ERP system developed internally in the early 1980s. As the business scaled, limitations in integration flexibility, data visibility, and long-term system maintainability became increasingly difficult to manage, prompting the organization to modernize its core systems to support continued growth.

A specialty e-commerce distributor selected Savant Software WMS to modernize high-volume shipping execution, deploying barcode-driven workflows

A defining execution challenge stemmed from the organization's diverse product mix. Orders frequently combine small, lightweight items with larger or irregular products, making it difficult to accurately predict final shipment dimensions earlier in the fulfillment process. As a result, pre-printing carrier labels was impractical. The organization required a shipping solution that allowed users to determine or override carrier selection at the end of packing, once dimensions and delivery requirements were known. During its evaluation, the organization reviewed multiple shipping solutions but ultimately selected Savant Software based on its ability to support this late-stage flexibility while integrating cleanly with its ERP environment.

The organization deployed Savant Software alongside its ERP modernization initiative, with Savant selected specifically to support shipping execution. Savant's deployment was intentionally scoped to the execution layer, allowing the organization to introduce barcode-driven shipping workflows quickly without disrupting existing fulfillment operations. While broader ERP modernization activities required additional coordination, the Savant implementation itself was viewed as straightforward to deploy and aligned well with the organization's goal of stabilizing and modernizing shipping execution with minimal operational risk.

Savant's ability to support late-stage carrier selection and barcode-based overrides enabled the e-commerce company to maintain fulfillment speed while improving shipping accuracy and customer service visibility.

Following deployment, the organization highlighted improved visibility into outbound execution as a key benefit. Customer service teams can now see whether orders have been scanned, labeled, and shipped directly within Savant, reducing reliance on workstation-level investigation or incomplete ERP data. This visibility has improved the organization's ability to proactively resolve address issues, such as converting residential USPS shipments to UPS deliveries when a street address becomes available, helping avoid dimensional surcharges and unexpected carrier fees.

From a usability perspective, the organization emphasized that Savant aligns well with its barcode-centric operating model. Overrides for delivery dates, service levels, and carrier selection are handled through barcode scanning rather than manual system navigation, preserving speed and accuracy in high-volume workflows. Leadership noted that minimizing keyboard and mouse interaction during execution is critical, as even small sources of friction can compound quickly during peak shipping periods.

Infrastructure manufacturer

Nucleus interviewed a rapidly scaling manufacturer that selected Savant to introduce barcode-driven inventory execution as it expanded from 1 to 4 facilities.

Nucleus evaluated a vertically integrated technology company focused on building physical infrastructure to support large-scale AI data center operations. The organization designs and manufactures electrical and power-related systems used to transfer energy from the grid into data center environments, with materials such as copper representing a significant portion of the total product cost. Over the past year, the company has expanded rapidly, growing from a single manufacturing facility to four locations, including two sites that are several times the size of the original operation. This rapid scale-up introduced new complexity in inventory management, material movement, and shop-floor visibility.

The organization had implemented Acumatica ERP approximately two years ago, which provided a foundational system of record but was not designed to support the level of execution visibility now required across multiple manufacturing sites. Inventory transactions and material movements were managed manually through a centralized desktop workflows, supported by paper-based processes and spreadsheets. As production volumes increased, this model became increasingly labor-intensive, introducing delays in inventory reporting and making it challenging to understand real-time material usage and on-hand balances. Leadership identified barcode-enabled execution as a necessary next step to maintain speed while improving accuracy and control.

A phased, execution-first rollout of Savant WMS is expected to deliver earlier visibility into material usage and inventory balances without delaying value until a full warehouse transformation is complete for the manufacturer.

Rather than initiating a broad WMS evaluation, the organization initially focused on identifying barcode scanning solutions that could integrate directly with Acumatica. Through this process, Savant Software emerged as the primary option evaluated, given its native alignment with Acumatica environments and its ability to support execution-level inventory transactions without requiring a full warehouse transformation upfront. The organization viewed Savant as a way to introduce structured, scan-driven execution incrementally, addressing immediate visibility and accuracy gaps while preserving flexibility as operations continue to evolve. The organization also viewed Savant's execution-first deployment model as a way to quickly introduce barcode-driven inventory control, without waiting for a broader warehouse transformation to be defined or completed.

The implementation of Savant commenced approximately three weeks before the interview and was in the requirements-gathering phase. The organization is currently focused on documenting execution workflows and ensuring Savant's configuration reflects how materials move through each facility. Initial deployment planning is centered on a phased rollout, with leadership targeting an initial site go-live as early as the first quarter of 2026. While benefits have not yet been realized, the organization emphasized that Savant's constrained deployment scope and execution-first focus were important in avoiding disruption during a period of rapid operational growth.

By decentralizing inventory transactions to the shop floor, the organization expects to eliminate manual reconciliation cycles and gain near real-time visibility into material usage and on-hand balances.

From an operational perspective, the organization expects Savant Software WMS to decentralize inventory transactions by enabling barcode scanning directly on the shop floor. This shift is intended to eliminate end-of-shift and end-of-week reconciliation cycles, reduce paper handling, and provide near real-time visibility into material consumption and inventory balances. By allowing supervisors and line

leads to execute and validate transactions as work is performed, the organization expects to improve reporting accuracy while maintaining, and potentially accelerating, production velocity. Leadership noted that earlier visibility into usage and inventory positions would also support better material planning decisions as facilities continue to scale.

Organizations that constrained the initial WMS scope to execution bottlenecks consistently realized value earlier than those pursuing full end-state designs upfront.

Best practices

Based on end-user interviews and observed deployment outcomes, Nucleus identified several best practices that consistently contributed to faster time-to-value and earlier payback in WMS initiatives.

Constrain the initial scope to execution bottlenecks

Organizations that realized the most value resisted the temptation to deploy a complete, end-state WMS design upfront. Instead, they focused initial deployments on the execution workflows that created the most operational friction, such as shipping, picking accuracy, or inventory movement visibility. By addressing these bottlenecks first, teams stabilized operations quickly and began to realize productivity gains before expanding their scope. This approach reduces implementation risk while pulling benefits forward into earlier operating periods.

Treat time to value as a design requirement

Organizations that explicitly defined time-to-value targets during vendor selection and project planning were more likely to achieve faster payback. Rather than measuring success solely by functional completeness at go-live, these teams aligned deployment milestones with the point at which operational improvements needed to materialize. This shift in decision-making throughout the project influenced scope trade-offs, customization tolerance, and the sequencing of sites or workflows. When time to value is treated as a requirement, not a byproduct, projects naturally become more focused and disciplined.

Treating time-to-value as a design requirement improved deployment discipline and accelerated payback by influencing scope, sequencing, and customization decisions.

Separate execution modernization from enterprise transformation

Many delayed WMS programs struggled because execution improvements were tied too tightly to broader ERP or supply chain transformation initiatives. Organizations that decoupled warehouse execution from enterprise-wide redesign were able to move more quickly, even when upstream systems were still in development. Introducing execution-layer capabilities, such as barcode scanning, inventory validation, or shipping control, independently allowed teams

to realize tangible benefits without waiting for full platform convergence, thereby reducing the financial drag of long transformation timelines.

Organizations that applied phased expansion strategies improved capital efficiency by using early execution gains to justify continued investment and adoption.

Prioritize operational adoption over early optimization

Several organizations noted that attempting to optimize warehouse processes before teams had real experience with the new system slowed deployment and delayed value realization. Faster-moving organizations focused first on getting the system live, stable, and in daily use, allowing real operational data to guide future improvements. This approach reduced rework, shortened implementation cycles, and ensured that optimization efforts were grounded in observed performance rather than theoretical process models.

Use phased expansion to justify continued investment

Organizations that accelerated payback treated WMS deployments as a series of smaller, validated investments rather than a single, all-or-nothing project. Early execution gains were used to justify subsequent phases, whether expanding functionality, adding sites, or introducing more advanced capabilities. This incremental approach improved capital allocation discipline, increased internal confidence in the platform, and reduced resistance to change by demonstrating value before asking the organization to absorb additional disruption.

Organizations that apply these deployment practices are better positioned to realize operational benefits earlier in the project lifecycle, accelerating payback periods and improving the timing of ROI.