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Modernize Your Warehouse

Are You Ready for Warehouse Automation?

A Self-Service Guide to Evaluating Automation Readiness

Table of contents

Purpose

The goal of this assessment is to help warehouse and supply chain leaders evaluate how ready their operation is for warehouse automation and a minimal-labor operating strategy.

Many automation initiatives fail not because the technology does not work, but because the underlying operation lacks the discipline, standardization, and data integrity required to support automation reliably.

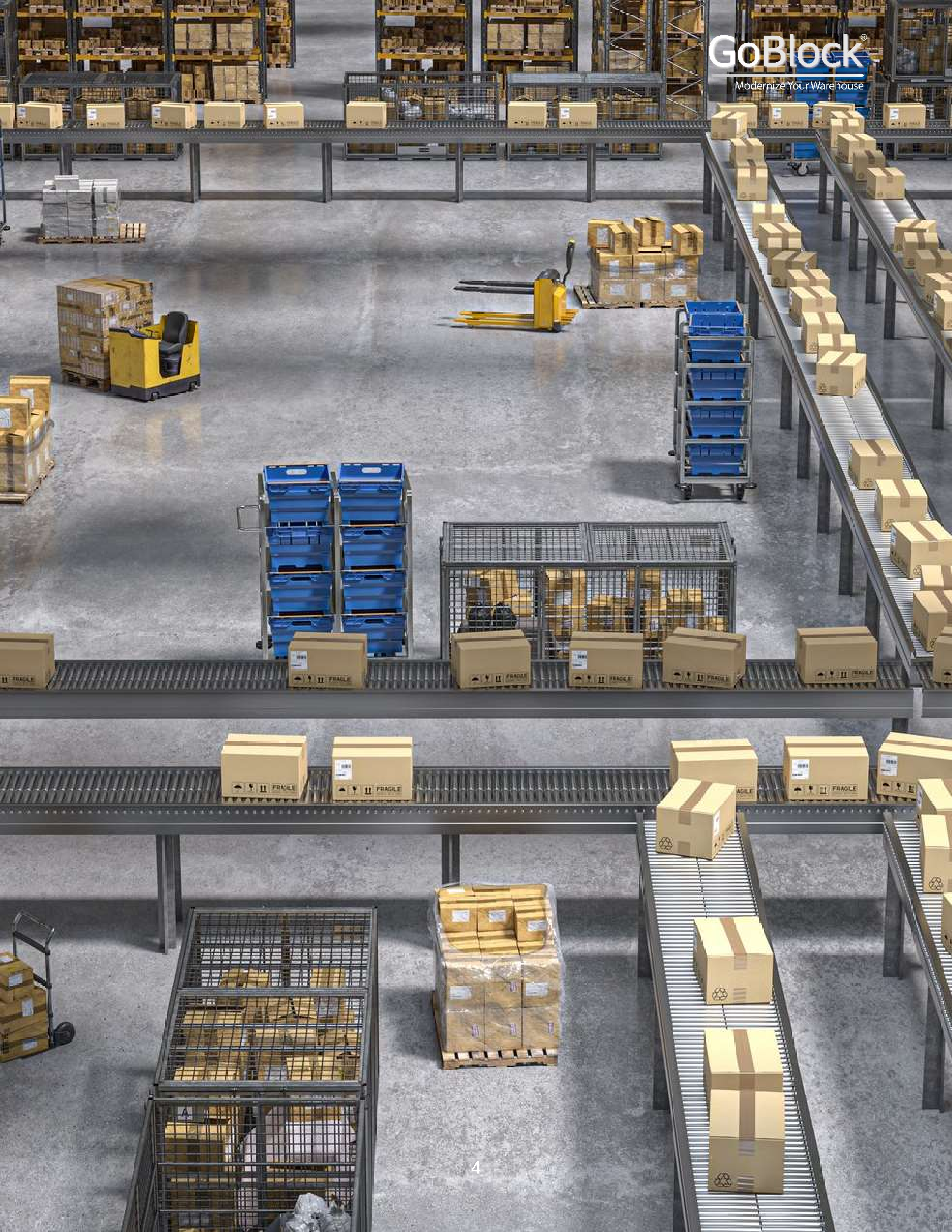
This assessment focuses on the prerequisites for automation success. It is intentionally practical. It does not recommend specific technologies or vendors. Instead, it highlights where automation will work in your operation, where it will struggle, and where foundational effort is required before making an investment.

This assessment is designed to:

- Identify structural barriers to automation.
- Separate realistic automation opportunities from aspirational ones.
- Support phased, low-risk automation roadmaps.
- Create alignment between operations, IT, procurement, facilities, HR, finance, and other stakeholders.

Throughout this guide, you will find a structured way to score your current-state performance, turn those scores into a readiness profile, and then translate that profile into pragmatic next steps.

Use this ebook as both a diagnostic and a conversation starter with your cross-functional stakeholders.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How to Use This Assessment

The assessment is organized by ten (10) topic areas - each with up to 5 questions (48 questions total).

1. Vendor Compliance and Inbound Discipline
2. SKU Base Characteristics
3. Packaging and Material Standards
4. Order Complexity
5. Order Packing
6. Loading and Outbound
7. Data Integrity and Inventory Accuracy
8. WMS and Controls Maturity
9. Facility and Infrastructure Readiness
10. People and Organizational Readiness

Each question is scored on a 0–3 scale, unless otherwise noted.
Higher scores indicate stronger automation readiness.

Each section has a maximum score of 15. The total possible score is 150.

Scoring Scale:
0 = Not in place or inconsistent
1 = Partially in place, or manual workarounds required
2 = Largely in place, occasional exceptions
3 = Fully in place, proven, enforced, and measured.

Write your score next to each question and subtotal each section

The final score will indicate overall readiness and guide next steps.

Be honest. Automation is unforgiving. Inflated scores will lead to inflated expectations.

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Results Bands and Interpretation

After you complete the Assessment, come back to this section and review where you land according to your Total Score.

Note: a lower score does not mean automation will never be applicable for your operation. It means foundational work is required first.

Total Score:120–150

Strong Readiness for Facility Wide Automation

Existing foundational readiness for minimal-labor operations. Many warehouse functions can operate with little or no direct labor.

What this means: Lights-out is feasible for many warehouse areas. Human involvement shifts to exception management and maintenance. Focus should be on uptime, sequencing, and scale.

If you are in this range, begin to move to automation as an operational platform. Establish service-level objectives for uptime, create a production control function, and formalize maintenance planning.

Total Score: 95–119

High Automation Potential, Human-Assisted

Well positioned for automation, but some structural constraints remain.

What this means: Automation will significantly reduce labor. Some operations may still require staffing. ROI exists, but reliability depends on discipline.

Your priority should be to close the few remaining structural gaps while launching automation in those areas where you are ready. Build feedback loops around exception causes and drive process standardization to lift you into the highest band.

Total Score: 70–94

Foundational Gaps Limit Reliability

Automation can help productivity, but execution may be fragile.

What this means: Automation should be targeted and assistive, only where ready. There is a risk of automating existing problems, and instead making them worse.

In this band, invest in foundational areas, such as master data, vendor compliance, and packaging standards.

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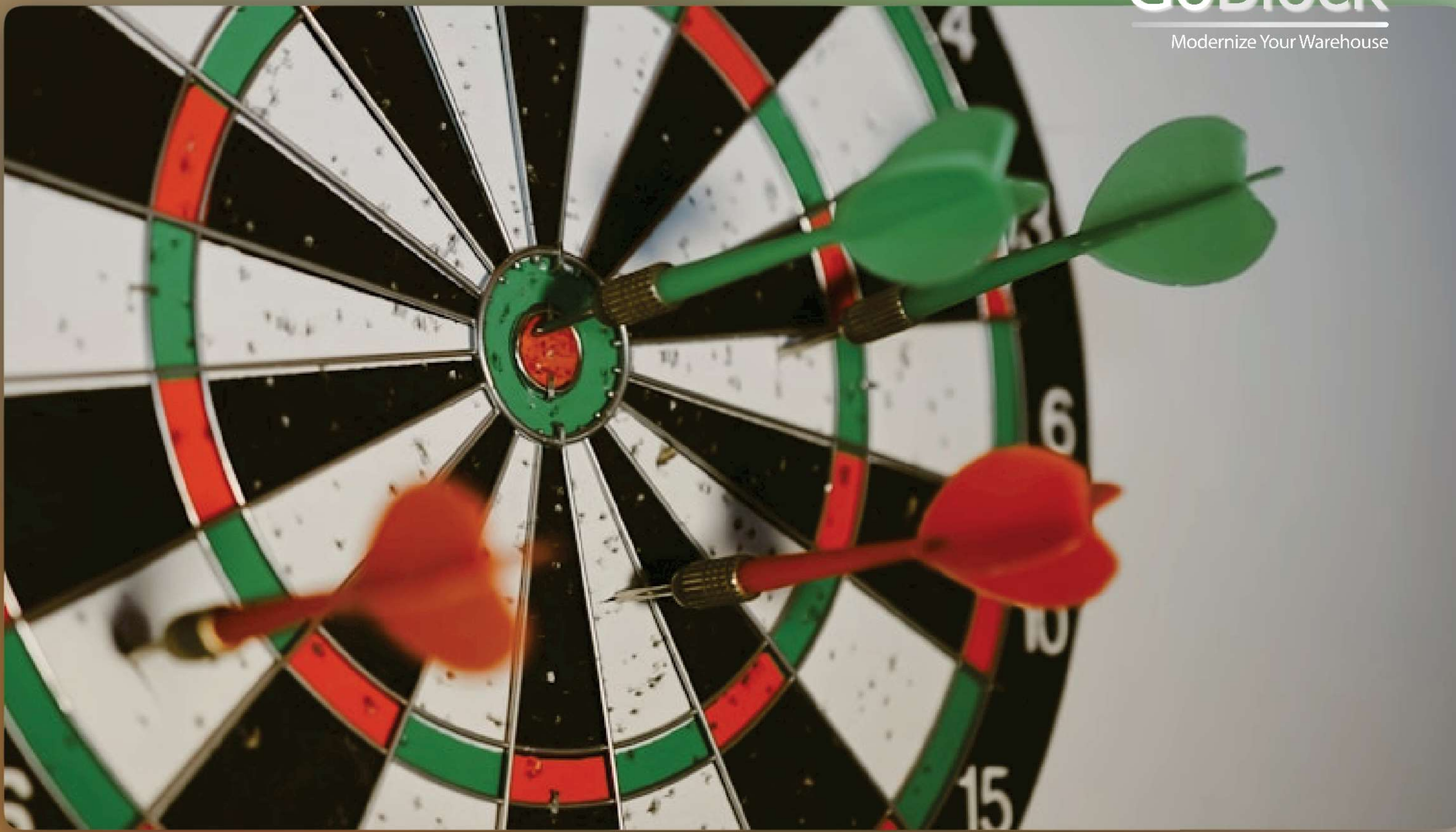

Total Score: 50–69

Automation Risk Is High

The operation depends heavily on human judgment and variability.

What this means: ROI is uncertain without remediation. Automation can increase complexity before reducing labor. Automation is not realistic in the near term, but this could be a good phase for small pilots in which to learn.

Total Score: Below 50

Not Automation-Ready

Most foundational prerequisites are missing.

What this means: Automation will amplify issues rather than solve them. Labor remains the primary control mechanism. Focus must shift to process stabilization first.

A. Vendor Compliance and Inbound Discipline

1. Advance Ship Notices (ASNs) are provided for all inbound shipments, are consistently received prior to arrival, and ASN accuracy consistently exceeds 98 percent.

Score: ___ / 3

2. All handling units (cases, inner packs, eaches where applicable) are labeled with GS1-compliant barcodes that include the appropriate identifiers such as SKU, lot, serial number, expiration date, and quantity, where applicable.

Score: ___ / 3

3. Barcode placement is standardized across vendors and SKUs and consistently scanner-readable.

Score: ___ / 3

4. Vendor over, short, and damaged (OSD) performance is measured, enforced, and consistently maintained at the following levels:
Less than 0.5 percent = 3; 0.5 to 1 percent = 2; 1 to 2 percent = 1; Greater than 2 percent = 0.

Score: ___ / 3

5. The inbound sources/vendors are:
Vertically integrated manufacturing or captive suppliers with controlled shipping practices = 3
Primarily full truckload suppliers with limited SKU variety per shipment = 2
Many vendors shipping LTL-sized, mixed-SKU orders = 1 or 0.

Score: ___ / 3

Section A Total: ___ / 15.

B. SKU Base Characteristics

1. The SKU portfolio contains no flammable, explosive, corrosive, or otherwise hazardous materials

Score: ___ / 3

2. Liquids and fragile items, if present, are packaged in a way that is compatible with automation, including tolerance for conveyance, acceleration, deceleration, and limited tumbling. (Score 3 if no liquids or fragile items exist.)

Score: ___ / 3

3. No SKUs require refrigerated, frozen, or temperature-controlled storage below 40 degrees Fahrenheit

Score: ___ / 3

4. All SKUs can be stored and moved using standardized pallets, platforms, totes, or trays and do not require special handling due to odd shapes, instability, or non-conveyable form factors.

Score: ___ / 3

5. All SKUs have clearly defined stackability and storage rules that dictate where and how they can be stored and what can be stacked on them or stored around them.

Score: ___ / 3

Section B Total: ___ / 15

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389280 389280 7836712
12/20oz GLACEAU VWTR FIRE
14:22 11-23-19 Line # 05
MAY1820 14:49 UBF2
20 FL OZ
12 COUNT
GLACÉAU
vitaminwater.
vitaminwater zero™
NUTRIENT ENHANCED WATER BEVERAGE
20 FL OZ 12 COUNT
frozen tundra
ice
cool blueberry-lavender
Nutrition Facts
Serv. Size 1 Bottle
Calories 20
fire

C. Packaging and Material Standards

1. Packaging is rigid, stable, cubed, non-deforming, and able to maintain its shape during robotic handling (Lower scores apply to bags, pails, bottles, bales, sacks, etc.)

Score: ___ / 3

2. Case dimensions and packaging specifications are consistent for a SKU - regardless of purchase order, supplier, or production run.

Score: ___ / 3

3. Standard pallet patterns (Ti/Hi) exist for all SKUs, are documented, and are consistently enforced by suppliers and internal operations.

Score: ___ / 3

4. A defined process exists to identify, remove, and replace pallets that do not meet minimum quality standards, including broken boards, protruding nails, unstable runners, or structural damage.

Score: ____ / 3

5. Small, irregular items can be placed into standardized totes or trays

Score: ___ / 3

Section C Total: ___ / 15

D. Order Complexity

1. Outbound orders are shipped as full single SKU pallets requiring no pallet breaking, consolidation, or manual intervention.
(Score 3 if 100 percent, score 0 if 0 percent)
(If Question 2 scores a 3, score a 3 here as well)

Score: ___ / 3

2. Outbound orders are shipped as full case picks using original manufacturer cartons with no inner handling required.
(Score 3 if 100 percent, score 0 if 0 percent)
(If Question 1 scores a 3, score a 3 here as well.)

Score: ___ / 3

3. Each-pick orders (break case, innerpack or piece-pick) have the following average items (SKUs) per order:
No each picking required, or fewer than 2 items per order = 3
Average 2 to 5 items per order = 2
Average 5 to 7 items per order = 1
More than 8 items per order = 0.

Score: ___ / 3

4. Each-pick items have standardized, automation-compatible packaging that can be reliably handled by robotic systems (think of robot arms picking the item).
(Score a 3 if no each picking required)

Score: ___ / 3

5. Customers do not require value-added services, inserts, or customer-specific labeling on items.

Score: ___ / 3

Section D Total: ___ / 15

E. Order Packing

Note: Score this entire section with 15 points if 100% of outbound orders ship as full single SKU pallets (as received), or in original full cases (even if not full pallet) with no inner modification. ***In other words, no packing required.***

1. All outbound orders are packed into rigid, cubed, corrugated cartons (score lower for bags or other non-rigid packaging)

Score: ___ / 3

2. Automated carton selection is feasible based on accurate SKU dimensions, weights, and order profiles.

Score: ___ / 3

3. Void fill requirements are consistent and compatible with automated dispensing systems.

Score: ___ / 3

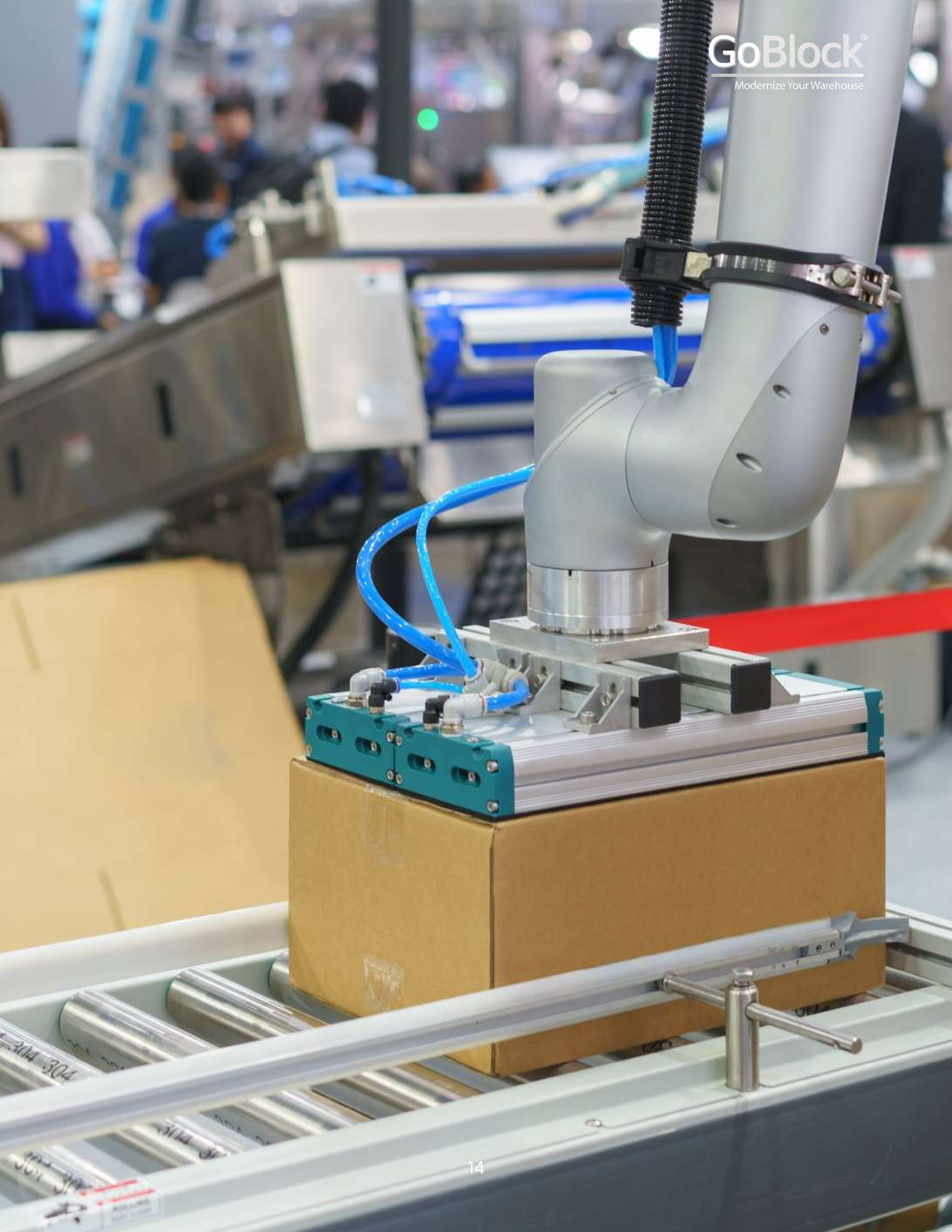
4. Every outbound package requires a barcode label that can be generated and applied by machine.

Score: ___ / 3

5. There are no customer-specific exterior labeling requirements such as special branding, export documentation, or exterior packing slips.

Score: ___ / 3

Section E Total: ___ / 15



F. Loading and Outbound

This section is scored a bit differently. Each question can range from 0 - 15. If the sum total of the section is greater than 15, score the entire section at 15.

1. Percent of outbound volume shipped as parcel cartons and floor-loaded directly into trailers without palletization.
100% = 15; 50% = 8; None = 0

Score: ___ / 15

2. Percent of outbound volume shipped as full pallets containing a single SKU that can be loaded without breaking or rebuilding pallets.
100% = 15; 50% = 8; None = 0

Score: ___ / 15

3. Percent of outbound volume consisting of mixed-SKU orders that require pallet building, wrapping, and staging for shipment.
None = 15; 50% = 7; 100% = 3.

Score: ___ / 15

Section F Total: ___ / 15 (sum to a maximum of 15)

G. Data Integrity and Inventory Accuracy

1. New SKU introductions follow a controlled, audited, documented daily process that ensures accurate setup across ERP, WMS, and related systems.

Score: ___ / 3

2. A process exists to physically confirm case, inner pack, and each-level dimensions and weights upon first receipt of SKU, with ongoing audit and correction.

Score: ___ / 3

3. A process exists to physically verify all GS1/UPC/SCC/EAN barcodes at all relevant units of measure upon first receipt of SKU, with ongoing audit and correction.

Score: ___ / 3

4. Inventory records are maintained through a systematic and audited daily processes, including synchronization of records across host, WMS, and related system including quantity, lot, serial, and expiration date, if applicable.

Score: ___ / 3

5. Inventory discrepancies are investigated and resolved daily, with documented reason codes, quantity adjustments, and financial impact tracking.

Score: ___ / 3

Section G Total: ___ / 15

H. WMS and Controls Maturity

1. The organization has prior experience using advanced WMS functionality such as wave management, real-time task control, and priority management.

Score: ___ / 3

2. The organization has prior experience integrating WMS with automation systems or material handling control systems.

Score: ___ / 3

3. A Warehouse Control System (WCS) or Warehouse Execution System (WES) has been used in addition to the WMS to manage flow, priority, and work.

Score: ___ / 3

4. Warehouse operations rely minimally on spreadsheets, manual or informal workarounds to manage daily execution.

Score: ___ / 3

5. A documented IT support and escalation process exists, including formal ticketing, agreed response times, root cause analysis, and historical resolution tracking.

Score: ___ / 3

Section H Total: ___ / 15

I. Facility and Infrastructure Readiness

1. Floor flatness and load rating are suitable for automated storage, conveyance, robotics, or autonomous vehicles.

Score: ___ / 3

2. Ceiling height supports vertical automation or mezzanine-based solutions.

Score: ___ / 3

3. Adequate and redundant power capacity exists to support automation equipment.

Score: ___ / 3

4. Adequate water supply exists to support enhanced fire suppression requirements associated with automation.

Score: ___ / 3

5. Redundant high-speed internet connectivity and facility-wide industrial Wi-Fi or cellular coverage are in place.

Score: ___ / 3

Section I Total: ___ / 15

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J. People and Organizational Readiness

1. A strong culture of safety exists, including formal training, tracked safety metrics, and continuous improvement programs.

Score: ___ / 3

2. Documented onboarding, training programs, SOPs, mentoring, and performance review processes exist for warehouse staff.

Score: ___ / 3

3. Maintenance personnel have experience working with, troubleshooting, and maintaining automated or highly mechanized equipment.

Score: ___ / 3

4. Leadership has experience operating or managing automated warehouse environments.

Score: ___ / 3

5. The facility has access to a skilled labor pool, including technical schools, third party training programs, or relevant local talent.

Score: ___ / 3

Section J Total: ___ / 15

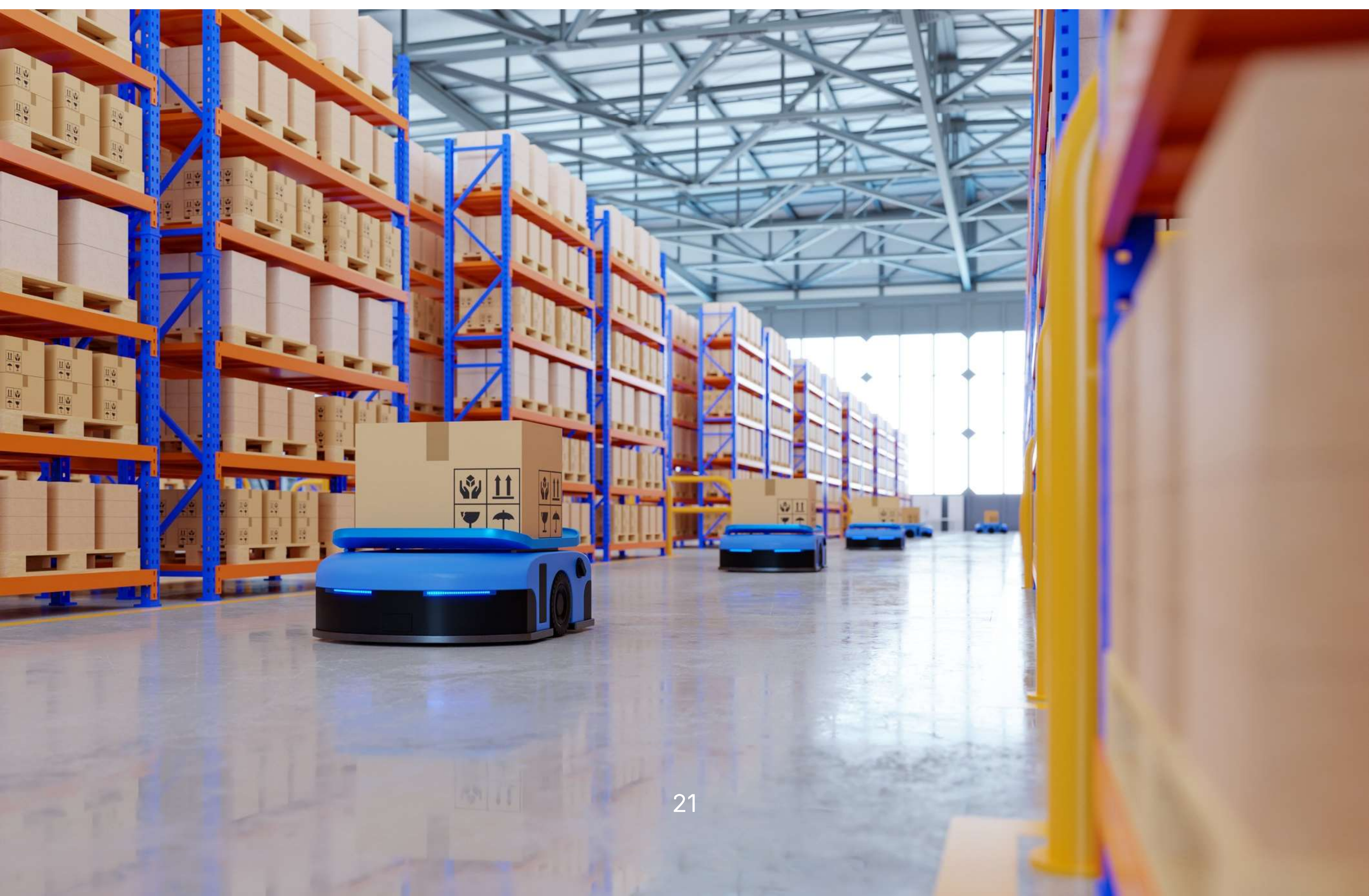
Interpreting Your Final Score

Total Score: ___ / 150.

Your Total Score is the sum total of the ten sections.

And it's not always about Total Score. One low-scoring area—such as packaging standards or data integrity—can compromise the entire system.

Utilize the "*Results Bands and Interpretation*" section above to categorize your readiness, then drill into the lowest sections to identify leading indicators of instability.



What to Do Next

This assessment does not tell you what automation to buy. It tells you where automation will succeed and where you will have challenges.

Recommended next steps:

- Review low-scoring sections first. These are risk multipliers.
- Identify which warehouse flows are structurally compatible with automation.
- Avoid big-bang implementations until foundational gaps are closed.
- If you want help interpreting results or translating this score into a practical roadmap, an independent review can save time, money, and risk.

Use this ebook collaboratively.

Convene operations, IT, quality, procurement, inventory control, facilities, HR, and finance to get their input, then reconcile differences.

The most valuable outcome is not the Total Score itself, but a shared understanding of what must be true for automation to deliver sustained results with a high return on investment.

About GoBlock

GoBlock USA LLC is an independent consulting firm that partners with consumer products companies to design and implement warehouse technology the right way.

We work on the operator side, not the vendor side. We work to ensure the technology you choose actually performs in your operation.

Independent, operator-side warehouse consulting means our incentives are aligned with your operational outcomes. We benchmark your readiness, design to your constraints, and de-risk decisions with data, pilots, and staged deployments.

Whether you are exploring ASRS, AMRs, goods-to-person, automated packing, WMS, or WES/WCS orchestration, we bring a structured approach to readiness, vendor-neutral validation, and program governance.

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