



SUCCESS STORIES

Supply Center solutions

Getting all of your media and reagents from one place just makes sense, according to an operations manager for a rapidly growing start-up company

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—Operations manager, immuno-oncology and gene therapy company

The challenge

What’s at stake when you go to the fridge and find that what you’re looking for has expired? If it’s a critical reagent for an experiment in a lab, it means the loss of both the product and valuable time. If your sample is precious or your experiment is in progress, it means the entire project could be compromised.

That was one of the issues facing the operations manager of an immuno-oncology and gene therapy start-up. Founded in 2015, the company grew quickly, and in only 3 years it had become a challenge to ensure the continual supply of media components that were critical for day-to-day operations.

He explains that he “had to make sure each item in the inventory was within its expiration date, so everything was still fresh and usable. A couple of times we thought we had a bunch of product in stock, and it turned out that the stock was expiring, so we ran into trouble.”

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The challenge (continued)

When the company started, they had only a handful of employees working out of an incubator in a very small lab. There was no dedicated purchasing or operations personnel, so the operations manager was also taking care of both roles. Because they were small, the job was relatively easy to do. But by 2018, the company had 50 employees, and the scale of both operations and logistics had increased—yet in many ways, they still behaved like a start-up. “We were still experiencing growing pains, and I was still doing both purchasing and logistics,” he says.

The primary source of the company’s cell culture media, cell culture reagents, and other products was, and still is, Thermo Fisher Scientific. “Since Thermo Fisher has a very broad catalog,” he explains, “we usually can find a product for anything that we’re trying to do.”

But until his company implemented the Supply Center by Thermo Fisher Scientific, he had been ordering most of the products from Thermo Fisher himself. The company had a biweekly ordering process that took quite a lot of effort—constantly taking inventory of their stock, making a list of things to order, and placing the orders. It got to the point where researchers were often having a hard time getting what they needed on time because they’d have to take inventory themselves if they wanted something more quickly.

The solution

The operations manager was charged with making the decision to implement the Supply Center. His reason for

choosing the Supply Center solution over investigating other suppliers was straightforward: “We were already using a lot of products from Thermo Fisher brands—most of our media and reagents, and even biosafety cabinets, incubators, centrifuges, and so on,” he says. “So it made good sense to consider the Supply Center.”

Still, he and his team put a lot of thought into the implementation. They wanted to know exactly what to expect, so they asked a lot of questions of both their sales representative and the Supply Center team.

The company had several needs that ultimately led the operations manager to implement a Supply Center: First, they wanted to ensure they’d have a continuously available supply of the reagents critical to their day-to-day operations. Second, they needed to find a solution to the expired product issue. Lastly, scientists and their products were spread out across the company, which made inventorying and keeping up stock levels difficult.

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Once the decision was made, he explains, “the implementation agreement was straightforward and easy; we just signed it and moved forward quickly after that.” And in the spring of 2018 his company implemented their Supply Center, consisting of a -20°C freezer, a 4°C fridge, and a shelf for storing room-temperature supplies—all located together in one central area.

“This is a system that I think will scale with us as we grow, which is great. In fact, I wish I had known about it a few years ago,” he says, laughing. “I would recommend that anyone considering the Supply Center go for it right away.”

The solution (continued)

He appreciated the help he received in implementing the Supply Center: “Our representative did an awesome job of being super responsive. She was right on top of it. She could have easily said, ‘They’re smaller. We’re going to ignore this for a while,’ but she was very good with staying on top of everything and getting everything to work smoothly.”

The results

“The Supply Center has met our expectations; we haven’t been disappointed,” he says. “It was great to get everything going, and there have been no bumps in the road—the most important thing is we can now consolidate all of our products in one central, convenient location. “It’s worked great for everybody, including the scientists. They’re happy to have one common place where they can find exactly what they need.”

He explains that the Supply Center is useful because it puts his company on a routine; he’s especially pleased with the service component of the solution.

“Our sales representatives have been key in keeping us super happy.

It’s great having the Supply Center specialist come in once or twice a week. She’s really good. We have a list of commonly used supplies that we share with her. She’s able to inventory everything quickly, so it’s hands off for me—I don’t have to go and inventory stuff anymore. The orders are placed through a consultation with us, so we can get an idea of what’s happening every week without having to do all the work.”

The operations manager approves the orders, and the reps deliver the products and stock the Supply Center twice a week. “It’s very useful,” he says, “because if not, we would have to keep track of the expiration dates and keep up the stock levels. We don’t have to worry about those things now.” He also appreciates that the company is able to purchase all kinds of lab supplies and equipment through the Supply Center ordering process, which reduces shipping costs. “It’s just a win-win situation across the board,” he says. “It has added convenience for our labs and let us try a lot of products from Thermo Fisher.”

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