

## Embracing the Future of Beverage Distribution: We're Breaking Down Robotic Automation Strategies to Help You Succeed

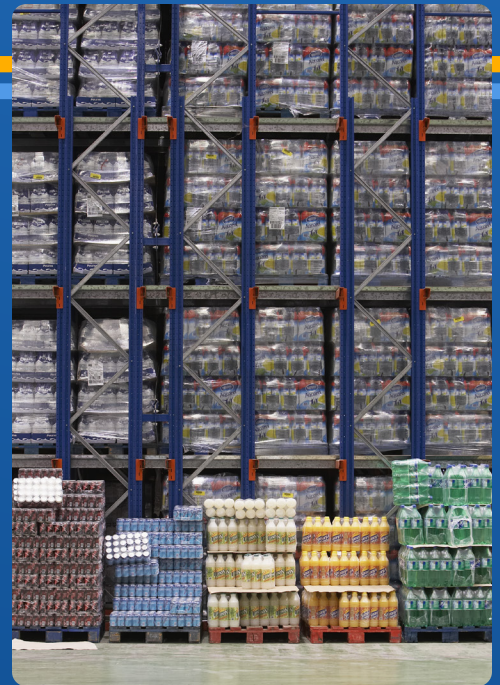


*Insights from Zac Boehm, Chief Automation Officer*

Beverage distribution is no longer a game of volume; it's a game of precision, speed, and adaptability. Whether you're delivering seasonal seltzers or fulfilling diverse direct-to-consumer (DTC) orders overnight, the industry is facing mounting pressure to move faster, handle more complexity, and do it all with fewer resources.

As SKU counts grow and labor markets tighten, traditional beverage fulfillment automation models are falling short. Everyone – including retailers, partners, and consumers expect higher accuracy, shorter delivery windows, and improved visibility. Meeting these demands can't happen in silos to be truly effective. That's why forward-thinking distributors seeking out long-term beverage warehouse automation strategies are moving beyond simple mechanization toward intelligent robotic orchestration.

At Hy-Tek Intralogistics, our teams address these challenges through two strategic frameworks: Hy-Flo™ for total high-throughput transformation and Hy-Sync™ for a phased, hybrid approach to optimization. Regardless of which framework you select, you can be confident that you're implementing a holistic solution for targeted warehouse automation for beverage companies.



### GROWING TRENDS AND INDUSTRY CHALLENGES

The beverage distribution automation landscape has become increasingly complex. As consumer demands evolve and product variety grows, companies must be agile enough to navigate new challenges while maintaining their operational efficiency.

#### 1. Exponential SKU Growth

As new brands, seasonal products, and personalized packaging emerge, managing a broad range of SKUs with varying demand patterns is becoming a reality. NBWA data indicates a typical beer distributor now manages approximately 37+ supplier relationships, ~280 brands, and more than 1,100 SKUs.

#### 2. Shifting Consumer Demands

Gen Z consumes less alcohol, particularly beer, compared to previous generations. This shift has pushed traditional beer distributors into the added complexity of wine and spirits to diversify their portfolios, further straining manual picking processes.

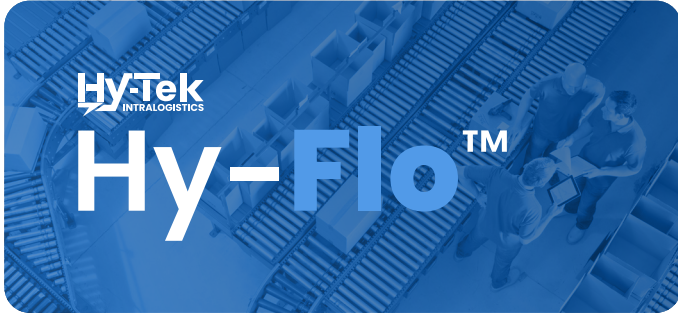
#### 3. Labor Scarcity and Cost

Recruiting and retaining warehouse workers is increasingly difficult. While beer wholesaling jobs have seen a steady increase post-pandemic, the physical nature of the work leads to high turnover. Beer distribution automation allows distributors to transition employees from repetitive tasks to enticing, higher-value roles.



## The Hy-Tek Solution Suite: Hy-Flo and Hy-Sync

While the most effective robotic strategies are individualized based on your particular needs, Hy-Tek provides two primary pathways for beverage distribution and warehouse automation.



### HY-FLO: THE FULL-SCALE AUTOMATION SOLUTION

Hy-Flo is designed for high-volume facilities—such as large-scale national distributors—seeking maximum density and throughput. Key features include:

- **Integrated Storage:** Uses Exotec's Skypod System for high-speed, high-density vertical racking.
- **End-to-End Robotics:** Features automated palletizing/depalletizing to eliminate manual handling.
- **Maximum Accessibility:** Enables 100% SKU accessibility in a minimal footprint, making it perfect for urban centers where real estate is more expensive.



### HY-SYNC: THE HYBRID "TOP-OFF" APPROACH

Hy-Sync is the ideal strategy for distributors who need to automate complex "long-tail" SKUs while maintaining manual processes for fast-movers.

- **Phased Transition:** Allows for a gradual introduction of robotic picking for beverage distributors into existing infrastructure with minimal disruption.
- **Targeted Picking:** Robotics consolidates the least efficient picks of a traditional manual process into a single destination, reducing the number of stops in a pick sequence, improving picking accuracy.
- **Flexible Scaling:** Systems can be ramped up by adding autonomous units (like LGVs) as demand grows.

## What's Next – AI and Robotic Vision: The Intelligent Edge

AI and robotic vision allow systems to "see" and understand their environment in real-time. In beverage warehouse automation, this provides:

- **Advanced Palletizing:** Robots analyze product shapes and sizes to ensure stable, mixed-SKU loads for transportation.
- **Quality Control:** AI-driven vision detects packaging defects or labeling inconsistencies before they reach the customer.
- **Reduced Engineering Workload:** AI removes the need to manually program depalletizing methods for every new SKU; the system analyzes the pallet as it is presented.

## Best-in-Class Orchestration via IntraOne™

Successful implementation depends on orchestration. Hy-Tek's IntraOne™ platform acts as the digital conductor, coordinating tasks between robots, humans, and legacy equipment, ensuring a holistic approach to your automation strategy and execution.

- **Real-Time Decision Making:** IntraOne optimizes task allocation to ensure remove bottlenecks between picking and staging.
- **Data-Driven Improvement:** By capturing operational data, IntraOne helps directors forecast demand spikes and empower predictive maintenance.

## Now is the Time to Invest in Automation

Beverage companies are facing mounting pressure to do more with less. Whether through the total transformation provided with Hy-Flo or the strategic hybrid integration of Hy-Sync, robotics provides a framework for agility, visibility and adaptability.

The future of beverage distribution automation isn't just about implementing a single solution—it is intelligent and built for the specific needs of your facility.

**Ready to start automating your beverage facility?** Hy-Tek Experts are ready to help you begin.



Connect with Zac Boehm, Chief Automation Officer, to learn how leading distributors are de-risking their automation investments.