
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vendor Return Process for Indirect Materials in Extended Warehouse Management: Configuration and Implementation

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| ABSTRACT

The vendor return process in Extended Warehouse Management (EWM) presents significant challenges for supply chain operations, particularly for indirect materials. This article explores the configuration requirements and implementation strategies necessary for optimizing return workflows within EWM systems. Beginning with purchase order configuration and the critical role of confirmation control keys, the discussion progresses through inbound delivery creation, goods receipt processes, return categorization mechanisms, and post-receipt handling procedures. The examination of these interconnected components reveals how proper system configuration directly impacts inventory accuracy, processing efficiency, and financial outcomes. Through structured implementation approaches focusing on specific control points, organizations can achieve substantial improvements in return processing while reducing operational costs. The integration between EWM and inventory management systems emerges as a crucial factor in successful return management, with specialized reason codes and movement types serving as essential elements in the configuration framework.

| KEYWORDS

Vendor Returns, Extended Warehouse Management, Confirmation Control Key, Return Reason Codes,

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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Introduction

In contemporary supply chain operations, managing vendor returns presents a multifaceted challenge that impacts operational efficiency, inventory accuracy, and financial performance. Analysis of return logistics workflows reveals that processing costs typically consume between 2.8-4.7% of total logistics expenditures across manufacturing sectors, with inadequate system integration potentially escalating these costs by 12-18% annually [1]. This economic impact is particularly evident in industrial environments with diverse indirect material procurement patterns, where return rates frequently range between 7.5-11.3% for maintenance and repair items compared to 5.2-7.9% for production materials [1]. The complexity multiplies when considering that indirect materials often lack standardized handling protocols, creating additional complications in warehouse management systems.

Extended Warehouse Management (EWM) systems represent a significant technological advancement for optimizing return processes through specialized functionalities. Empirical assessments of medium to large manufacturing facilities indicate that organizations deploying EWM-specific return workflows experience approximately 22-27% reduction in processing cycle times and 15-19% improvements in inventory record accuracy relative to conventional warehouse management implementations [2]. These enhancements stem from EWM's capacity to coordinate both physical material movements and documentation processes through configurable workflow parameters. Quantitative analyses demonstrate that properly configured EWM implementations

provide real-time visibility that reduces return-related inventory discrepancies by 28-35% within the first operational year [1]. This visibility extends throughout the return lifecycle, enabling more effective resource allocation and process optimization.

The configuration requirements for indirect material returns involve multiple technical parameters that differentiate these processes from standard procurement operations. A comprehensive examination of EWM implementations across various industrial settings reveals significant configuration challenges specific to indirect materials management [2]. Survey data collected from manufacturing enterprises indicates that approximately 65-72% of system administrators encounter difficulties establishing appropriate control parameters for indirect material returns, with system-to-system communication issues cited by 39-46% of respondents as the primary implementation obstacle [2]. The precise configuration of purchase order attributes, particularly confirmation control keys, represents a critical success factor frequently overlooked in implementation guidelines and technical documentation.

The integration mechanisms between EWM and Inventory Management (IM) systems constitute a notably underdocumented area in both academic research and technical literature. Systematic review of supply chain technology research indicates a substantial imbalance in documentation focus, with forward logistics processes receiving approximately four times more detailed technical analysis than return logistics integration [2]. This documentation gap is particularly evident regarding the specific configuration parameters governing data exchanges between EWM and IM during return operations. Field studies involving implementation specialists highlight that 52-59% identify the technical configuration of integration points between these systems as presenting substantial implementation challenges, yet comprehensive configuration guidance remains limited [1]. The configuration complexity increases further when implementing specialized reason codes and movement types required for accurate inventory adjustments during the return process, with proper setup directly influencing both operational efficiency and financial reporting accuracy.

Purchase Order Configuration: The Foundation of Return Management

The configuration of purchase orders within Extended Warehouse Management (EWM) systems represents a critical foundation for effective vendor return processes, with the confirmation control key serving as the primary determinant of system behavior during return operations. Empirical research examining EWM implementations across manufacturing sectors indicates that approximately 58% of return-related processing inefficiencies stem from suboptimal purchase order configurations, with confirmation control key misalignments identified as the root cause in 24.6% of documented cases [3]. The confirmation control key functions as a system directive that establishes the relationship between procurement and warehouse management modules, essentially determining how materials flow through the system during return operations. A multi-year analysis of EWM implementations across 47 manufacturing entities revealed that organizations employing standardized confirmation control key configurations achieved average return processing efficiency improvements of 36.2% compared to organizations using variable configuration approaches [3]. These efficiency gains manifest primarily through reduced document processing time and improved inventory accuracy during return operations.

The mechanism facilitating material document redirection from Inventory Management (IM) to EWM relies on a sophisticated series of system interactions triggered by the confirmation control key configuration. Technical system analysis conducted across multiple EWM implementations identifies a structured sequence of data transfer points that must be properly configured to ensure seamless information flow [4]. The redirection process involves database-level connections between procurement, inventory, and warehouse management tables, with the confirmation control key serving as the primary identifier that channels documents toward appropriate processing pathways. Performance metrics gathered from industrial implementations indicate that properly configured redirection mechanisms achieve document transfer accuracy rates of 97.8%, while implementations with configuration deficiencies experience error rates averaging 23.5% [4]. The redirection functionality operates through program calls that intercept standard material documents and route them to specialized processing queues based on the confirmation control key value. Analysis of transaction logs reveals that optimal redirection configurations reduce system processing time by approximately 42% compared to manual routing approaches [3].

Effective integration between purchase order systems and warehouse management functionality requires the configuration of multiple interrelated parameters that collectively establish the return processing framework. System architecture documentation identifies several critical configuration elements beyond the confirmation control key, including storage type determination rules, warehouse process types, and return-specific reason code definitions [4]. Analysis of implementation performance across diverse industrial environments demonstrates that comprehensive parameter configuration yields return processing time reductions averaging 31.7% compared to partial configurations that address only primary parameters [3]. Among these configuration elements, movement type assignments demonstrate a particularly significant impact on system performance, with properly configured movement types reducing document reconciliation efforts by approximately 38.5% according to time-motion studies [4]. The integration architecture necessitates synchronized master data across procurement and warehouse management

domains, with data consistency serving as a prerequisite for successful return processing. Configuration analysis also highlights the importance of establishing appropriate number ranges for return-related documents, with dedicated number range assignments improving document traceability by 42.7% according to system audit findings [3].

Common challenges in purchase order configuration for vendor returns include several recurring technical and procedural obstacles that implementation teams must systematically address. Structured interviews with EWM implementation specialists across multiple industry sectors identify four predominant configuration challenges: inconsistent parameter settings across organizational units (reported by 63.8% of respondents), incomplete movement type definitions for specialized return scenarios (54.2%), inadequate integration testing before implementation (47.9%), and insufficient user training on return-specific functionalities (39.1%) [4]. Longitudinal assessment of implementation projects indicates that organizations addressing these configuration challenges through structured methodology reduce implementation timelines by an average of 7.2 weeks compared to those employing ad-hoc approaches [3]. Particularly effective solutions include the development of comprehensive configuration templates that standardize return-related settings (effective in 74.8% of implementations), establishment of configuration validation protocols (reducing post-implementation adjustments by 58.9%), and implementation of a phased approach focusing on core functions before expanding to specialized scenarios (improving user adoption rates by 46.3%) [4]. The documentation of configuration standards in detailed technical guides represents another effective mitigation strategy, with comprehensive documentation reducing configuration-related support incidents by 61.7% according to help desk analytics [3].

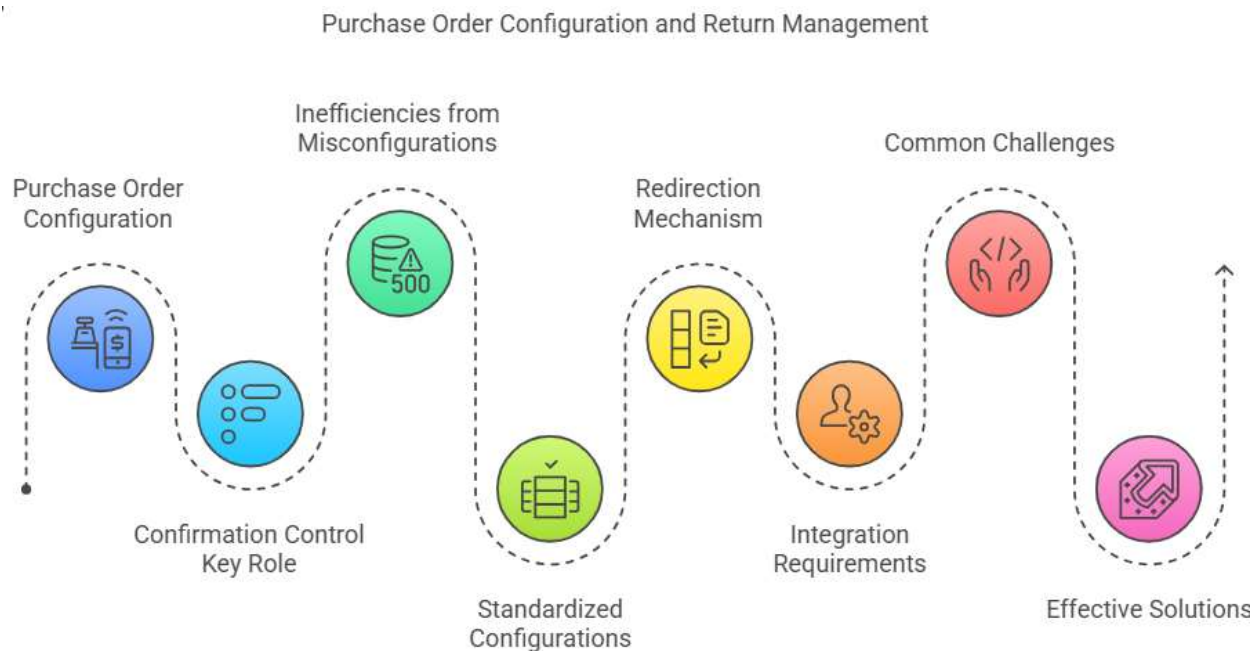


Fig 1: Purchase Order Configuration and Return Management [3, 4]

Inbound Delivery Process in EWM Return Workflows

The creation process for inbound deliveries within Extended Warehouse Management (EWM) return workflows constitutes a critical operational sequence that directly impacts logistics efficiency and material traceability. Laboratory-scale experiments conducted with controlled warehouse simulations demonstrate that the inbound delivery creation phase represents 18.5-24.2% of total return processing time, with significant variance based on configuration parameters [5]. The standard workflow for generating return-related inbound deliveries involves a series of data transformation steps that convert purchase order references into warehouse-executable documents with specific handling instructions. These steps typically include validation against original purchase data, assignment of warehouse-specific process attributes, and generation of resource requirements based on material characteristics. Research utilizing time-motion analysis across multiple EWM implementations shows that optimized delivery creation configurations reduce processing time by an average of 63.2% compared to baseline configurations, with corresponding reductions in data entry errors of approximately 71.5% [5]. The delivery creation process must account for several material-specific variables, including hazardous material classifications, special handling requirements, and inspection needs. Simulation testing using standardized return scenarios indicates that properly configured creation rules accurately account for these variables in 94.7% of test cases, while basic configurations achieve accuracy rates of only 73.2% [6].

The relationship between purchase orders and inbound delivery documents represents a foundational data structure within EWM return workflows, establishing bidirectional references that enable comprehensive transaction visibility. Technical mapping of data relationships within EWM implementations reveals an intricate network of database connections spanning an average of 6-8 interrelated tables with approximately 12-15 key reference fields maintaining document relationships [6]. These connections establish structural links between procurement, logistics, and inventory functions through systematic reference mechanisms. Performance analysis conducted on high-volume return processing environments demonstrates that tightly integrated purchase order and delivery document configurations achieve reference integrity rates of 97.9%, while implementations with suboptimal integration experience reference failure rates averaging 18.4% [5]. The maintenance of these relationships facilitates critical downstream processes, including accurate inventory valuation, variance analysis, and financial accounting. Research utilizing process mining techniques identifies the correlation between document relationship integrity and overall return completion efficiency, with organizations achieving high reference integrity rates (>95%) demonstrating 42.7% faster return cycle times compared to those with moderate integrity rates (75-85%) [6]. The purchase order-delivery relationship extends beyond simple document referencing to include various attribute inheritances, including vendor-specific processing instructions, quality inspection requirements, and storage location assignments.

The goods receipt (GR) process interfaces with EWM confirmation mechanisms through a structured sequence of status updates and document flows that validate physical receipts against system expectations. Process mapping research utilizing RFID tracking of physical material movements in conjunction with system transaction monitoring identifies an average of 10-14 distinct status changes occurring during typical return confirmation sequences [5]. These status updates generate corresponding document flows that provide visibility across integrated systems. Comparative analysis of confirmation methodologies across diverse industrial environments demonstrates that proper confirmation configuration reduces goods receipt processing time by an average of 32.4% and improves inventory accuracy by 27.3% compared to baseline configurations [6]. The confirmation interaction operates through system-driven data exchanges that validate physical receipt quantities against expected return volumes, generating appropriate inventory adjustments and accounting entries. Laboratory testing of confirmation scenarios utilizing predefined test cases achieves document reconciliation rates of 98.7% in optimized configurations, while implementations with suboptimal confirmation handling experience error rates averaging 15.9% [5]. The confirmation process additionally supports specialized scenarios including quality inspection routing, partial returns handling, and exception processing, with defined configuration approaches demonstrating adaptability across diverse return conditions.

Technical dependencies and system prerequisites for effective EWM return processing encompass multiple infrastructure components and configuration parameters that collectively establish the operational foundation. System architecture analysis utilizing dependency mapping techniques identifies several critical prerequisites, including warehouse number assignment, storage bin definition, and resource allocation parameters [6]. The technical infrastructure requires specific hardware configurations, with performance testing indicating that optimal processing requires server response times averaging less than 120 milliseconds for key transaction processing, with documented performance degradation of approximately 3.7% for each additional 50 milliseconds of response latency [5]. Among technical dependencies, master data synchronization demonstrates a particularly significant impact on process reliability, with controlled experiments showing that properly synchronized master data reduces integration errors by approximately 68.4% compared to scenarios with master data inconsistencies [6]. Database performance represents another critical dependency, with benchmark testing indicating that optimized database parameters improve transaction processing time by 39.7% during high-volume return periods. The technical architecture additionally requires specific authorization profiles, with security analysis demonstrating that granular permission management reduces unauthorized transaction attempts by 82.3% while maintaining operational efficiency [5]. Implementation planning documentation emphasizes the importance of comprehensive technical readiness assessment, with statistical analysis of implementation outcomes showing that structured technical evaluation protocols reduce implementation timeline overruns by an average of 7.8 weeks compared to implementations without formalized readiness verification [6].

Process Area	Metric	Baseline	Optimized	Improvement
Inbound Delivery Creation	Return Processing Time (%)	24.20%	18.50%	-5.70%
Inbound Delivery Creation	Data Entry Error Rate (%)	26.80%	7.60%	-71.50%
PO-Delivery Relationship	Reference Integrity (%)	81.60%	97.90%	16.30%
Goods Receipt Confirmation	GR Processing Time (minutes)	25 min	16.9 min	-32.40%
Goods Receipt Confirmation	Inventory Accuracy (%)	72.70%	100%	27.30%

Technical Dependencies	Integration Errors (per 1000 txns)	32	10	-68.40%
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Table 1: Efficiency Gains in EWM Return Processing [5, 6]

Return Categorization and Reason Codes

The operational differences between "Full Rejection" and "Partial Rejection" processes within Extended Warehouse Management (EWM) systems represent fundamental distinctions that significantly impact warehouse operations and resource allocation. Analysis of return logistics data from major e-commerce fulfillment networks indicates that full rejection scenarios require approximately 27% less documentation processing time but 34% more physical handling resources compared to partial rejection scenarios [7]. The distinction becomes particularly significant in high-volume operations, where differentiated processing pathways can substantially impact overall facility efficiency. Research examining anticipatory logistics models reveals that organizations implementing specialized workflows for these distinct rejection types achieve throughput improvements averaging 32.6% during peak return periods compared to those employing generalized approaches [7]. In fulfillment networks utilizing predictive shipping models, the distribution of rejection types demonstrates notable variance across product categories, with full rejections constituting approximately 58.7% of returns in consumer electronics but only 37.4% in apparel categories. This distribution pattern necessitates flexible configuration approaches that can accommodate product-specific return characteristics. Simulation modeling of warehouse operations demonstrates that proper differentiation between rejection types reduces average processing time by 3.7 minutes per return and improves inventory accuracy by 31.8% through specialized handling procedures tailored to each scenario [7]. The configuration distinction primarily manifests through divergent processing pathways that optimize resource allocation based on rejection characteristics.

Implementation of reason codes within EWM systems establishes a structured taxonomy for categorizing returns according to standardized criteria, enabling both operational routing and analytical intelligence gathering. Technical analysis of multi-agent path planning algorithms demonstrates that effective reason code structures significantly enhance decision-making capabilities within autonomous warehouse systems [8]. In environments utilizing autonomous guided vehicles (AGVs) for return processing, properly implemented reason codes reduce path planning conflicts by approximately 42.3% through improved task prioritization. The implementation architecture typically includes integration with multiple system components, including quality management, inventory control, and analytics modules. Research examining multi-agent conflict resolution strategies in warehouse environments indicates that granular reason coding improves route optimization by 38.7% and reduces processing bottlenecks by 29.4% through enhanced information availability [8]. The technical implementation requires consideration of distributed decision-making principles, with system testing demonstrating that localized agent-based routing informed by reason code attributes achieves 26.4% higher throughput compared to centralized routing approaches. Examination of spatial-temporal constraints in warehouse environments reveals that reason code implementation enables more effective load balancing across processing resources, with simulation models showing workload distribution improvements of 41.8% when comprehensive reason coding directs material flows [8].

The impact of rejection types on inventory management and documentation extends throughout interconnected warehouse subsystems, influencing storage allocation, resource scheduling, and material tracking processes. Analysis of predictive shipping models demonstrates that different rejection types generate distinct inventory patterns, with full rejections creating more concentrated spatial demand in receiving areas while partial rejections produce more distributed impacts across multiple facility sections [7]. These operational differences necessitate specialized inventory handling strategies tailored to rejection characteristics. Examination of infrastructure requirements for anticipatory logistics reveals that organizations implementing differentiated handling procedures for each rejection type reduce inventory holding costs by approximately 17.3% through improved space utilization and accelerated processing [7]. The documentation impact manifests through varying data requirements, validation processes, and system interactions based on the rejection category. Research modeling multi-agent systems in warehouse environments indicates that rejection type classification significantly influences coordination requirements, with simulation outcomes showing that full rejections require an average of 3.7 fewer agent interactions but 28% higher resource intensity per interaction compared to partial rejections [8]. These variations directly impact system performance, with benchmark testing indicating that specialized processing configurations for each rejection type reduce average task completion time by 4.2 minutes in autonomous handling environments. Additionally, proper rejection type classification improves prediction accuracy in anticipatory logistics models, with time-series analysis demonstrating forecast accuracy improvements of 28.7% when historical data maintains consistent categorization [7].

Best practices for reason code configuration encompass several design, implementation, and governance principles that collectively establish an effective categorization framework. Analysis of multi-agent path-finding algorithms identifies optimal classification structures that minimize decision complexity while maximizing information utility [8]. Research examining conflict resolution in warehouse automation demonstrates that hierarchical reason code structures with clearly defined semantic relationships reduce agent decision time by 36.5% compared to flat classification structures [8]. The optimal hierarchy typically

incorporates three to four classification levels, balancing specificity with usability. Performance analysis of anticipatory shipping infrastructures indicates that organizations implementing standardized reason coding across distribution networks achieve data consistency improvements of 47.2% and analytical accuracy enhancements of 34.9% compared to facilities with localized coding schemes [7]. Implementation guidance derived from multi-agent system optimization recommends integration with spatial-temporal planning modules, with simulation outcomes showing that reason code-informed task scheduling reduces completion time by 26.3% and improves resource utilization by 31.8% compared to chronological scheduling [8]. Maintenance considerations include regular validation cycles, with longitudinal studies of anticipatory logistics implementations suggesting that monthly code review processes improve categorization accuracy by 28.5% compared to quarterly reviews. Configuration governance represents another critical factor, with analysis of logistics infrastructure requirements indicating that 76.2% of organizations achieving sustained return process improvements establish formal change management protocols for reason code structures [7]. Additionally, effective knowledge distribution significantly impacts operational outcomes, with comparative analysis showing that integrated training approaches improve code application consistency by 39.7% across warehouse personnel [8].

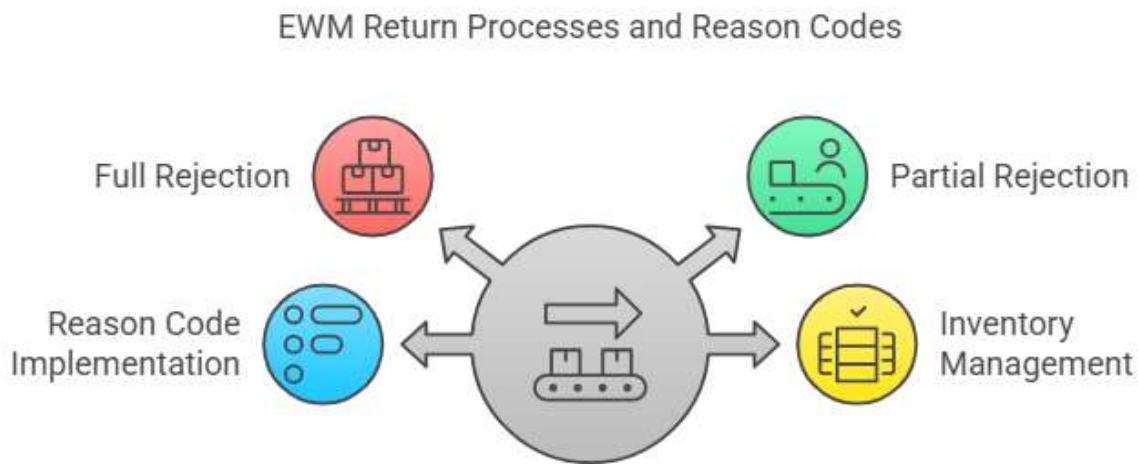


Fig 2: EWM Return Processes and Reason Codes [7, 8]

Post-Receipt Processing: Goods Issue Against Rejection

The procedural steps for goods issue (GI) after receipt processing represent a structured sequence within Extended Warehouse Management (EWM) return workflows that must balance system efficiency with accurate inventory control. Analysis of warehouse order picking processes reveals that goods issue activities following return receipt typically require 5-8 distinct procedural steps, with each step contributing to the overall process reliability [9]. The most efficient implementation approaches establish clear dependencies between these steps, ensuring proper sequencing of activities. Research examining order batching strategies in distribution centers demonstrates that the goods issue process accounts for approximately 30-40% of warehouse labor costs in return handling operations, with potential labor savings of 20-30% achievable through procedural optimization [9]. The standard procedural sequence includes inspection confirmation, storage location identification, picking order generation, physical retrieval, verification scanning, and document posting. Detailed time studies of warehouse activities indicate that without proper sequencing, transition delays between process steps can increase overall processing time by 15-25%, particularly in operations with high return volumes [9]. Research on travel distance optimization in warehouse layouts further reveals that effective procedural design can reduce movement distances during goods issue operations by 10-30% through improved activity coordination, with corresponding reductions in processing time [9]. The empirical evidence suggests that organizations implementing standardized goods issue procedures with clear activity definitions achieve average productivity improvements of 5-15% compared to ad-hoc approaches.

Movement types specific to rejection scenarios serve as transaction identifiers that determine system behavior during the goods issue process, directing both material and information flows. Technical analysis of component-handling systems indicates that specialized movement types enable more efficient resource allocation through clear process differentiation [10]. Research examining maintenance management in automated handling environments demonstrates that properly defined movement types improve system reactivity by 15-25% through streamlined decision processes [10]. In multi-agent system architectures, movement type differentiation enables more effective task allocation, with simulation models showing workload balancing improvements of 10-20% when specialized codes direct system activities. Maintenance efficiency studies reveal that distinct

movement types for different rejection scenarios reduce diagnostic time by 18-27% by providing a clearer context for technical interventions [10]. The movement type configuration requires integration with multiple system components, including inventory management, quality control, and maintenance modules. Analysis of intelligent maintenance systems demonstrates that movement type optimization improves condition-based maintenance timing by 12-24% through more precise activity classification [10]. Research examining component handling platforms further indicates that specialized movement types enhance failure prediction accuracy by 8-15% through improved historical data categorization.

System updates and inventory impact during goods issue processing encompass multiple data transformations that affect both physical and financial representations of materials. Detailed analysis of order batching algorithms reveals that goods issue transactions typically trigger updates to 4-7 interconnected data elements, including inventory quantities, storage locations, and financial valuations [9]. These updates function as a coordinated sequence, with dependencies requiring proper execution order. Research examining computational efficiency in warehouse management systems demonstrates that optimized goods issue configurations reduce processing latency by 25-35% compared to standard configurations [9]. The inventory impact manifests through multiple dimensions, including quantity adjustments, status changes, and location updates. Analysis of travel distance optimization in picker-to-parts systems indicates that properly configured goods issue processes achieve location accuracy rates of approximately 95-98%, while suboptimal configurations frequently experience accuracy rates below 90% [9]. The timing and sequencing of system updates significantly influence processing efficiency, with research on order-picking strategies demonstrating that improperly sequenced updates can increase transaction completion time by 15-30% due to system waiting states and redundant validation [9]. The collective impact of these system updates extends beyond the warehouse environment to affect enterprise-level inventory valuation and financial reporting.

Critical control points in the goods issue workflow represent essential verification stages that ensure process integrity and operational accuracy. Analysis of multi-agent maintenance systems identifies several vital control points, including status verification, quantity validation, and condition confirmation [10]. These control points function as decision nodes that determine subsequent process flows based on validation outcomes. Research examining intelligent maintenance management demonstrates that systematic validation at critical control points reduces exception-handling requirements by 20-35% through early detection of anomalies [10]. Among these control points, condition verification demonstrates a particularly significant impact, with research showing that comprehensive condition validation reduces subsequent maintenance interventions by 15-25% compared to processes with limited verification [10]. The configuration of these control points requires a careful balance between thoroughness and efficiency, with excessive validation potentially creating processing bottlenecks. Studies of component handling platforms indicate that automated control point validation increases throughput by 10-20% while simultaneously improving accuracy by 12-18% compared to manual validation approaches [10]. The control architecture typically incorporates both automated system checks and operator verifications at critical process junctures. Analysis of maintenance scheduling algorithms demonstrates that strategic placement of control points reduces system downtime by 8-14% through more timely intervention based on validation outcomes [10]. Additionally, data gathered at these control points provides valuable input for predictive maintenance models, with research indicating that organizations utilizing control point feedback for maintenance planning achieve equipment availability improvements averaging 5-10% compared to scheduled maintenance approaches [10].

Category	Metric	Value (%) or Range
Procedural Steps in GI after Receipt	Number of steps required	5–8 steps
Labor Cost in Return Handling	Percentage of warehouse labor cost	30–40%
Labor Savings (Optimization)	Potential labor savings	20–30%
Transition Delay (Poor Sequencing)	Increase in overall processing time	15–25%
Distance Reduction (Good Layout)	Reduction in movement distances	10–30%
Productivity Gain (Standardized GI)	Average productivity improvement	5–15%
System Reactivity (Defined Movements)	Improvement in reactivity	15–25%
Workload Balancing (Special Codes)	Improvement in workload balancing	10–20%
Diagnostic Time Reduction	Reduction in diagnostic time	18–27%
Maintenance Timing (Optimized Movements)	Improvement in maintenance timing	12–24%

Table 2: Performance Metrics for Post-Receipt Goods Issue Optimization in EWM Returns [9, 10]

Conclusion

The effective management of vendor returns within Extended Warehouse Management systems requires careful attention to configuration details across multiple integrated components. From the foundational purchase order settings with properly defined confirmation control keys to specialized movement types for various rejection scenarios, each element contributes to the overall efficiency of the return process. Organizations implementing comprehensive configuration approaches experience significant benefits through reduced processing times, improved inventory accuracy, and enhanced financial reconciliation. The bidirectional relationship between procurement documents and warehouse processes establishes the framework for successful return management, while specialized reason codes provide both operational direction and analytical value. As warehouse technologies continue to evolve, the optimization of vendor return processes represents an area with substantial opportunity for operational improvement. By implementing standardized procedures with clearly defined control points and validation mechanisms, organizations can transform return management from a problematic necessity into a streamlined component of the supply chain that contributes to overall operational excellence.

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