The new inventory operations management

ORDER MANAGEMENT | WAREHOUSE OPS | VIN TRACKING | REAL-TIME DATA

Operational Excellence in Inventory Management: How a Leading Motorhome Dealership Achieved 45% Faster Order Cycles on a Native Salesforce Platform

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New Zealand's most ambitious luxury motorhome dealership is killing off two traditional and outmoded business concepts: the spreadsheet and the calendar-driven purchase order.

The client — now the country's largest authorised distributor of premium German motorhome brands — imports 80 to 90 high-value units every year from a state-of-the-art flagship showroom. The organisation has set an ambitious goal: welcoming 20,000 customers by 2030. That goal demands operational infrastructure that scales without proportional headcount growth. What the client had instead was a patchwork of manual processes, daily spreadsheet updates, and three disconnected systems that could not talk to each other.

Traditional inventory management — aligned with weekly purchase-order runs, manual BIN searches, and spreadsheet-based stock counts — is an unresponsive model organised around internal convenience, not customer experience. It does not account for the daily operational moments that define a premium brand's service promise. Increasingly, customers buying a €150,000 motorhome expect the same seamless, real-time responsiveness they experience from digital-native retailers.

As the pressure mounted to scale without sacrificing the client's brand promise, the solution needed to be native to their existing Salesforce environment — eliminating integration complexity and enabling immediate adoption. Arka Inventory was that solution.

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The Diagnostic: Four interconnected failures

McKinsey's research on operational transformations consistently shows that organisations that address root-cause system failures — rather than patching individual symptoms — are more than twice as likely to sustain efficiency gains. For this client, the diagnostic revealed four distinct but deeply interconnected failures.

- **Manual order processing.** Order-to-delivery cycle times exceeded 72 hours for standard operations. Each order required between 8 and 12 discrete manual data-entry steps, creating compounding opportunities for error at every handoff between sales, purchasing, and warehouse teams.
- **No real-time inventory visibility.** There was no unified view of motorhome stock across the two showroom locations. Teams relied on spreadsheets refreshed once daily to track stock, BIN locations, and VIN numbers — a model that guaranteed decisions were always made on stale information.
- **Fragmented workflows.** Order management, purchase planning, and warehouse operations were three separate, disconnected processes. Every junction between them required a manual handoff, adding friction and delay to every transaction.

- **Limited scalability.** The arithmetic was blunt: existing systems could not absorb the transaction volume implied by 20,000 customers without a proportional increase in operational headcount — precisely the model the client needed to escape.

These four failures directly threatened the client's brand promise of exceptional customer support and operational reliability. The organisation needed a modern, integrated inventory solution deployable on Salesforce — their central business platform — without the cost and disruption of a full ERP replacement.

Exhibit

Arka Inventory implementation: operational results for a Leading Motorhome Dealership

Metric	Before Arka	After Arka	Improvement
Order-to-Delivery Cycle Time	72+ hours	39 hours	↓ **46%**
Manual Steps per Order	8–12 steps	2–3 steps	↓ **75%**
Inventory Visibility	Spreadsheet / daily	Real-time dashboard	**100% live**
Order Accuracy Rate	94.8%	99.2%	↑ **4.4 pp**
Time to Locate Inventory (BIN)	12–15 minutes	2–3 minutes	↓ **80%**

[1] Order-to-delivery cycle measured from confirmed customer order to warehouse pick-and-ship trigger. Averages across all unit types, June 2025–June 2026.
[2] Order accuracy rate defined as orders completed without rework or correction required post-despatch.
SOURCE: Client operational data, pre- and post-Arka implementation — June 2026

Becoming receptive: real-time visibility as a competitive asset

To build an organisation that operates in real time, Arka Inventory deployed five native Salesforce capabilities that together close every gap in the diagnostic. The critical design choice was native deployment: rather than building a middleware layer between Salesforce and a separate inventory system, Arka lives entirely within the Salesforce environment. Users work within a single, familiar platform. There is no data reconciliation, no integration overhead, no duplicate entry.

- **Order Creation and Outbound Management.** The unified order creation workflow allows sales teams to select motorhomes and accessories based on customer requirements. Once an order is confirmed, the system automatically generates outbound lines, displaying only inventory-tracked items with real-time availability — eliminating the risk of selling stock that does not exist or has already been committed.
- **Intelligent Back Order and Purchase Automation.** When inventory is insufficient, teams select outbound lines and create back orders with a single click. Arka automatically generates purchase orders, removing manual PO creation entirely and reducing supply chain delays. A Southeast Asian telecom player that deployed a similar single-click next-action model boosted upsell revenue from existing customers by 30 percent within 12 months.
- **Warehouse and BIN Location Management.** Received items are automatically assigned to BIN locations, creating a precise real-time map of physical warehouse stock. The system enables efficient picking and receiving workflows, reducing the average time to locate inventory from 12–15 minutes to 2–3 minutes.
- **Serial and VIN Tracking.** For high-value motorhomes, Arka captures VIN numbers at the purchase order level. Upon receiving, the system associates VINs with specific pallets and inventory records, enabling full traceability and supporting warranty management, compliance reporting, and customer service operations across the product lifecycle.
- **Real-Time Inventory Visibility and Commitment.** Availability is automatically updated upon receiving completion. When order status reaches ‘Arrived,’ outbound lines are automatically committed, triggering picking and shipping workflows. Real-time dashboards provide instant visibility into stock levels across all locations — replacing the daily spreadsheet refresh entirely.

> ***Rather than investing in complex demand forecasting, real-time inventory visibility enabled the client to make reactive, data-driven decisions based on actual stock and orders.***

The choice to prioritise real-time visibility over demand-forecasting complexity is deliberate and instructive. For businesses with limited SKU counts and high per-unit value — where each unit may represent €150,000 or more — knowing precisely what is in stock and committed today is more valuable than probabilistic forecasts of what might be needed in 90 days. Reactive, data-driven decisions beat forecasts when the cost of a wrong forecast is a misallocated unit sitting in a warehouse for six months.

Becoming responsive: the 39-hour order cycle

Being responsive is about having the systems, workflows, and inventory intelligence in place to react with precision when a customer commits. Too many dealerships and distributors have the data but fail to get it out of their systems and into the hands of frontline teams quickly enough to drive better, faster, and more accurate transactions. The objective of responsiveness here is to ensure that every order — from the moment a customer signs to the moment a motorhome is allocated, picked, and prepared for delivery — flows without manual intervention.

The results are measurable. Order-to-delivery cycle time fell from 72+ hours to 39 hours — a 46 percent reduction. Order accuracy improved from 94.8 percent to 99.2 percent. Manual data-entry steps per order dropped from 8–12 to just 2–3. These are not marginal gains. They are structural changes to how the business operates.

Responsiveness is not limited to the warehouse floor. Arka's integration with Salesforce CRM means that customer-facing sales staff can see live inventory availability during a customer conversation — no more promises made on the basis of yesterday's spreadsheet. The result is a material improvement in the client's brand promise: the premium, reliable service that defines this dealership in the New Zealand market.

Building the right capabilities

This implementation offers four transferable principles for any organisation managing high-value, low-SKU inventory across multiple locations. These are not technology recommendations — they are organisational design principles that explain why this implementation succeeded where generic ERP deployments consistently fail.

- **Get your inventory data house in order.** Often the best operational triggers are behavioural touchpoint data already available but not organised or accessible in close to real time. Event trigger data — a customer purchase of a related accessory, a VIN matched to a warranty claim — has been shown to be five to ten times more predictive and powerful than statically appended data. Proven analytical platforms can track the occurrence of patterns across channels, so the organisation can treat flagged inventory or customer interactions differently. A warehouse team that receives an alert when a high-value unit is within 48 hours of its committed delivery date, for example, can proactively resolve picking issues before they become customer problems.
- **Arm your channels with real-time intelligence.** Often organisations invest in sophisticated inventory systems that stay hidden in back-office databases, used only during periodic stock-takes or quarterly reporting. This is a missed opportunity to arm frontline sales and service staff with detailed, relevant, and useful inventory intelligence. Customer-facing personnel should be equipped with live availability, committed stock status, and incoming PO timelines — accompanied by a recommended action, such as offering an available equivalent unit or a confirmed delivery date. The client's integration of Arka with Salesforce CRM achieves precisely this: sales staff see the same live picture as the warehouse.
- **Measure operational lifetime value, not just transaction accuracy.** One of the hardest changes to adapt to in modern inventory management is moving measurement from short-term transaction accuracy to metrics that reflect the full business impact of operational excellence. Measurement needs to move from blunt KPIs like 'orders shipped on time' to a more sophisticated set of metrics: 'reduction in order rework cost,' 'customer retention rate attributable to fulfilment accuracy,' and 'margin impact of inventory carrying cost reduction.' As the interaction between operations and customer experience becomes more integrated, the measurement of those interactions needs to become more granular, with the goal of learning and then driving continuous improvement.
- **Upgrade operational talent — raise the data IQ of the organisation.** Making real-time inventory intelligence work requires more than software deployment. It requires people who can bridge operational and analytical functions. Companies need to fill roles with specific skill sets: warehouse managers who understand data dashboards, sales staff who can interpret live inventory commitment signals, and operations leaders who can translate system outputs into customer experience decisions. Specialist competence is essential but not sufficient. Look for individuals who are also translators — able to bridge the gap between data and frontline action with clarity and speed.

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Industry applicability

This engagement demonstrates a model applicable across specialised dealership, distribution, and high-value product industries. Three segments share the same structural characteristics:

- **Niche and specialist retailers.** Businesses with limited SKU counts but high per-unit value — automotive, marine, luxury goods, industrial equipment — face the same core challenge: each unit is a significant balance sheet item that demands precise location tracking, full serial-number traceability, and real-time commitment management.
- **Complex fulfilment operations.** Companies managing made-to-order, build-to-stock, or mixed inventory models gain the highest leverage from back-order and purchase-order automation. The ability to trigger a PO with a single click — and have that PO automatically associated with the originating customer order — is transformative at scale.
- **Multi-location distributors.** Distributors and retailers with multiple warehouses requiring coordinated inventory management find that real-time visibility across locations is the primary value driver. The elimination of the daily spreadsheet reconciliation between locations alone can recover hours of management time every week.

This engagement demonstrates how modern inventory management — deployed natively on Salesforce — can drive operational excellence while supporting ambitious growth targets. By unifying order management, purchase automation, and warehouse operations, the organisation achieved a 45 percent reduction in order cycle time, improved accuracy to 99.2 percent, and built the operational foundation required to scale to 20,000 customers by 2030.

The new inventory management model is about understanding operational state in real time, then reacting quickly, accurately, and profitably. Operations leaders who can unify their inventory, purchasing, and warehouse functions on a single platform — eliminating the manual handoffs that compound into hours of wasted cycle time — will have the structural edge as the market for premium goods continues to grow.

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