

There is no such thing as a warehouse twin

A practical guide to multi-site SAP EWM
rollouts that respect reality





Introduction

Rolling SAP Extended Warehouse Management (EWM) out across multiple distribution centres is often seen as an exercise in efficiency: reuse what exists, minimise deviation and move quickly from site to site.

In theory, this approach promises speed, cost control and consistency.

In practice, it is one of the most common causes of underperforming warehouse systems.

This whitepaper explores why **blind reuse is risky**, how experienced teams distinguish between *patterns that scale* and *assumptions that don't*, and what it really takes to scale SAP EWM across sites **without copy-pasting failure**.

The myth of the repeatable warehouse

Many organisations begin with an understandable assumption: “If it works in one warehouse, it should work in the next.” From a system perspective, this feels logical. From an operational perspective, it is almost never true.

Warehouses differ in:

Physical layout

Product mix

Order profiles

Labour skill and turnover

Inbound behaviour

Customer service promises

“SAP EWM will tolerate these differences. Templates will not”.



Damon Conway,
Senior Solution Architect, TCT

Why template driven rollouts struggle

Template led approaches often optimise for:

Speed of deployment

Configuration reuse

Simplified governance

What they tend to under weight is operational nuance. Common failure modes include:

Processes that technically work but fight the building

RF flows that assume different labour capability

Storage strategies that ignore volume distribution

Replenishment designs that over or under react

Exception handling that worked “over there” but not “here”

“Nothing is broken yet productivity drops and workarounds emerge.”



Andy Taberner,
Senior Solutions Architect, TCT.

Reuse is not binary

Experienced SAP EWM teams do not ask: “Can we re use this?” They ask: “What exactly are we re using, and why?” Re use exists at several levels:

Conceptual patterns

Design principles

Configuration approaches

Development objects

Master data structures

Treating all of these as equally reusable is where problems begin.

What does scale well

Across multi site EWM programmes, certain things scale extremely well.

Design Principles

Beliefs such as:

Minimise operator decision making

Keep exceptions inside the system

Favour consistency over elegance

Design for recovery, not perfection

These principles travel better than any configuration.

Process patterns (not process copies)

High level patterns scale when applied with judgement:

Order based replenishment where order density exists

Wave management where departure profiles justify it

Fixed pick faces where velocity supports them

Patterns are adaptable. Copies are brittle.

Governance and decision frameworks

Structured ways of deciding:

When to stay standard

When to enhance

When to defer capability

When to accept divergence

These accelerate rollouts more reliably than technical reuse.

What rarely scales without rethinking

Other elements almost always need site level reconsideration.

Storage design

Even with identical product sets, storage behaviour varies by:

Ceiling height

Aisle width

Equipment mix

Fire and safety constraints

Goods in and goods out adjacency

Reusing storage types without physical validation is one of the fastest ways to embed inefficiency.

RF and operator interaction

RF flows that work well with experienced, long tenured staff who often struggle with newer, seasonal, or temporary labour. Assumptions about:

Scan discipline

Exception handling confidence

Speed vs accuracy trade offs

do not translate automatically across sites.

Handling unit strategy

One site may benefit from full HU management inbound and outbound.

Another may require:

Partial HU usage

Outbound only Hus

Deferred HU discipline

Copying HU strategy without volume and inbound profile analysis introduces friction immediately.

The danger of shared custom functionality

Re using enhancements can be extremely valuable or extremely dangerous.

Enhancements often encode:

Implicit assumptions

Local workarounds

Historical compromises

Before re use, experienced teams ask:

What operational problem did this solve originally?

Does that problem exist here?

What constraints made it necessary then?

Do those constraints still apply?

Without these questions, enhancements turn into inherited complexity.

Copy paste creates silent divergence

One of the most subtle risks in multi site rollouts is silent divergence. This occurs when:

A template is adopted nominally
Local tweaks are made quietly
Documentation lags reality
Support teams assume consistency that no longer exists

Over time, sites look similar but behave differently increasing support effort and reducing trust.

“Judged divergence is safer than accidental divergence”.

Adam Wilson,
Digital Supply Chain, Logistics Lead, TCT

How experienced teams scale without copying blindly

Successful multi site SAP EWM programmes follow a consistent approach, not a consistent solution. Start with principles, not config. Each new site begins by reaffirming:

Core design principles
Non negotiables
Areas open to adaptation

This creates alignment without rigidity.

Revalidate physical reality every time. No matter how similar a site appears:

Walk the floor
Time the travel
Observe congestion points
Watch how work “really” happens

Physical validation is faster than post go live correction.

Explicitly classify reuse decisions. For each major design area:

Re use as is
Re use with modification

Re design intentionally

Defer entirely

Making this explicit avoids unconscious inheritance.

Document why, not just what. What changes is less important than why it changed.

Capturing rationale:

Improves future rollout speed

Prevents repeated debates

Builds organisational memory

The second rollout should be easier because insight has accumulated not because configuration was cloned.

Why large programmes often default to copying

Large transformations are incentivised to:

Demonstrate consistency

Reduce perceived risk

Move quickly

Copying feels safer than judgement until the warehouse goes live. Specialist teams take a different view:

They expect each site to challenge the template

They view difference as information, not resistance

They design with accountability for outcomes, not just delivery milestones

Scaling well is about transfer of judgement The real asset in a multi site SAP EWM rollout is not the template, the configuration or the development library.

It is the ability to apply judgement repeatedly, consistently, and transparently.

That judgement:

Respects local reality

Preserves global coherence

Avoids dogma

Enables evolution

Conclusion: reuse what makes sense, not what was convenient

Scaling SAP EWM successfully does not mean making warehouses identical. It means making them:

Coherent

Understandable

Supportable

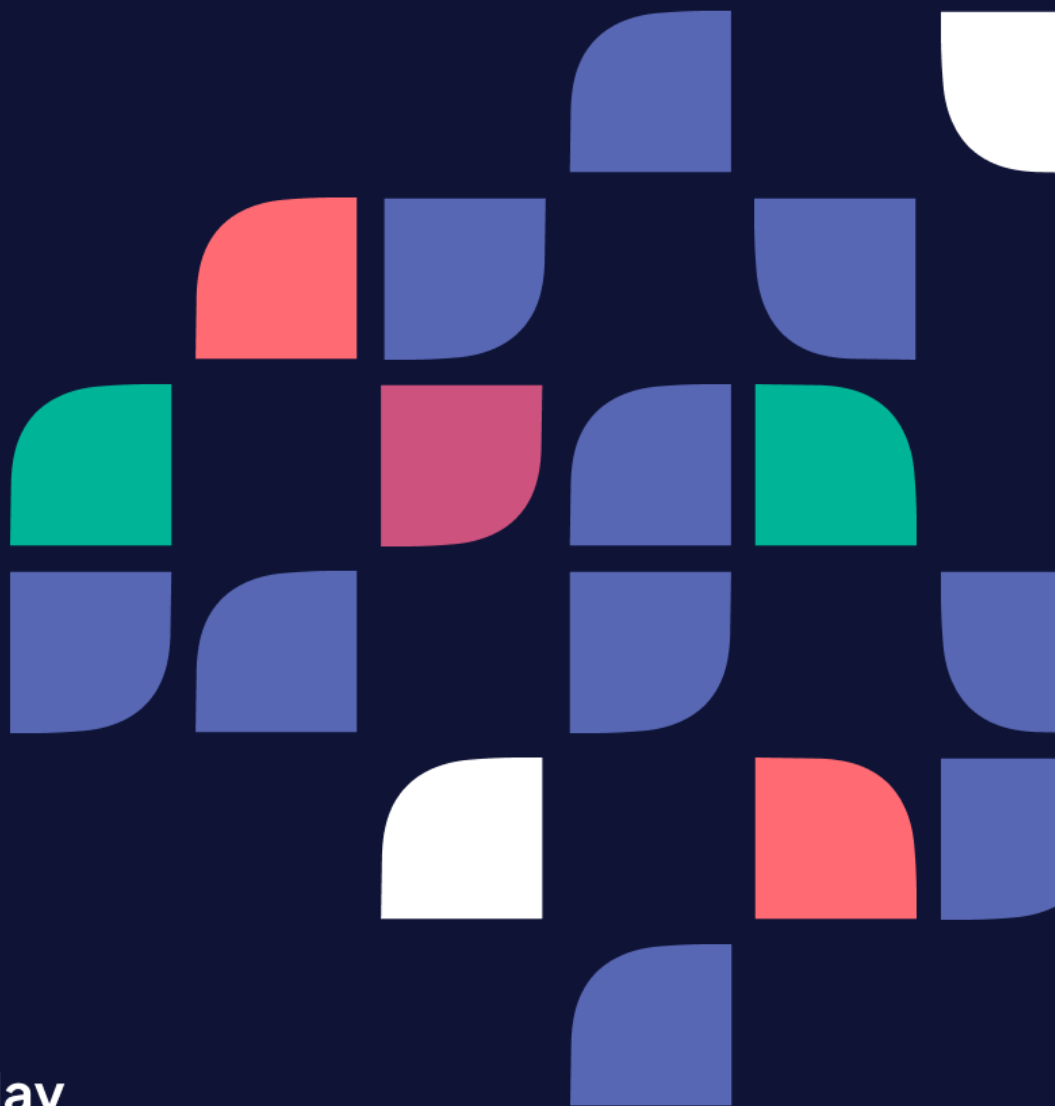
Fit for purpose

“Copy pasting solutions transfers risk. Transferring insight transfers capability. The difference shows up very quickly on the warehouse floor”,



Phil Foulger,
Senior Solution Architect, TCT

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