

# 12 Rules for Pallet Supremacy

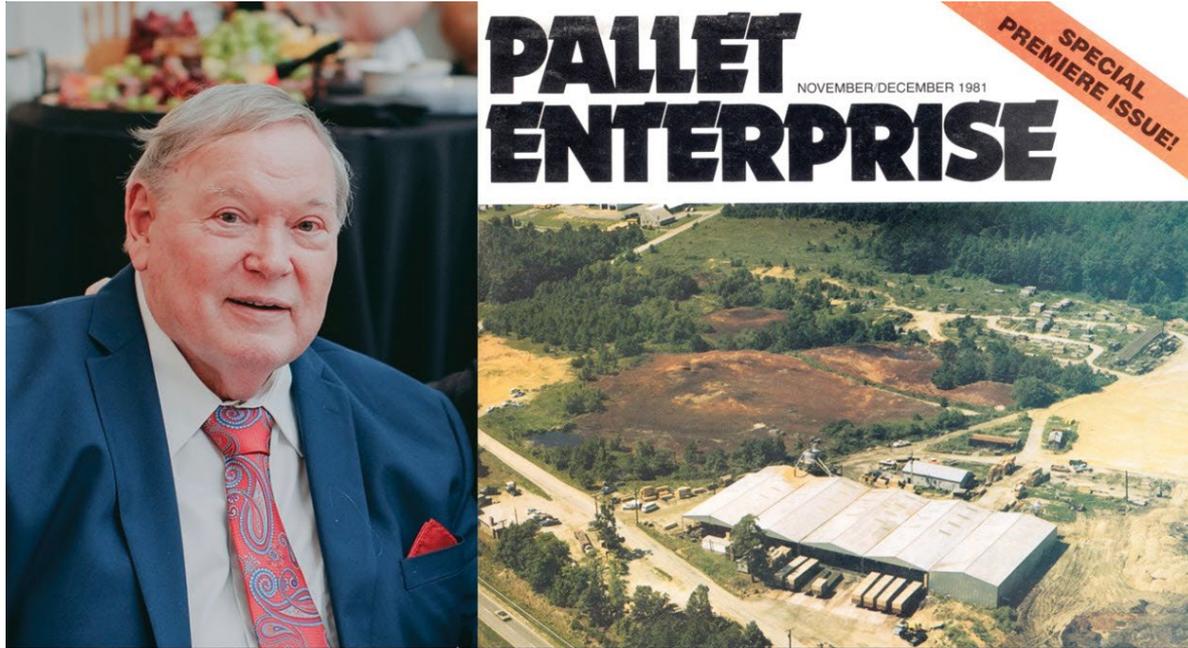
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1. Two Second Lean
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Chaille Brindley, publisher of **PALLET ENTERPRISE** magazine and **Pallet Profile Weekly** market report.

# 12 Rules for Pallet Supremacy



My dad lived to help people run better plants, produce better products and develop better people. That still guides me every day at *Pallet Enterprise* magazine.

# 12 Rules for Pallet Supremacy

## Rule 1:

### Two Second Lean

Lean initiatives lose when you try to hit home runs instead of base hits.



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## Two Second Lean

*A program where employees were released to make operational changes if they can show two seconds worth of savings daily.*

- Portable backup camera example.
- Employees share these ideas via cell phones across the company's Slack chat network showing before and after images while explaining the change and the savings.
- Only big-ticket items need management approval.



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## Two Second Lean

- Based on “2 Second Lean” by Paul Akers. Download a free copy: <https://tinyurl.com/r9cm3ysu>.
- Changed approach to focus on minimal touches, one-piece flow, fast throughput.
- Repair station operator decides if pallet will be repaired or disassembled and does everything there, eliminates a lot of forklift and hand stacking activity.
- Cross-trained personnel.

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## Lean Must Be Measured and Reviewed

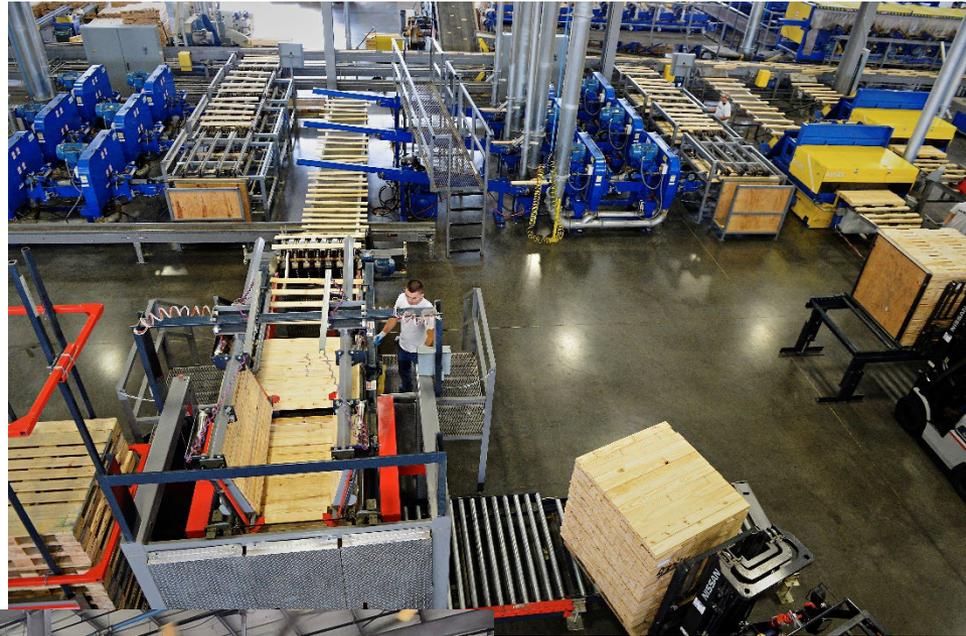
- S&L Spindles uses the 6S Principles: sort, set in order, shine, standardize and sustain. The goal of the approach is to create a safe, organized, and efficient work environment to improve productivity, minimize waste, and enhance employee well-being.
- Every worker is evaluated twice a year, and his pay is adjusted accordingly based on his attitude and performance.



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## Rule 2

**Pallet Quality Doesn't Happen By Accident:**  
Quality is engineered—  
or failure is built in.



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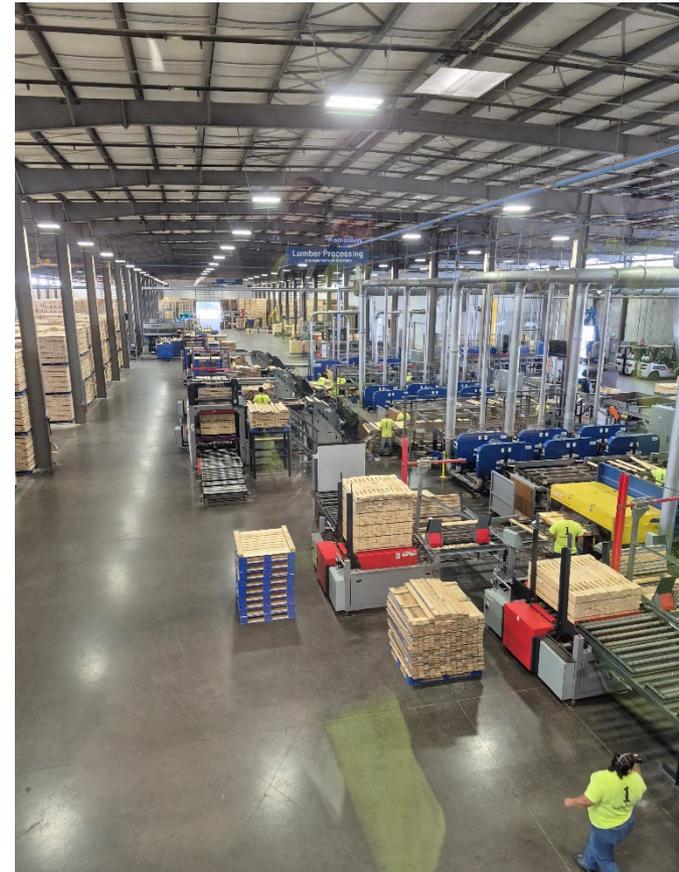
## Neopal

- Every detail was well thought out, and the systems were designed to reinforce quality control at every turn.
- Currently, Neopal uses a human-based inspection process for finished pallets.
- Each line has an integrated quality inspector who, at the touch of a button, can eject any individual pallet requiring further inspection or repair. The end of the line has two operators manually inspecting every pallet stack.



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- Neopal is evaluating various pallet inspection technologies to speed up quality processing and eliminate errors.
- Employees are paid hourly but are rewarded and advanced based on output
- Employees know costs per line and are rewarded with a percentage of savings when they can save the company money by making improvements.
- Status monitors above each machine.



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## Rule 3

**Start by Understanding the Ask:** Most “crazy” request hides a business opportunity.



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**Overreaction can be as problematic as inaction.**

*“I think a lot of times a pallet company sees a question come in from a customer, and they jump right away to thinking it means a huge, detailed report...But really, a lot of those requests are for something much smaller, like wood sourcing, or maybe energy usage. So instead of guessing or overdoing it, the better step is to stop and ask for clarification. That way you don’t spend a bunch of time giving them way more information than they actually wanted.”*

– Brad Gething, vice president of Science and Technology at the NWPCA.



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**One positive is that you may already have more of the data than you realize.**

*“You’d be surprised how much you already know about your operations,” he said. “We track fuel use, electricity, repairs, sourcing. It’s all part of running a plant. When a customer comes with a request, don’t assume you’re starting from zero. You probably already have 80% of what they want, but it’s in your head or on a spreadsheet. The key is to pull it together in a way that shows you’re paying attention.”*

-- Brett Bucktooth, senior supplier diversity and sustainability manager for Ongweoweh Corp.



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- Sometimes customers aren't even sure what they're really asking for. Ask probing questions. Which data points matter most to you? Is this about compliance, or about partnership and storytelling?
- Understanding the context of customer requests also matters. If a customer asks about carbon, you need to understand what kind of carbon they are talking about. Do they mean embedded carbon in the pallet, transportation emissions, or something else?
- Don't guess, don't overcommit, and don't be afraid to ask questions back.



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## Rule 4

**Hard Decisions**

**Determine Destiny**

Fear creates  
stagnation; decisive  
pivots create growth.



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- Pre-COVID, Oak Creek Wood Products, a Wisconsin-based pallet supplier, was struggling to hold its position in the ultra-competitive recycled market.
- As of 2025, it has 780 employees just in Mexico alone. The company has expanded domestically and internationally, pivoting from commodity recycling to more complex and higher-value custom pallets and industrial packaging.
- Rafael Guerrero's, the company's president, oversaw a transition in 2020 to producing new pallets. Revenues surged from \$3 million to \$15 million in one year.

# 12 Rules for Pallet Supremacy



- Pre-COVID, the Oak Creek, Wisconsin-based pallet supplier was struggling to hold its position in the ultra-competitive recycled pallet market.
- Today, it spans 780 employees just in Mexico alone. It has expanded domestically and internationally, having pivoted from commodity recycling to more complex and higher-value custom pallets and industrial packaging.

# 12 Rules for Pallet Supremacy

- Rafael Guerrero's, the company's president, took a massive step to transition the entire focus of the business.
- Saw revenues surge from \$3 million to \$15 million in one year.
- Focused on custom block pallets. Despite the steep learning curve, block pallets have quickly become a cornerstone of the business, now accounting for \$20 million in annual revenue.



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Pallet Resource of North Carolina (PRNC) states to its clients, *“Any pallet or specialty crating product you can imagine, we can build.”*

- Older equipment and approach needed to redesigned.
- Demanding customers want quality
- Shifted from a strategy of buying used equipment and trying to make it work.
- Now focus on new equipment to improve efficiency and uptime.



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- Installed a new repair line and Pallet IQ inspection system from AMS.
- Situated inspection system at end of the line.
- Inspect the work of our operators, track production and determine quality of cores coming from each load.



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## Rule 5

**Easy Wins:** Your best innovation investment starts with getting the most out of what you already have.



# 12 Rules for Pallet Supremacy

- Leverage how your current ERP can help eliminate duplicate entry.
- Don't just use your ERP for order entry. Connect your office and plant floor.
- Use customer data tools in your ERP to simplify customer communications and order updates.
- Automate data capture wherever possible.
- Ask yourself what features you really need and see if they already exist in some way in your current ERP solution.
- Train your people and give them time to explore the capabilities of the software.
- Make feature requests and be patient.
- Explore new vision and AI capabilities and integration.

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## Rule 6

### **Unleash Hidden Talent:**

Top performers thrive when they design their roles.

Let me  
introduce you to  
Joe Hunter...

- Machine operator at Blackberry Pallet LLC in Christiansburg, Virginia.
- Wears multiple hats.
- Took on roles as webmaster, social media coordinator, problem solver.



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Meet Joe Hunter now...

- Still a machinery operator part-time at Blackberry Pallet, which is owned by The Turman Group.
- Also is leading the effort to revamp all 15-member company websites and develop a cohesive digital strategy.
- Self taught learning SEO, content development and more.
- Now empowered to be the Digital Strategy and Communication Lead



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## Rule 7

**Recycled Pallet Supremacy =  
Control the “right” cores, control  
margins, control the market.**



# 12 Rules for Pallet Supremacy

- The rule used to be: Win the cores at any costs.
- Now it seems to be: Win the “right” cores at an aggressive rate while preserving some margin.
- Walk away from junk pallet deals.
- Control margins as core costs go up. Finished goods are lagging.  
Don't get caught in the squeeze.



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## Rule 8:

AI is changing pallet purchasing, so don't ignore your front door!

Hinton Lumber Products LLC Expands Automated Pallet Manufacturing To Meet Sam's Club 48"x40" Block Pallet Requirement Deadline

April 19, 2025 • Hinton Lumber Products LLC



TUSCALOOSA, AL & La Porte, TX — Effective May 1, 2025, [Sam's Club](#) will exclusively accept inbound shipments on its approved 48"x40" block pallet design, officially ending the use of traditional stringer-style pallets within its supply chain. While both new and repaired block pallets are permitted, the specification must conform to Sam's four-way, block-class standard, driving a rapid shift for

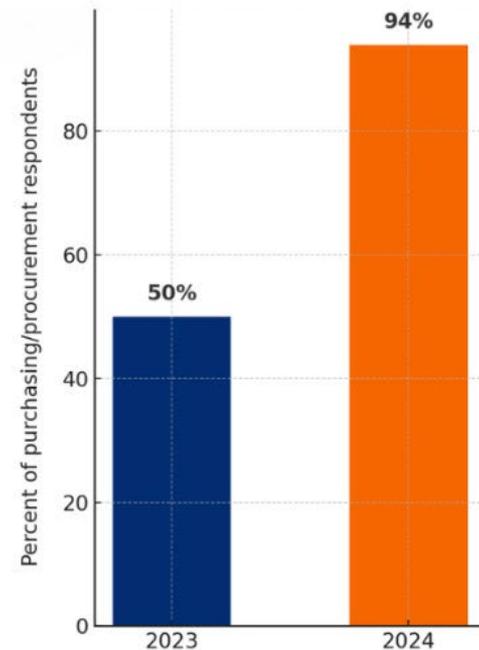


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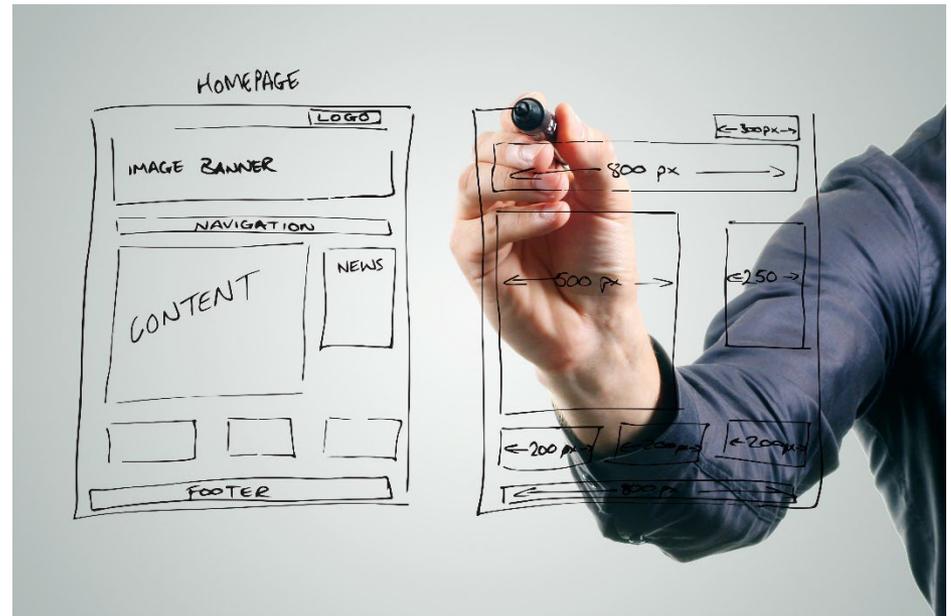
- Think about your website because AI systems are using web data for analysis, and pallet buyers are using AI to help with purchasing.

<https://artofprocurement.com/blog/state-of-ai-in-procurement>

**Percent of procurement professionals using generative AI at least once a week**

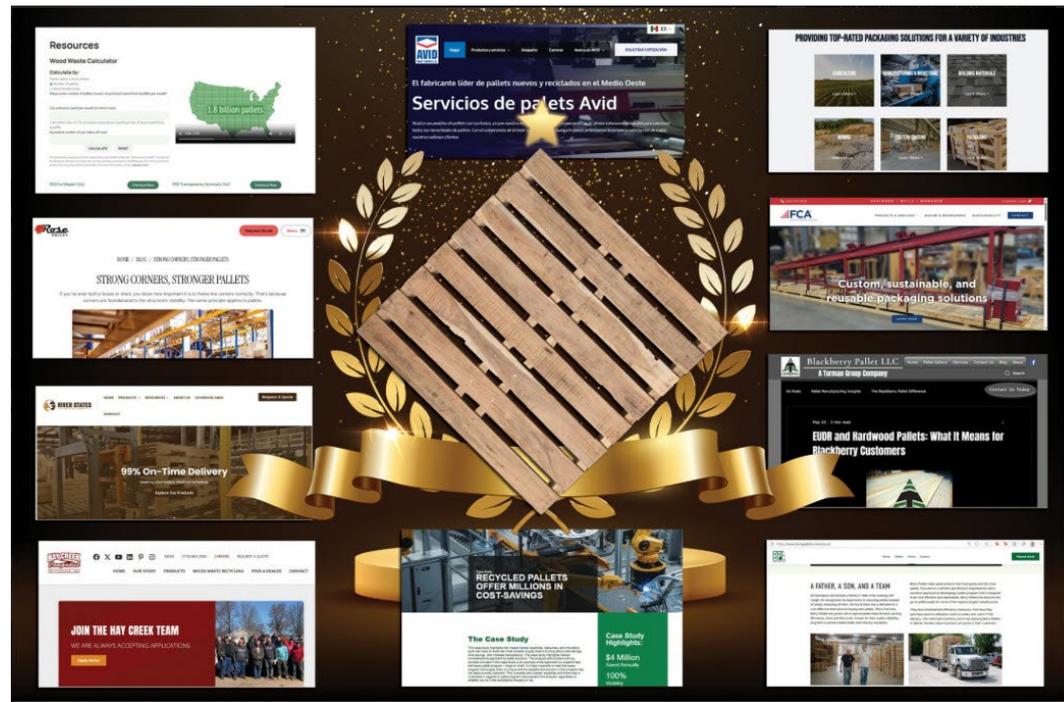


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- Keywords matter.
- Online is the best place to shape your narrative to those who don't know you.
- If you want to get left out as AI does more for your customers, than just ignore your website and social media.

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Check out the Website awards article for ideas.

<https://palletenterprise.com/pallet-company-website-excellence-award-winners-2025/>

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## Rule 9:

### **Culture Follows Care:**

Care for people as people, and you'll build a culture that others envy.



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## **Continuous Training, Chaplaincy and Second Chances**

- McVantage has tackled a number of adult learning opportunities to improve the lives of its employees. In 2024, the company developed its first class of graduates for an English as a Second Language (ESL) program.
- One way the company cares for workers is by hiring a chaplain who works directly for the company. He is a former employee who knows what it is like to work in a pallet plant. This chaplain meets weekly with employees, especially those who are struggling or need to talk with someone about issues outside of work.
- Getting ready to launch a financial literacy program for employees based on Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University.

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*“When you talk about the community engagement side, there is a general employee shortage in our area. But with these additional programs we’re offering, it’s encouraging our employees to come to work. These **employee engagement initiatives are driving employee retention and opening up opportunities to hire more family and friends of existing employees.**”* --- Kate Matz, chief revenue officer of McVantage Packaging



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## Rule 10:

### **Competitive**

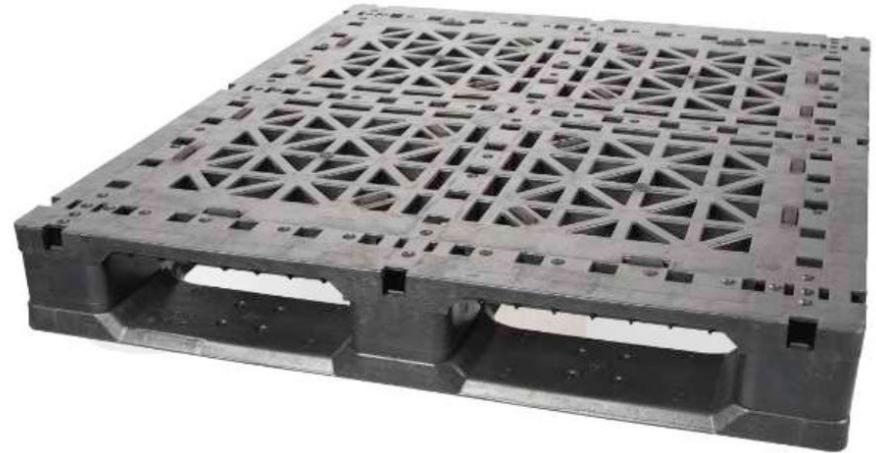
**Evolution:** Your competition isn't going away, it's just evolving, evolve with it or die.



# 12 Rules for Pallet Supremacy

## Plastic Pallet Companies Are Trying to Answer Wood Pallet Negatives

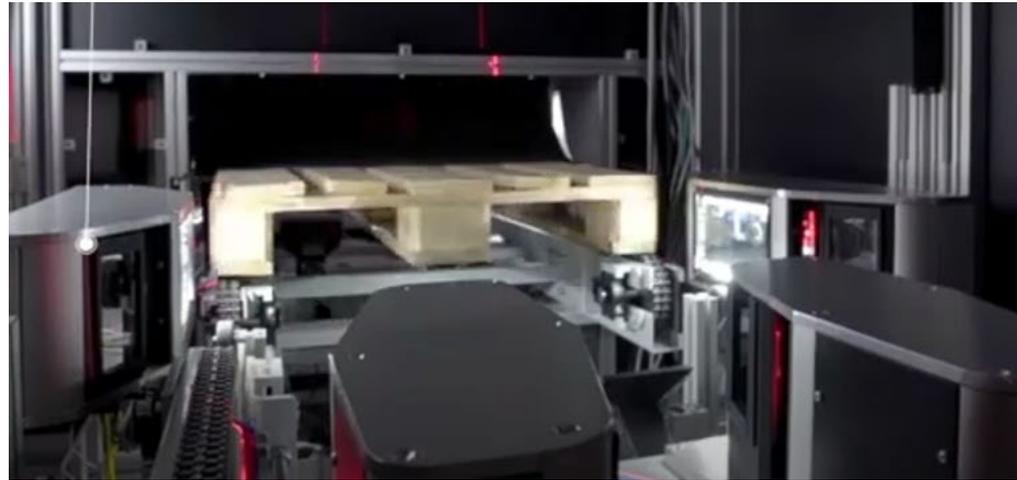
- Greystone Logistics just announced new cellular-based tracking and tracing for plastic pallets coupled with tailored rental and lease programs.
- Focusing on pallet quality concerns. The new program dubbed “Palletrip,” introduces a lightweight recycled plastic, cellular tracked pallet, designed exclusively for transfers in closed loops.
- Leasing offers pay-per-use or fixed terms, no capex, with full management.



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## Customers Are Becoming Competitors

- Major retailers and DCs are doing more TPMs and installing pallet inspection equipment.
- Information is going from pallet supplier to the pallet buyer.
- Retailers and DCs are keeping more high-quality, used pallets. Sending more junk out in core trailers.



- Makes obtaining high-quality cores harder, more costly.
- Could drive up used pallet prices.
- Requires more upcycling of poor-quality cores.

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## Rule 11:

### A Bad Deal

Don't play by Wall Street's rule book if you don't have their money.



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- Some of the major pallet companies have faced serious financial leverage concerns due to debt load. At least in the case of 48forty Solutions, the new owners are some of the biggest names on Wall Street.
- Major players have pushed sales volume over margin. This has placed downward pressure on used pallet prices.
- Fortune 500 pallet customers are using RFQs and bid processes to look for lower prices and in many cases beat up on existing suppliers.
- Be willing to lose some customers to save your margins.



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## Rule 12:

**Help Me, Help You! –**  
Industry data  
improves only when  
you participate.



# 12 Rules for Pallet Supremacy

## Major Wage and HR Survey for the Pallet Industry – We Need Your Help

- Largest pallet industry human resources survey conducted every 2-4 years.
- My simple pitch. If you take about 20-30 minutes to fill out the survey, I will send you a free copy of the final results. Everyone else has to pay a steep price for it. \$745.
- Complete the online form at [www.palletenterprise.com/2026hrsurvey](http://www.palletenterprise.com/2026hrsurvey).



# 12 Rules for Pallet Supremacy

## **Rule 1 – Two Second Lean:**

Lean initiatives lose when you try to hit for home runs instead of base hits.

## **Rule 2 – Pallet Quality Doesn't Happen By Accident:**

Quality is engineered—or failure is built in.

## **Rule 3 – Start by**

**Understanding the Ask:** Every “crazy” request hides a business opportunity.

## **Rule 4 – Hard Decisions**

**Determine Destiny:** Fear creates stagnation; decisive pivots create growth.

**Rule 5 – Easy Wins:** Your best innovation investment starts with getting the most out of what you already have (ERPs)

## **Rule 6 – Unleash Hidden**

**Talent:** Top performers thrive when they design their roles.

## **Rule 7 – Recycled Pallet**

**Supremacy =** Control cores, control margins, control the market.

**Rule 8 – AI is changing pallet purchasing,** so don't ignore your front door!

## **Rule 9 – Culture Follows**

**Care:** Care for people as people, and you'll build a culture others envy.

## **Rule 10 – Competitive**

**Evolution:** Your competition isn't going away, it's just evolving, evolve with it or die.

**Rule 11 – A Bad Deal:** Don't play by Wall Street's rule book if you don't have their money.

## **Rule 12 – Help Me, Help**

**You!** – Industry data improves only when you participate.

# 12 Rules for Pallet Supremacy



**I'm here to help. Feel free to contact me...**

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Check out the latest buzz at the Pallet Board: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8133689/>