



stick, switch or move?
the options for
Dispatcher customers
explained.



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intro

Are you a Blue Yonder Dispatcher customer? Are you curious about the future of Dispatcher and the various options available to you? Then this ebook is for you.

Up until recently Blue Yonder had plans to sunset Dispatcher, with customers facing an end-of-life situation due to a Java/Oracle supportability issue in the product's front end, which would not just mean it goes out of support but also that in some cases it would prevent users from being able to login to the GUI... in other words a cliff edge business continuity issue.

However, Blue Yonder has announced that it is now committed to Dispatcher as a long-term, strategic product and is once again investing in the product roadmap. A new release with a completely new front end is due for release in November 2021. This was unveiled to the SIG (Dispatcher Special Interest Group) recently and the initial feedback has been very positive.

Great news for the large customer base who enjoy Dispatcher's functional depth & breadth, flexibility and stability; but where does that leave your business in terms of its journey ahead? There are a number of options and plenty to think upon. There are also a large number of businesses in the same position all of whom will need to take action over the next few years, drawing upon a limited industry-wide pool of talent in order to execute their journey. The time to formulate a strategy and plan is most definitely upon us!

With this in mind, there are three strategic options to consider:

1. **Stick with Dispatcher**
2. **Remain with BlueYonder but switch to their other WMS product – BY WMS**
3. **Move to another WMS solution provider**

This ebook will explore each option in more detail, offer pros and cons and highlight areas for consideration.

But first, a quick reminder as to what is Dispatcher and a recap on the history up until now.

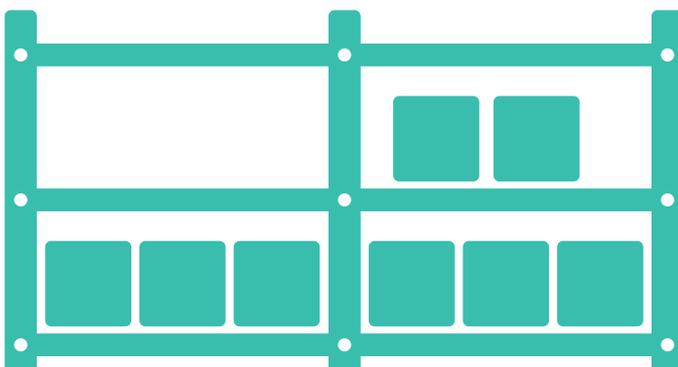
what is Dispatcher?

Dispatcher is a market leading warehouse management system (WMS) provided by Blue Yonder, the world's leading SCM solutions provider.

It is a long-standing favourite amongst retail, hi-tech and logistics businesses across the globe, installed in hundreds of facilities across over 150 different customers.

As one of the established market leaders, Dispatcher boasts some of the best depth and breadth of functionality available, which allied to the fact that it is highly configurable, enables leading retailers and logistics providers to deliver modern best practice warehousing.

The maturity that comes from the Dispatcher product that has evolved over 30+ years, it is also a scalable, performant and reliable system, supporting some of the biggest and most complex warehouses in the world.



a quick recap on the history and the future roadmap.

To understand why this situation has come about, it's useful to understand some background. Blue Yonder was previously JDA and rebranded in 2018. In the years before, JDA acquired Red Prairie, which had acquired LIS.

Due to this history of acquisitions, Blue Yonder's offering includes two market-leading WMS solutions: Dispatcher and WMS/Discrete, the latter now rebranded as BY WMS. Dispatcher's customer base has been predominantly EMEA, whereas BY WMS has been BY's more dominant WMS solution in North America and globally.

Up until the recent change, Blue Yonder's strategic direction for WMS was to converge the two solutions into a single WMS, combining the best of both Market-leading solutions, to serve all regions and industry segments. This, however, has proved a challenging strategy to execute and the decision to re-invest in Dispatcher and fix the end-of-life issues recognises its popularity amongst its current install base.

The decision to breathe new life into Dispatcher comes with a new dedicated leadership and product team within Blue Yonder and the reinvigoration of the Special Interest Group (SIG) which will be pivotal in helping Blue Yonder to direct and manage the ongoing product roadmap. Now we're caught up, let's move on to the three main options available to existing Dispatcher customers – stick, switch or move.



stick with Dispatcher.



For some existing businesses, the choice of being able to stick with Dispatcher comes as welcome relief. This typically applies to businesses who enjoy what is now an incredibly mature, functionally rich and stable WMS solution but who are also heavily invested in it in terms of licenses, skilled people and modifications. For businesses who have enterprise licenses, significant levels of modifications and sizeable delivery and support teams with specialist Dispatcher skills, clearly moving away from Dispatcher presented a significant business risk and potential cost outlay.

However, the current version of Dispatcher (i.e. all versions up to 2020), without the new GUI and the Java issues rectified, will still become end-of-life in 2025 and customers will need to go through an upgrade to the new version at some point before that.

Whilst the underlying platform and application functionality is not undergoing radical change in the new version, it will undergo wholesale changes to the GUI with several enhancements. Blue Yonder have invested significant resources to developing the new front end, which is a big step forward and the look and feel is very similar to their luminate products - a big plus for customers who have a wider product offering from BY. Whilst this is great, it does mean that for many customers, this upgrade could be more involved than a standard one, particularly for customers who have mods to the existing GUI.

As with all upgrades, what to do with modifications will play a big part in the upgrade journey as will consideration around whether you can wait for the new version or whether your version goes out of extended support before it becomes available (i.e. all versions up to 2016). If this is the case, an interim upgrade to the latest current version may be required to offer continuity of support until you are able to move onto the new version after it becomes available in Q3 2021.

reasons to stay with Dispatcher.

There are several reasons to stay with your reliable WMS, which include:

Functional Fit

It may sound obvious, but one of the key reasons customers may prefer continuing to invest in Dispatcher is the product which would make upgrading simple but if not and your business really still needs your mods, it is likely to be far easier to port them into the latest version than it is going to be to implement them first time around in another WMS (the chances are if the functionality isn't available in the latest version of Dispatcher it probably isn't available in another WMS).

Or simply, for businesses that have spent years getting their warehouses and WMS setups just right to fit their specific needs, including fitting the WMS around complex automation, the thought of having to do it all again with a new system rather than invest that time and money enhancing their existing solution to keep up the ever changing requirements of their customers and colleagues, may not be a palatable one. For businesses that already have other recent Blue Yonder products, the upgraded GUI in the new version of Dispatcher is also going to be very similar in look and feel to those products, which may give one more reason to stay with Dispatcher.

Financial

For businesses that have already invested in deploying Dispatcher including licenses, project delivery costs and internal skillsets, extending the life of the system via upgrade is an obvious choice from a commercial perspective. This option will be the likely choice for businesses that have invested in perpetual enterprise licenses, which means retaining the system in long term with no additional license fees. Moving to an alternative WMS solution requires significant outlay in license fees, on top of, of course, the implementation costs.

reasons to stay with Dispatcher.

Risk avoidance

Moving away from Dispatcher and implementing a new WMS is significantly more complex and risky than continuing with your current Dispatcher installation and upgrading to the latest version. All significant systems implementations come with an element of risk, whether that be cost overrun, unplanned disruptions to operations or unplanned disruptions to other change programmes and WMS implementations are no different. Warehouse operations are invariably mission critical to businesses, particularly ecommerce retailers where disruptions translate directly to service impacts and worst-case sales losses. Sticking with Dispatcher is a good way of having one less business critical risk to worry about, particularly where stability is a major imperative and/ or focus is needed on landing complex change in other areas of the business.

Avoiding operational disruption

Closely aligned to avoiding risk, simply avoiding disruption to warehouse operations can be a key imperative for businesses.

WMS implementations are disruptive as they require a cross functional approach across operational and Technology teams - it's not just about the potential downtime associated with deploying a new system but all the work that goes into defining the requirements and solution, acceptance testing it, training, preparing the workforce and managing any operational cutover activities. This can all be a significant distraction to operational teams when focus is required on stabilisation, growth or other technology or operating model driven changes.

Support current infrastructure and hosting

Businesses that have already invested in scalable, affordable infrastructure for their Dispatcher installations may prefer to enjoy the return on that investment before entertaining the idea of moving to another WMS that wouldn't be able to leverage the existing infrastructure - some of the alternative market leading WMS solutions offer SaaS solutions, which would fall into this consideration.

a few things to consider.

All of the above might be convincing reasons to keep your Dispatcher solution, but there are some things to consider:

You might have to do an interim upgrade

Dispatcher in its current form will be retired in 2025. The new release will be available from Q3 2021 so you can't upgrade right away. In the meantime, the route you'll need to take depends on the version that you are on, and what your support agreement with Blue Yonder entitles you to in terms of length of support.

For example, customers with a 2016 version may have 6 years product support plus a potential additional 3 years extended support which would take them through to 2025 - those customers would only need to upgrade to the latest version once it comes out in 2021 to avoid the end of life issue in 2025. Customers with 2013 for instance, however, will be out of extended support in 2020 so may need to perform an interim upgrade asap in order to extend their support life until such time as they are ready to move to the new version.

You'll need to check your customisations

Customisations are one of the largest contributors to complexity for an any upgrade. Customers who have heavily customised their Dispatcher installation will need to invest time in validating w their unique customisation need to be migrated to thenew version - which will require additional development from BlueYonder and add to the amount of design, build, deployment and in particular testing effort.

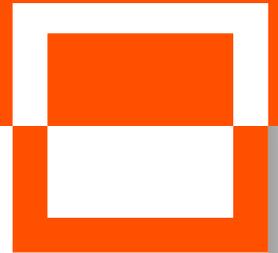
Where possible therefore, customers should take the opportunity of an upgrade to dispense with modifications by assessing whether the previously modified functionality is available in the latest release or standardising processes to fit base functionality.

Hosting and infrastructure

An upgrade could also present a good opportunity to migrate your Dispatcher installation to public cloud, consolidating the testing and operational disruption to a single event rather than twice.

Public cloud offers a flexible and scalable alternative to on-premise hosting and is a good option for customers with aging or costly on-premise infrastructure, those looking to simplify their support model by moving infrastructure support out of their existing support teams and those looking for greater agility in being able to rapidly stand up and stand down their non production environments.

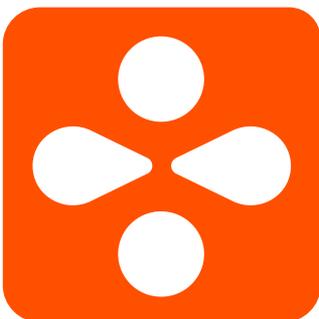
a switch to Blue Yonder WMS (Discrete).



The second option for Dispatcher clients is to switch to Blue Yonder's other WMS product, Blue Yonder WMS, previously called Discrete.

Although the vendor remains the same, this will still entail a major change program as it's a different product. Businesses will need to go through the whole project lifecycle, with the associated cost, timeline, risk and disruption implications. The benefit of doing this versus moving to another solution provider is continuity of relationship and avoiding having to go through a system selection exercise, which can be costly and time consuming.

BYWMS is offered primarily as SaaS so for businesses looking for the simplicity of a SaaS WMS, without the worry of infrastructure or upgrades, this is a great option.



reasons to switch to Blue Yonder WMS.

While there are several reasons to stay with your current Dispatcher installation, there are also a number of reasons for potentially looking to make the change from Dispatcher to Blue Yonder WMS. These reasons include:

Functionality

The functionality between the two products differs and for some businesses BYWMS may be a better fit than Dispatcher.

Extensibility

BY WMS offers fantastic flexibility around extensibility. It gives users the ability to customise using a comprehensive extensions framework, for both application functionality and integration, without the need to customise the base product.

SaaS Simplicity

For businesses who are looking for a fully SaaS product, BY WMS is an attractive option. You'll never need to worry about upgrades again as features and new releases are pushed automatically and hosted centrally. It also simplifies things from a hosting perspective too - not having to worry about infrastructure support and maintenance is for many businesses a significant benefit.

Commercial fit

BY WMS is a SaaS subscription-based product. Many businesses will prefer paying a subscription out of their revenue/ opex budgets rather than investing in licenses and infrastructure up front with capital.

Continuity of Service Provider

As with Dispatcher, BYWMS is a mature product and there is the reassurance of continuity with the solutions provider, which is particularly beneficial for those with other Blue Yonder products and wishing to follow the SaaS model for BY WMS. There is also a clear upgrade path, so customers can trust that the product will always offer the latest functionality and technology.

a few things to consider.

If a shift onto BY WMS is the preferred option for you, then there are a couple of things to consider:

Disruption

Switching to BYWMS will entail a high level of disruption as it is effectively a new WMS - requirements and processes will need to be specified, functionality designed and the solution tested end-to-end - all of which will require significant input from operational teams, which will distract away from running the operation and any other change activities being executed.

Being a significant systems integration project, it will also require significant focus across both Technology and business teams, which more often than not impacts the ability to successfully land change across other areas. So if focus is required on delivering complex projects within supply chain or other areas of the business then avoiding change within the WMS may be beneficial.

In order to keep the solution as vanilla as possible, processes may need to change and investment or development may be required in other systems, including automation.

Cost

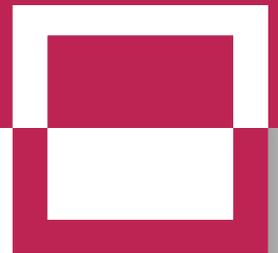
Businesses need to look closely at the costs, not only of switching from paying licence fees to paying a subscription but also at the cost of implementing the project. Implementation costs will exceed those inherent with sticking with Dispatcher but should be less than moving to an alternative solution, which will require a system selection exercise precluding the implementation, which can take many weeks and even months.

Performance

For complex, high volume, high user facilities, performance will be imperative. Moving away from an existing system that has been stabilised over months and in some cases over numerous years, presents a risk. In such performance critical installations, mitigating this risk through thorough definition of non-functional requirements and performance testing is a must.

move to a new solution.

3.



The third option for Dispatcher customers is to move to an entirely new solution from a different vendor.

Dispatcher and BY WMS are considered best-of-breed options and moving provider is unlikely to provide any business a greater level of breadth and depth of functionality. However, for reasons such as the need to support very non-standard warehousing requirements, where a best-of-breed solution WMS solution is overkill or where the simplicity of having the WMS and ERP all under the same vendor suite is an imperative, another solution provider may be the preferred option.

Moving to another solution provider is a huge undertaking involving selection, new commercials, implementation and standing up a new service and support capability to support and maintain the system ongoing. However, if a move to a new vendor better supports long term business objectives, then the initial disruption may be beneficial in the long run.



reasons to switch to a new solution.

Some of the reasons businesses may choose to move to a new solution include:

Wider Technology Strategy

One of the key reasons a business may choose to move away from Blue Yonder is due to an enterprise technology strategy which predicates the use of other vendors. This could be where a business wishes to consolidate with their ERP footprint and move their WMS onto the ERP suite in order to simplify the systems landscape and the corresponding support and commercial environment.

Although the WMS offerings from the main ERP providers have improved functionally in recent years the breadth and depth of their offerings still falls short of the best-of-breed solutions such as Blue Yonder. For simple warehousing operations this could be a perfectly acceptable compromise, particularly where the benefits of seamless ERP integration and the simplicity of the vendor landscape are taken into consideration.

Functionality and Automation

There may be instances where the functional requirements of a warehouse fundamentally change such that a best-of-breed WMS such as Dispatcher is no longer the best fit. For example where warehouses no longer require the functional depth and breadth but require specialist additional functionality such as duty or customs management; in this scenario there are simpler WMS solutions which meet this requirement and could also offer greater affordability versus a best of breed WMS. An increasing trend for heavily automated facilities is to look at WMS solutions provided by automation providers. For some time, automation providers have invested in their Warehouse Control Systems (WCS) adding greater breadth and depth of functionality such that many now offer credible WMS/WCS combined solutions that can run warehouses end to end. They still generally lack breadth in areas such as returns, grid picking / flow-through and task driven and optimised workflows as well as depth in many of the core warehouse functions (receiving / putaway/ picking/ outbound) versus a best-of-breed solution, but for heavily automated warehouses, the advantages of having a single system running the warehouse and only one set of complex integration (i.e. WCS to host systems and no WMS-WCS) can outweigh these down-sides.

Affordability

Going out to tender can be used as an opportunity to drive down costs. Comparing support packages and deals as well as negotiating can help with ensuring a positive ROI in the long term.

You'll also be able to closely check what is and isn't included in fees to ensure you're getting the best value for your money for the functionality you need.

As previously mentioned, the business may no longer need a best of breed solution and moving to a simpler solution could yield cost benefit.

a few things to consider.

As with option 2, there are significant cost, risk and disruption implications involved with implementing a new WMS. Added to that, moving to a new vendor brings an additional level of complexity and risk associated; and for IT support and vendor management functions, one more vendor to manage.

Longer timescales

Checking the market for the best vendor and running an RFP and tendering process could add up to four more months to your timescales.

Higher risk

Moving to a new software solution has a high element of risk. But moving to an entirely new partner – in any part of the business – comes with significantly increased risk.

This option involves not only implementing a new WMS, but also bedding in a new provider – both of which come with unique challenges.

Increased complexity

Introducing a new technology vendor to the business means another vendor to manage, another set of commercials and potentially another support team within the IT support model.

Performance

Much like with the “switch” option, for performance critical installations, thorough definition of non- functional requirements and performance testing is a must.

what option is best for me?

There is no magic formula to drive out the right answer for your business but for many existing Dispatcher customers, the extension of its product life will undoubtedly come as welcome relief in order to avoid a costly and disruptive WMS replacement programme and instead enable them to focus on maximising the value from their existing investment. Modernising their Dispatcher installation through upgrading and potentially re-hosting onto public cloud whilst at the same time stripping out the complexity of existing modifications and starting to leverage some of the new capability available in upcoming releases can all be achieved in the time it takes to swap out a WMS and for a fraction of the cost.

For some businesses, it won't be as simple as a single answer. For instance, numerous retailers and 3PLs already run a mixed estate of WMS, including both Blue Yonder WMS solutions. Most businesses would have been considering harmonising their ecosystem with Dispatcher's previous announcement of going end of life. There is now a path of lower risk, cost and disruption in being able to simply upgrade the existing sites on Dispatcher whilst continuing the other sites on BYWMS. With this hybrid strategy there are then options available for new sites which may depend on synergies with existing sites. Whilst leaving both solutions within the ecosystem avoiding risk, cost and disruption in the short term, those benefits should be weighed against the additional support and commercial complexity in the long term in order to determine the best hybrid vs harmonise strategy.



a few things to consider.

Whatever your business situation, here is a summary of the key factors we recommend be factored into your thinking and decision making:

Functional fit

Does Dispatcher still deliver the business requirements, and does it support the capability required for the business to meet its future needs? Does the product roadmap align to your corporate goals and is there sufficient ability to influence it?

Alignment to enterprise architectural strategy/ principles

Does Dispatcher still align to the corporate/ enterprise Technology strategy? Does the product roadmap align to your technology direction and is there sufficient flexibility and innovation built in?

Corporate alignment

Does Blue Yonder align to your businesses corporate ways of working and is the relationship strong and future proof?

Cost

This should always be based on TCO and incorporate modifications into the equation - modifications always have a huge impact not only on implementation costs but ongoing support cost. If your current Dispatcher modifications are costing you a lot in support fees, is the best way to remove these through simplifying your existing Dispatcher implementation as part of or as a precursor to an upgrade or would moving to another solution be the answer?

Timeframes

Your strategic decisions will be made providing the best long-term solution for the business in mind. But if there are more immediate needs such as supporting a roll out across multiple sites with an imposed time limit, sticking with a solution you know and are easily able to build upon to support these additional sites may be the best way forward. Timelines will also dictate when you need to upgrade and whether an interim upgrade is required

ROI

Whichever path you choose, some investment is going to be required to provide your business with continuity of what is likely to be one of your business critical systems. Bringing, cost, functional fit, timelines all together into an ROI assessment which looks across the entire lifespan of the system will be needed

REPL can help.

One thing is for certain, doing nothing isn't an option. The current version of Dispatcher will go out of support in 2025 and your fulfilment operations could be jeopardised if you do not do something before then.

REPL is ideally positioned to help you to make the right decision with your WMS and support you through your change journey, every step of the way, whether that be continuing with Dispatcher and upgrading to a new version, migrating to BYWMS or moving to an alternative WMS solution. We work with the leading WMS vendors in the marketplace and have thought leaders and experts with deep experience not only in WMS but warehouse operations, automation and the full suite of logistics technologies that form part of the ecosystem in which a WMS generally sits. We support customers assess options, formulate technology strategies and translate these into technology roadmaps with supporting business cases and investment plans, whatever path you choose.



REPL can help.

Additionally, we can also action any immediate term Dispatcher requirements your business has while helping you navigate your path to a long-term strategic solution that keeps your warehouse operations cutting-edge. Our comprehensive, market leading suite of consulting and technical services can support you in scenarios such as:

Dispatcher Optimisation

Our Dispatcher product experts will audit your current Dispatcher installation(s), including modifications, solution architecture and support model; and identify simplification and cost reduction opportunities. Simplifying and removing modifications will ensure a lower cost lower risk upgrade path and there can be an immediate ROI without having to wait for an upgrade.

Ongoing Enhancements

Our Blue Yonder certified configuration team will deliver business-critical enhancements your WMS to support business-led initiatives. These small enhancements and configurations will drive operational efficiencies, cost savings, new fulfilment services and operating models, and increased service levels. This can range from delivering WMS configuration to integration development to simply providing specialist resource to support your team through analysis, design, build, test and deployment activities.

Peak Support

Managing your warehouse operations during peak periods can be a challenge. We offer expert, qualified resources to help your business through peak times, when your systems and workforce are most stretched. From IT support to help-desk services, our Dispatcher experts will keep your warehouse operations running smoothly.

Upgrades

We are the default partner to support your business through your WMS upgrade, whether that is to the new version of Dispatcher or whether you choose to migrate to Blue Yonder WMS. Agile and flexible in our upgrade approach, we can either take the lead, work as a trusted advisor or fill in where you have specific gaps with our suite of modular professional services.

Training

As Dispatcher experts, we offer functional and technical training to customers, delivered in a variety of ways. We can provide your business with specialist resources that will deliver product training to your teams based on agreed timelines. Alternatively we have a training centre of excellence offering, where we will set up a complete learning and development programme for your business to assist in on-going, long term training around the Dispatcher product, at which point you can take it into the business or we can run it for you as an ongoing service.

why REPL? |

REPL are Blue Yonder's preferred partner for Dispatcher for a reason:

Gold Alliance Partners

We are a gold accredited partner for Blue Yonder, have an exceptionally strong alliance relationship and have some of the most highly trained, skilled and experienced people in the market across all Blue Yonder WMS products. We are currently the only partner with company level BY WMS accreditation

Dispatcher leaders

We have an unrivalled depth and breadth of capability when it comes to defining, designing, changing, optimising, upgrading or supporting Dispatcher, with over 150 years of shared Dispatcher product knowledge within our team.

Market leading offerings and assets

We have an unrivalled suite of professional services and assets which enable rapid implementation, minimise TCO and maximise ROI.

Global Transformation Expertise

We have extensive experience leading complex global rollouts for Tier 1 organisations. Systems integration is in our DNA and we have exceptional programme management and business change capabilities.

Award Winning

REPL are a multi award winning organization, recognized by many of our partners and external organisations.

Innovation & Insight

We are constantly looking for new ways to deliver value for our customers and are prepared to invest in capabilities that help our customers improve the speed to market and maximise the ROI of their technology investments.

Commercial Fit

REPL is privately owned and we pride ourselves on ourselves on our ability to shape commercially attractive deals that focus on achieving value for our customers whilst being nimble and responsive to their needs.



Part of **Accenture**

REPL Group, Part of Accenture, is a world-leading consultancy and technology group specialising in workforce management, supply chain, customer experience and enterprise systems. Since 2007, the highly specialised retail technology team has developed intimate partnerships with businesses to deliver long-lasting value. Hundreds of businesses around the world rely on REPL to solve critical enterprise problems. Driven by doing the right thing for its customers, team, and the world at large, REPL has enjoyed year-on-year growth and international acclaim. As part of Accenture, REPL Group helps clients reimagine their supply chain, people and store technologies to become more efficient and meet new customer needs.



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