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John Rosser
General Manager
Hi-Spec

Hi-Spec Sees Clear Benefits of Voice

By the Numbers

20

% increase in productivity

99.9

% accuracy

88

% reduction in training time

Quick Facts

Objectives

- Modernize the warehouse
- Find a picking solution that interfaces with new WMS
- Eliminate outdated systems
- Increase accuracy

Business Value

- Able to eliminate auditors and shorten picking sequence
- Reduced training time from over 1 day to less than 1 hour
- Increased accuracy from 99.5% to 99.9%
- Increased operational efficiency by 15-20%

Customer Quotes:

"We started talking to Voxware at a critical point during our efforts to modernize our warehouse. They helped us make the business case for voice and showed us how the software would work for us. We were able to quickly build up a level of trust and understanding that made us feel that we would be in good hands with Voxware."

-John Rosser, General Manager

"Accuracy is an extremely high priority when you're shipping prescription lenses, and we can't afford to have mis-picked packages leave the warehouse. Before implementing Voxware we had a 100% check at the end of the line. Now, we've raised our accuracy to 99.9% and no longer need that final auditing step."

-John Rosser, General Manager

A Warehouse Decides to Modernize

Hi-Spec Lenses is a UK-based distributor of eyewear products. The company ships glasses, prescription lenses, and eyeglass cases to over 1,000 retail locations across Europe from one central warehouse. Orders must be picked and dispatched the same day that they are received by the warehouse, which normally takes about 6 hours and because each prescription is unique, accuracy is of paramount importance.

As part of a planned program, General Manager John Rosser and his team embarked on the next phase of modernization of their warehouse early in 2013. Many of their existing processes were outdated and a reliance on manual systems had created operational inefficiencies. The first step they took was to implement a new WMS, Red Prairie, and as it so often does, one decision led to another: now Hi-Spec needed to find a new picking solution.

Finding a New Way to Pick

The company's old manual paper-based picking system was particularly in need of modernizing. Picking accuracy hovered around an unsatisfactory 99.5%. As a result, Hi-Spec had to employ a team of auditors to perform a 100% check at the final stage to ensure that mis-picked packages didn't make it out the door.

Hi-Spec needed to determine whether an RF scanning based system or voice technology would be a better fit, so they turned to their own warehouse. "We ran time and motion studies and found that voice gave us greater flexibility and also supported the ergonomics of the picking process," says Rosser. The hands free system made it easier for pickers to move about the warehouse, and Hi-Spec was able to plan improvements to their existing warehouse configuration. With an RF scanning solution, they would have had to widen the aisles and cope with a clunkier picking process.

Building a Relationship with Voxware

Hi-Spec had a number of voice providers to choose from. Many interfaced easily with RedPrairie, but what really made Voxware the choice for Rosser was the Voxware team. "We met Voxware at a critical point in our decision making process and were able to build a trusting relationship quickly," he says.

Voxware helped Hi-Spec make the business case for voice and provided demos that helped the team gain a better understanding of how Voxware's system would work for Hi-Spec. After all the guidance and support Voxware provided at the beginning of the process, Rosser says, "We knew we'd be in good hands."

Voice Technology Helps Maximize Staff Potential

One of the biggest impacts Voxware's voice solution has had on the Hi-Spec warehouse is a maximization of the staff's output.

First, the training process is much shorter. With the old paper-based picking system, new hires spent most of their first day in training. "With Voxware, new hires are fully trained and ready to start picking within the first hour of the first day," says Rosser.

Voice has also helped Hi-Spec's accuracy increase from 99.5% to 99.9%. For the first 4-6 weeks, Rosser kept his team of auditors at their posts. "We soon realized that our accuracy had improved so much that we no longer needed auditors to perform that last check at the end of the picking sequence," he says. As a result, they were able to shorten their picking sequence and begin picking later in the day.

As for operational efficiency, Hi-Spec's decision to modernize the warehouse has had ripple effects throughout the facility. Thanks to Voxware alone, Hi-Spec has seen a 15-20% increase in operational efficiency.