

Voice that Puts Vroom into the DC

We saw Voxware as a good way to extend our WMS and gain cost benefits without having to embark upon an expensive WMS upgrade.

Josh Lankford
Manager, Logistics Support
Advance Auto Parts

By the Numbers

10

% increase in productivity

50

% decrease in errors

25

% reduction in training time

Quick Facts

Objectives

- Improve picking efficiency
- Add new intelligence to legacy WMS without incurring expensive WMS upgrade costs
- Improve operational quality
- Decrease training time

Solution

- Voxware order picking software
- Honeywell rugged mobile computers
- Voice driven tasks with optional expert mode
- Configurable, rules-based software

Business Value

- Reduced cost from gains in operating efficiency
- Costly WMS upgrade avoided yet cost benefits realized
- 10% productivity improvement
- 50% reduction in errors
- 25% reduction in training time

Advance Auto Parts is a Fortune 500 company with over 3400 retail locations. Honored by Forbes as the best-managed automotive aftermarket company in the retail sector, Advance Auto Parts has served customers for nearly 80 years.

Expanding operating margins is one of Advance Auto Parts' key corporate goals. With 8 distribution centers processing millions of lines each year, the company embarked on a program of leveraging Voxware's voice picking technology, and realized cost savings benefits as a result.

Expansion of WMS Capabilities

"We saw Voxware's software as a way to gain cost benefits without having to undertake an expensive WMS upgrade," said Josh Lankford, Manager of Logistics Support. "Integration between Voxware and our WMS was quickly accomplished, and in the end we realized cost savings that have given us money to invest in other areas, such as our move to Red Prairie."

With the Voxware solution, more orders can be clustered together, and pick paths are more efficient. Workers operate hands-free and eyes-up, and are more focused on work practices.

Hardware Independence

Before implementation, Advance Auto Parts ran live trials of Voxware VMS using several mobile devices from different manufacturers. "We didn't want to get stuck in a single-vendor hardware relationship," said Lankford. "We verified that Voxware VMS is portable, and had the same voice application operating on multiple devices without any programming changes."

For deployment, Advance Auto Parts chose rugged

voice-only devices manufactured by Honeywell.

In addition to hardware independence, the nature of Voxware's software with rules-based logic made the solution less expensive and easier to scale than alternatives that had been considered.

Positive Results

After a short time positive results began to accrue. Productivity increased 10%, due in part to Voxware's "expert mode," which allows power users to combine responses into a single utterance.

Training time was reduced 25%. Voxware VMS walks users through each task, making it easier for new employees to learn what to do. At any time, a user can ask, "What do I say?" ... and receive in-context help. Supervisors are able to spend more time on managerial tasks and less time babysitting new employees.

Accuracy has also improved with a 50% reduction in errors compared to the RF scanning system in use before Voxware. Errors would sometimes occur because SKUs must often be densely packed into pick faces, and team members would inadvertently pick up the wrong product. With Voxware the product is verbally verified and automatically checked in real time, and the operator is notified of the mistake before anything else can be done. This is the cheapest way to correct an error – just as it is about to occur.

Voice picking has been rolled out to all eight distribution centers, and is being expanded into other functional areas. Advance Auto Parts is happy with the ROI and the continued realization of cost savings across its extensive distribution operation.