

## Case Study: Frontier Distributing



From its 100,000 square feet distribution center in Oxford, Michigan, Frontier Distributing serves nearly 700 Pet Specialty Retailers in Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana. These retailers range from single store independent operators to multi-store, multi-state operations, and all primarily brick and mortar businesses.

### The Quest to Modernize the Distribution Center Begins

In 2015, Frontier Distributing began evaluating its internal processes looking to improve its distribution center operation and the productivity of nearly 70 employees who make it successful. One of the first opportunities they saw to increase efficiency and improve accuracy was reconsidering their paper pick-ticket process.

“We were a very paper intensive organization. Every day, we had stacks of paper over a foot tall on desks in the distribution center,” said Mark Smith, founder and President of Frontier Distributing. “We relied on paper pick-tickets, which had to be separated by zones. It was a very labor-intensive and time-intensive process. Not to mention that this process made it easy to make mistakes and lower our accuracy rate.”

The team at Frontier thought that voice automation software would be a viable solution, but they needed to ensure it could integrate with their existing ERP system. The other challenge they faced, was a lack of existing RF infrastructure. Frontier’s distribution center is made up of 60,000 square feet of perishable goods and two other zones containing hard goods and a freezer for raw goods.

### Frontier Turns to Voxware for Voice Automation

Frontier began discussing their challenge with Voxware in May of 2015. After a visit to an existing Voxware customer’s site that summer and reviewing an implementation plan from Voxware’s project implementation team, Frontier executed a multi-year agreement for Voxware’s Cloud-based [Voice Management Suite](#).

“During the whole process, we never considered anyone other than Voxware,” said Mark Smith. “We knew that Voxware had the unique position of not being a



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— Mark Smith,  
Founder & President,  
Frontier Distributing



part of anyone's WMS or ERP systems, so their team already had the expertise of integrating into different packages to make it work flawlessly."

Frontier, Voxware and a local installer in Oxford, Michigan worked together to deploy all the necessary infrastructure, including a full wireless network throughout the distribution center in all the zones and freezer.

After a short time using Voxware, Frontier immediately started realizing results.

"By implementing Voxware, we were able to improve our pick accuracy to 99.9%," said Jacob Smith, General Manager of Frontier Distributing. "That figure is tremendous, because many of our customers don't have the ability to stock large storage rooms. If one of our customers doesn't get their order, it's a big deal to them."

## Utilizing Analytics to Better Manage the Distribution Center

In addition to voice picking, Frontier relies on [VoxPilot](#), Voxware's supply chain analytics solution to better manage its staff and picking routes.

"VoxPilot has really helped us to reorder our routes so that we can pick them in a more efficient manner," said Jacob Smith. "It also gives us the ability to see what each employee is working on at a given time and how much time they are taking between tasks. The data is improving productivity and making our employees' experiences better."

When starting their journey, Frontier was very cognizant of the benefits that voice automation would offer. However, there were a few unexpected benefits realized.

"The amount of time it takes to get a new employee trained up has been much less time-consuming than in the past," commented Josh Strangway, Fleet Facility Supervisor at Frontier Distributing. "We can get a headset on them and have them ride around with a more experienced worker to learn how and what is being said to get them working almost instantaneously."

One of the other concerns that Frontier workers face daily is that nearly every bag of pet food looks nearly identical from each brand. According to Mark Smith, "Voxware has been a tremendous help in regard to enabling the pickers to accurately select the right product."

"We focus on the end experience for our customer, and that begins with timely and accurate delivery of what they need" said Mark Smith. "Our goal is to help them succeed in this industry and Voxware's technology helps our team deliver a superior customer experience."

## Success Highlights

- Achieved **99.9% pick accuracy**
- **Improved picking routes**
- Tremendous **reduction in time spent training** new employees
- Use of technology **enhanced overall employee experience**
- Helped deliver a **superior customer experience**

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