

COMPANY: CADENCE
INDUSTRY: DENTAL EQUIPMENT SUPPLY

VOICE-POWERED RESULTS:

OBJECTIVE

- /// Reduce order returns by improving picking quality
- /// Increase flexibility during activity peaks
- /// Improve productivity

RESULTS

- /// Pick error rate reduced from 4% to 1.6% in four months, equivalent to 0.35% line errors on partial order picking
- /// Picking processes and routes improved
- /// Temporary workers quickly and easily assimilated
- /// Encourages operator multi-tasking
- /// Enhanced work quality for teams

RETURN ON INVESTMENT

- /// Order line costs reduced
- /// Quality control tables dispensed with virtually over night

"Investing in a state-of-the-art solution like Vocollect is a clear signal to our customers that we are committed to providing top quality service."

Grégoire Corby,
logistics manager, Cadence



Voice-powered solutions for enhanced warehouse performance

Cadence is a central purchasing organization based in Tremblay-en-France (Paris region). It began operations in August 2007 following the merger of three GACD Group companies. The company's activities include mail order selling for France and abroad, third-party brand retail and manufacturing of products under the Cadence brand. Its mission is to concentrate logistics operations at a single high-capacity platform (in terms of flows and resources) in order to achieve economies of scale by sharing inventories, offer world-class services, improve productivity and, ultimately, to provide an attractive competitive offering while also improving profitability. The Cadence warehouse handles three categories of products for dental and orthodontic offices, dental prosthesis manufacturers and hospitals: consumables (cutters, beakers, gloves, etc.), equipment (chairs, sterilizers, furniture, etc.) and corporate gifts. A total of 11,000 order lines are received each day, representing approximately 3,500 packages, half partial, half full.

THE CHALLENGE

Foster more fluid picking to accommodate annual activity peaks

Cadence experiences an activity peak in the fourth quarter: "We make 40% of our sales during this period," remarks Grégoire Corby, logistics manager at Cadence. "When we first began operating in 2007, this peak posed a major problem. So we called on Hardis to make some suggestions for improvement."

Early deployment of the Reflex Warehouse Management System from Hardis enabled identification of three key picking processes among the seven in place at the Cadence site: picking of high rotation small items (18,000 active references) stored in 21 Kardex carousels, dynamic and static picking, representing 4,000 product references, and full package picking.

"Having equipped more than 2,500 warehouse workers with voice-operated solutions, we had the experience feedback needed to address the challenges facing Cadence, partly by implementing voice-powered systems for the picking process as these are far more suitable in this case than other available technologies, such as radio frequency," explains Renaud Bézier, sales engineer at Hardis.

THE SOLUTION

Integration of Vocollect voice recognition technology in the Reflex WMS from Hardis: the winning duo for optimizing picking processes!

The keys to success in a logistics system built around voice-powered technology are accurate picking route preparation and high-quality two-way dialogue between

"Voice technology has resulted in significantly fewer customer returns, coupled with increased productivity."

Grégoire Corby,
logistics manager, Cadence

the application and the warehouse workers, who must fulfill orders line by line. Cadence benefited from long-standing technological collaboration between Hardis and Psion Teklogix, enabling the Reflex WMS and TekSpeech middleware to be configured via a standard interface. "Before May 2008, workers used paper order lists. We had already made as many process improvements as possible using Reflex in readiness for a technological upgrade. So integrating Vocollect couldn't have been easier and took just two months," says Renaud Bézier. To standardize processes across the site, Cadence and Hardis then set about extending voice-directed picking to the warehouse's "Full Package" area. Cadence conducted an in-house communication campaign to promote the advantages of the voice-directed system, which consists of Vocollect Talkman® T5 wearable computer terminals and Vocollect Talkman® SR20 headsets. "Our pickers quickly saw the advantages of keeping their eyes and hands free, especially for partial order picking which requires both hands," points out Grégoire Corby.

THE RESULTATS

Fewer customer returns and enhanced work quality

"We are wholly convinced of the countless benefits offered by voice-driven picking," says Grégoire Corby. "It takes just one and one-half hours to train an operator to use Talkman, which means that both permanent and temporary workers become fully operational fast – putting everyone on the same footing regardless of their seniority. The result is a stress-free environment, more efficiently loaded packages, significantly fewer customer returns and higher overall productivity! We've even been able to eliminate the quality control tables, which were a real bottleneck."

Two months after installing the voice-driven system, the pick error rate had fallen by 1%. The next step for Grégoire Corby's team is to standardize picking methods using the Kardex carousels. Implementing the same methods at all work stations will extend multitasking capabilities across the workforce.



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