Vocollect Case Study

Splosh Operates With the Gift of Voice

Voice Results

🖿 Objectives

– Streamline operation processes
– Eliminate workflow inefficiencies of RF system
– Increase productivity and accuracy

🖿 Application

– Order selection

🖿 Installation

– Vocollect Talkman® A500
– SR20 Series Headsets

🖿 Results

– Increased productivity by more than 20%
– Streamlined procedures and policies
– Reduced training time by at least 50%
– Improved safety to zero incidents

Immediate productivity gains in the warehouse

Splosh Australia is a fast expanding homeware and giftware wholesaler that has been in operation since 2000. The company not only imports and distributes its own designs and brands, but also represents a number of overseas manufacturers through exclusive distribution agreements. An efficacious supply chain is therefore, critical to Splosh, which sees its business growing to over 2,000 customers in Australia and New Zealand.

Operating out of its high throughput distribution centre (DC) in Brisbane, Splosh has about 2,100 square meters (approximately 22,604 square foot) of warehousing space with approximately 1,500 picking locations and 700 bulk store pallet bays. It's picking and dispatch for the entire operation is executed by 10 staff and they are all trained on voice.

Sound of Silence

In the early days, order picking was done via paper assignments. Instructions and reminders would be frequently sent from the office to the distribution floor. However, as its business grew, so did its need for higher productivity, so paper order picking was replaced by RF barcode scanning. Unfortunately, this proved to be only a temporary measure, because the increasing sales volume quickly overwhelmed the technology in just three years. To keep up with demand, Splosh needed to find a way to increase warehouse efficiency and to make its DC future-proof.

Splosh's WMS implementation partner suggested Vocollect Voice as a candidate. This industry leading solution features functionalities that not only matched the operational aims of Splosh, but also has the added advantage of offering true mobility for workers, with its robust hands- and eyes-free devices.

"We trusted that Vocollect was the perfect next step for us, and so we went with the advice from our implementation partner," said Michael Kendall, Director, Splosh Australia.

"With Vocollect, we've improved our inventory accuracy and enhanced our customer service at a time when we are rapidly growing our business."

Michael Kendall
Director
Splosh Australia

Finding its Voice

Splosh's voice implementation consisted of Vocollect Voice, Vocollect Talkman A500 mobile appliance, and purpose-built SR20 Series headsets – all of which are now working seamlessly with the WMS in the backend.

With picking locations spread out across the entire warehouse floor due to the bulk of the merchandise – voice-assisted picking was deployed for the order selection process to make pick-and-pack an efficient, straight forward process.

Michael was pleasantly surprised at how easily pickers adapted to Vocollect Voice, resulting in an immediate jump of about 10% in accuracy levels. Even though Splosh had good accuracy with the RF system previously, it wasn't able to achieve a breakthrough in this regard. Errors in picking were eliminated by Vocollect Voice, through a system of verbal checks and verification, conducted on the fly as workers go about completing their tasks.

Since Voice kept the picking processes simple and uncomplicated, staff gained confidence with its use after one or two picks. Even among long-standing employees, whom Michael thought would offer a degree of resistance with the switch, took to Voice very quickly.

Credit too goes to the training culture at Splosh, which ensures its staff were involved as much as possible for changes that were made to the workflow.

Michael explained: "By involving them in these processes, we found that user acceptance was much higher than expected, with the staff excited by the prospect of this new implementation. In fact, they were asking the management when they could start using it!"

Besides benefiting existing staff, Voice has also allowed Splosh to introduce "casual" employees into the warehouse and not worry about getting them up to speed. Training time has been reduced from about 3 days to mere hours.

Vocollect Voice, with its advanced speech recognition technology, allows workers to communicate with the WMS regardless of their accent. The difference in Australian and New Zealander accents thus, posed no problems to the system, and newcomers could be left to work unsupervised in about an hour.

Other Problems: Solved

The simplicity of Voice also meant that workers could receive instructions on the move, and a lot of the explaining and briefing before they start their picks have now been done away with, making it a lot less complicated for them to complete their tasks.

With the old RF technology, some staff didn't handle the scanners ergonomically, leading to straining and endurance issues, and that affected productivity. This was resolved when Vocollect Voice frees their hands and eyes, allowing them to pick the orders and pack into the cartons more effectively.

Productivity for Splosh's Jewellery range in particular, saw great improvement. This range requires multiple small items picked from storage drawers, so the process was much slower when using RF. With Voice, speed has improved, and batch picking is now possible. Splosh will soon be implementing 'batch pick' for all picking of multiple small orders.

From an equipment point of view, the construct of the Talkman mobile appliance makes it far more durable than a handheld RF scanner. With no screens, keyboards or scanners – components of RF that are prone to wear and tear – Vocollect's equipment offers hassle-free maintenance and servicing.

Other immediate improvements that Splosh has experienced include:

- Increased productivity by more than 20%
- Reduced training time by at least 50%
- Improved safety to zero incidents
- Staff endurance increased by not scanning and packing with one hand

Future Plans

"As our operation continues to grow, we can already see other potential uses for the voice system within the warehouse. We may consider using Voice to unload shipping containers (which is now done manually) as a large majority of the cartons do not come with barcodes and require both hands to move," said Michael.

"Furthermore, the ability to batch small orders into a single pick for an operator will provide further efficiency in the warehouse!"