

COMPANY: HENDERSONS
INDUSTRY: RETAIL STORE DISTRIBUTION

VOICE-POWERED RESULTS

OBJECTIVES

- ▄ Increase accuracy and streamline warehouse operations

VOICE-POWERED RESULTS

- ▄ Error rates reduced from 0.25% to just 0.01% the equivalent of over £40,000 stg in four months from the reduced number of returns
- ▄ Warehouse production improved by 5%
- ▄ Training down to 4-6 weeks from 13 weeks



Hendersons streamlines logistics processes with voice recognition

Henderson Group Ltd is the owner of the Spar, Eurospar, Vivo, and Vivoxtra franchises in Northern Ireland and has been distributing food and grocery-related products to the convenience retail sector for over 100 years.

Employing over 1,900 people, Hendersons is the largest family-owned business in Northern Ireland and the sole Spar franchisee in the country since 1960. In today's fast-paced convenience retail sector, the efficient management and distribution of over 6,000 food lines is critical to the continued success of Hendersons. To supply almost 400 privately owned and independent stores, the company has 230,000 sq feet of ambient, fresh and frozen warehousing.

"We have reduced our reported error rate from 0.25% to just 0.01%. This equates to a saving of over £40,000 stg in four months from the reduced number of returns."

Alan Abraham,
Logistics System Manager, Henderson Group Ltd

THE CHALLENGE

New WMS paves way for greater warehouse efficiencies

In 2002 Hendersons began an innovative programme to transform its distribution centre at Mallusk, Belfast enabling it to improve customer service and minimise stockholding. Following the successful implementation of an advanced warehouse management system (WMS), Exceed from Infor, Hendersons decided to voice-enable the picking of grocery products in its ambient warehouse.

THE SOLUTION

Voice recognition increases accuracy and productivity

Hendersons selected Zetes for the voice implementation. Zetes worked with Hendersons to model and implement the Zetes 3iVoice Solution based on Vocollect Voice, according to their requirements. This links the WMS directly with the workforce. The system/user dialogue is established via Vocollect mobile wearable computers, headsets and microphones, allowing workers to verbally exchange stock information with the WMS in real-time, and perform their tasks without having to carry paper lists.

With traditional paper-based picking systems mistakes are often made as workers select the wrong item and struggle to consult and update pick lists whilst loading items safely onto pallets. Voice systems eliminate these challenges by relaying detailed stock item information between the worker and the WMS.

THE RESULTS

Hendersons realises instant return on investment

The impact of voice has been dramatic, Hendersons has reduced its reported error rate from 0.25% to 0.01% saving the equivalent of over £40,000 stg in four months from the reduced number of returns. Production has also improved by 5% largely due to the transformation of late picks. With paper-based picking, workers couldn't plan for missing or delayed stock and had to return to a specific location at the end of the complete picking line to check if the missing product had been replenished. With the new 'go back' functionality the problem is resolved as the real-time communication between the WMS and the worker triggers the action as soon as the item is replenished. Savings have also been made in training. New recruits typically required 13 weeks to become competent but now need only 4-6 weeks, with a good operative level attainable after just 14 days. The acceptance of the new system by existing workers was also positive. Hendersons attributes this to voice-profile training undertaken with each worker and the system's ability to recognise many dialects and accents.

The voice deployment in the ambient warehouse has exceeded Hendersons' expectations, resulting in voice now being extended to picking of non-grocery products with future consideration for frozen goods.

"The introduction of voice has resulted in almost paperless, highly efficient processes and our customer service is at its highest level ever."

Philip Mehaffey,
Hendersons Logistics Manager



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