

# Vocollect Case Study

## Nisa Today's

Making a Difference Locally



### Voice Results

#### Objectives

- Minimisation of order picking errors
- Enable supply chain efficiency
- Enhanced health and safety
- Improve productivity
- Improve customer satisfaction

#### Application

- Order picking of ambient, BWS and high value goods

#### Installation

- Seamless integration with the AquiTec SCM400 Warehouse Management System
- Vocollect Talkman® T2 and T5 mobile computing devices
- Radio network in accordance with IEEE 802.11b standard

#### Results

- Increased productivity and throughput by 10%
- Accuracy increased to 99.8%

### Nisa Today's and Vocollect - Future Proofing Warehousing Processes

Nisa Today's is the UK's leading member-owned organisation, providing benefits to independent retailers and wholesalers in food and drink markets. There are 765 Nisa retail members operating over 5,000 stores and 228 Today's wholesale companies with 270 depots, making it possibly Europe's biggest independent buying group. The rapidly expanding Nisa Today's group runs a central distribution service (CDS) for member stores, with ambient and licensed products handled out of three warehouses in Scunthorpe and chilled and frozen foods from a modern, dual temperature facility in Stoke-on-Trent.

As the UK's largest buying group for independent retailers and wholesalers, Nisa Today's main objectives are to negotiate the lowest possible cost price for goods and to ensure the most efficient supply chain possible for its members. To achieve these, the group reviewed IT-based processes in the warehouse. This involved the deployment of voice-directed systems to deliver unmatched productivity and accuracy throughout warehousing processes.

### The Challenge

#### To Enable Supply Chain Efficiency for Member Companies

Nisa Today's typically has up to 100 concurrent pickers on the warehouse floor at any time, during their early, late, night and weekend shifts. For their picking operations, warehouse operators would use paper label lists, returning to collect a new list after completing each pick assignment.

To improve workers' productivity, the group opted to bypass leading RF scanning-based picking technologies in favour of a cutting-edge, yet well-proven voice-recognition system, for maximum future proofing. After a series of phased trials, Vocollect's Talkman voice-directed distribution system was gradually introduced to 360 pickers across five shifts.

*"The introduction of voice has helped us to compete effectively in a challenging marketplace, while also enhancing the working environment for our employees."*

**Stephen Hunter**  
Managing Director,  
Logistics  
Nisa Today's

## The Solution

### Voice Technology for Order Pickers

Vocollect's Talkman System was seamlessly integrated with the existing warehouse management system SCM/400 supplied by AquiTec. UK Vocollect Voice Certified Partner VoiteQ provided the middleware for integrating the two systems with the minimum of disruption to established working processes. The group of 'Super Users', who were involved with the voice initiative from the onset, were responsible for training the remaining picking staff, with trainees undergoing a two-week induction period. Super Users were issued with special listening kits enabling them to hear the instructions pickers were receiving and the responses they were feeding back.

"The whole training process was incredibly easy; in some ways it was easier than the procedures we were replacing, as the only change for business users is that they communicate with the system using the most natural form of communication they know - speech," said Stephen Hunter.

Nisa Today's chose to run existing Label Pick procedures in parallel with the voice pick application initially, enabling roll out as quickly or as slowly as the business dictated.

Hunter explained, "We used a Reference-SRF card, which indicated to the user whether to use voice, labels or both, for any given assignment. Running them simultaneously guaranteed a risk-free implementation for us, allowing a gradual increase in the number of voice pickers as they increased confidence through their training."

The migration to voice picking was completed in 12 months and now, Nisa Today's is now using Talkman voice-directed technology for every picking task with a portfolio of over 300 units in use. It has retained the use of barcodes as check digits for added contingency with high value items such as cigarettes, however the benefits of voice are already shining through.

## The Results

### Increased Productivity, Accuracy and Safety

Nisa Today's achieved a ten percent overall increase in warehouse productivity and an ROI of approximately 12 to 18 months from the implementation of the voice system. Often lists and handheld devices are responsible for delays through loss of momentum, as users repeatedly put down their instructions to pick and load a product.

As pickers are able to work "Hands-free, Eyes-free™" the general pace is increased, resulting in greater productivity. Nisa Today's has reported a dramatic rise in pick accuracy to 99.8 percent with the voice system; up 50 percent on previous picking methods.

Because the voice system will not allow users to progress to the next pick until it is satisfied with the status of the current pick, it is virtually impossible to make a mistake. This method eliminates the occurrence of mis-keying that is common with handheld terminal methods and therefore also saves on delivery shortages or over-picks that take time to discover and are costly to rectify. As safety was also a specific concern for Nisa Today's, one of the key factors in its decision to implement a voice-based solution was that it would enable users to focus on the task in hand, without constantly having to look down at a piece of paper or read a display on a hand held terminal. For a large, high-speed operation such as Nisa Today's, where a large number of people and pieces of machinery occupy the warehouse floor at all times, this was deemed critical to the safety of staff. As a result of the impact that the voice-directed system has had on the fluidity of the supply chain and consequent profitability of the business - not to mention the morale of warehouse employees, who enjoy using the system - voice is the preferred solution for future development.

"Competing effectively in such a challenging marketplace is always a primary focus for us. We are therefore committed to identifying new ways to inject extra efficiency into the supply chain," stated Stephen Hunter. "The implementation of voice recognition technology has helped us to achieve this, whilst also enhancing the working environment for our employees."



Vocollect North America:  
info@vocollect.com  
+1 412 829 8145

Vocollect EMEA:  
voc\_emea@vocollect.com  
+44 (0) 1628 55 2900

Vocollect APAC:  
apac@vocollect.com  
+852 3915 7000

Vocollect Latin America:  
latin\_america@vocollect.com  
+1 412 349 2675

Vocollect Japan:  
japan@vocollect.com  
+813 3769 5601

Vocollect Singapore:  
singapore@vocollect.com  
+65 6248 4928

### About Vocollect

Vocollect, a business unit of Intermec, is the number one provider of voice solutions for mobile workers worldwide, helping customers achieve a higher level of business performance through voice. Every day Vocollect enables over 300,000 workers worldwide to distribute more than \$3.5 billion dollars' worth of goods from distribution centers and warehouses to customer locations. A global team of over 2,000 supply chain reseller and channel partner experts supports Vocollect Voice offerings in 60 countries and in over 35 languages. Vocollect's VoiceWorld Suite integrates with all major WMS and ERP systems, including SAP, and supports the industry's leading mobile device solutions.

For more information, visit [www.vocollect.com](http://www.vocollect.com)