

Vocollect Case Study

HBW Foodservice

Tighter Operations

Voice Results

Objectives

- Streamline operation processes
- Plug work flow loop holes of existing scanning system
- Increase productivity and accuracy

Application

- Order selection (pick by item, carton and random weight)
- Picking in cold storage

Installation

- Vocollect Talkman® A500
- SR30 Series Headsets
- Navigator WMS

Results

- Increased productivity and efficiency
- Improved traceability
- Reduced cost in equipment maintenance, servicing and replacement
- Reduced training resources

Voice-assisted distribution provides greater productivity with minimal resource outlay.

Australia's HBW Foodservice, established in 1980, is part of the Countrywide Network of food service companies. As a food wholesaler, it specializes in direct-to-store delivery to restaurants, take-away stores and hotels across Queensland, from Hervey Bay, Maryborough, Bundaberg, Gin Gin to as far afield as Longreach and Cunnamulla.

The delivery network is serviced by a fleet of six refrigerated trucks out of its 3,000 square meters (approximately 32,291 square foot) central warehouse in Hervey Bay. This distribution centre (DC) delivers a host of food stuff and catering supplies, including frozen, dry and processed foods – logging an approximate 250 picks of items per hour and delivering about 3,000 cases of product per week.

With the F&B establishments in Australia renowned for their freshness of ingredients, HBW is driven to continuously upgrade its distribution processes to meet customers' demands and satisfaction levels. Such measures include an update of its distribution system, to DCS 2, a new business management system custom-written for the food-service industry, and a revamp of its picking process.

"Our original barcode scanning technology required pickers to use both hands for picking," explained Evan Geale, Operation Manager, HBW Foodservice. "We also had problems with scanning in the freezer, where the screen would fog up or barcodes unable to be captured due to the labels being frozen over."

These difficulties, plus escalating expenses related to the maintenance and repair of scanning equipment, were hurting the DC's productivity and bottom line. Evan felt that the operations could gain greater efficiency using tools better suited to freezer and cold store environments.

In particular, he wanted to see improvements in productivity and accuracy levels. "We were looking for a way to tidy up this process," he summarized.



"Vocollect Voice has streamlined our operations and provided us with increased productivity and improved accuracy. The new equipment is robust and effective for use in cold storage, and that will bring down our cost of ownership in the long run."

Evan Geale
Operation Manager
HBW Foodservice

Streamlining

While searching for the scanning system replacement, one technology stood out – voice-assisted distribution. RFBS, the systems integrator for HBW's DC, had previously mentioned the benefits of voice technology to Evan. From what he understood, Evan believed that it could be the last piece of puzzle to complete the picture. With no comparable technology available that had a better fit than voice, he decided to go with the market leader of this arena, Vocollect.

Once identified, HBW quickly adopted Vocollect Voice solution, deployed with the new Talkman A500 mobile computing voice appliance, and specialized headsets that robustly cancel out high decibel ambient noises. The entire implementation is now working seamlessly with its Navigator Warehouse Management System (WMS), in both ambient and cold storage environments.

Picking on Ice

HBW's voice-assisted distribution was kicked-off with order selection, which encompasses critical processes like pick by item, by carton and by random weight – prioritized based on the day of delivery and the time of the delivery run. Picking conditions get significantly tougher in the freezer-room, which is kept at a temperature of -20°C, and requires workers to trek out their assignments in protective gear – including thick gloves.

Evan noted that soon after the implementation, the pickers were no longer going to the wrong warehouse zones or aisles when executing their orders. With the voice system directing them throughout the picking process, they were able to complete their order selection in and out of cold storage with ease. Vocollect Voice allows them to fulfil their orders with clockwork precision the first time, every time.

In the new process, each picker is voice-directed to the next location on the pick slip and is asked to read the last three digits of the product's barcode. Once the correct code is verified, the picker is told how many cartons or loose items to pick. As he loads the products into a waiting trolley, he will verbally confirm the quantity picked. Operators can also 'ask' for more information about the product, including product code, description, location and quantity on hand. The system, in the meantime, automatically sends pick and inventory updates, along with worker productivity statistics through to the WMS.

"Vocollect has helped us with traceability of our meat products," said Evan. "We label each piece of cryovaccated meat with the batch number, the weight of the meat, and the best before date as it is picked. The Talkman asks the picker to speak the batch, weight, best before date and produces a label for each piece, giving us greater traceability."

"We can also pick meat in two different ways, depending on how the customers place their orders. If a customer orders eight pieces, the Vocollect system collects eight weights and prints eight labels. We can also ask the pick to be up to 10 kilograms, and Vocollect Voice will accommodate that as well."

Benefits

With HBW's operations streamlined by Vocollect Voice, other benefits surfaced, like a reduced training time (where a picker can be ready for the floor in under three hours) and having the freedom to use both eyes and hands when picking. To the picker, hands- and eyes-free means being able to move around easier, faster and safer – improving overall work accuracy and efficiency.

The voice equipment's climate-resistance also allows picking to be conducted with no glitches in and out of refrigerated environments, thus improving productivity while reducing equipment maintenance and repair costs.

From a big-picture perspective, the change from scanning to voice was straightforward. Operators who were used to the older scanning technology quickly adapted to Vocollect Voice and the process improvements it enabled. To the management, this solution provides a new level of monitoring and management tools to ensure customers receive on-time, in-full deliveries without damage or mistakes.

At the time of print, HBW has seven workers trained for the new voice solution. Even at this skeletal strength, the DC is experiencing increased productivity and worker satisfaction levels. As the use of Vocollect Voice expands to other processes, Evan is confident that the whole operation will run even more efficiently, and expects operational, maintenance and scalability costs to go on a proportionate decline.



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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