

# Voice Enabled Technology Has Proven Its Value



There are numerous benefits to implementing voice, there's no question. Accuracy is the most obvious as is improved productivity. Significant savings can be realized by reducing the amount of paper pick tickets and labels, and decreasing the amount of accidents as a result of changing to a hands-free and eye-free operation. Other notable benefits include increased efficiencies in stocking, cycle counting, and service levels, as well as reduced training time for new employees.

Voice certainly is not a new concept in the supply chain industry. When it was first introduced, it proved to be extremely effective in the food and grocery channel. Then voice gained momentum and we saw an expansion into other high volume, labor intensive operations – mass merchandising, third-party logistics, consumer goods, and the automotive market. However, we are still asking ourselves:

- *When does it make sense to implement voice?*
- *Is the financial investment worth it?*

Warehousing and distribution center operations continue to increase in complexity, requiring companies to create a flexible environment that can easily adapt to changes driven by consumer demand and industry growth. At the same time, supply chain managers are trying to do more with less to reduce expenses and increase profit margins. Both create their own set of challenges. Voice enabled technology can prove to be a very effective tool to address these challenges and provide a quantifiable payback typically realized within the first nine-to-twelve months.

Voice technology was first introduced in the supply chain arena to automate picking activities, which remains its most common use today. The immediate success of voice in driving enhancements to productivity, accuracy, and safety, in conjunction with its quick return on investment, accelerated the industry to expand its technology to include other common warehouse activities – putaway, replenishment, cycle counting, receiving – where additional gains could be achieved. The industry boasts over 10 percent penetration in distribution centers and warehouses in North America and Europe, with an increasing presence in Asian markets.

The voice industry continued to evolve making the shift from proprietary hardware to standards-based, open solutions to simplify integrations with WMS and ERP host systems, and other technologies such as barcode scanners. Upgrades can be accomplished much faster and more economically because



the pool of developers familiar with this technology has expanded significantly in recent years. Innovation and competitive pricing changed the landscape of voice enabled hardware and reduced the total cost of ownership. Now, midsize companies with smaller warehouse operations are able to see the performance benefits and ROI much more quickly.

The speed at which voice enabled technology can bring a positive contribution to your operation cannot be ignored. In addition to the obvious advantages, – increasing productivity, improving accuracy, and reducing labor costs – voice solutions require a short learning curve, provide multi-lingual voice options to accommodate diverse labor markets, and allow companies to deploy a single technology throughout their entire network of facilities. Voice solutions are scalable, adaptable, and portable making it easier for companies to achieve rapid, measurable gains through voice versus traditional picking solutions.

For any organization seeking to sustain an agile, productive, and efficient supply chain network, voice technology has proven its value in the warehouse. It is a beneficial and robust tool in operational environments, and provides considerable productivity gains that cannot be matched in delivering the greatest return on investment.

## **What solutions are available?**

Vocollect®, along with its worldwide partners, is recognized as the leading provider of integrated voice solutions. Vocollect's VoiceLink® software application was the first of its kind to leverage leading-edge open source technology through Vocollect Voice® Integration Platform. This new platform allows Vocollect Voice applications to fit easily and cleanly within an enterprise-wide IT strategy. Vocollect also offers its VoiceDirect® solution, which is a direct, real-time interface to common WMS applications providing immediate visibility and status updates of your warehouse operation. Vocollect's Talkman® T-5 terminal is the latest generation Talkman wearable computer and is equipped with Bluetooth capabilities to provide wireless connectivity to critical warehouse functions and activities.

Some of the other industry leading voice solutions include: Voxware, Dematic, Lucas Systems, Motorola, Datria Systems, and topVOX.



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