

WHITEPAPER

Manage rising customer expectations with voice in the warehouse

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Over the past 10 years, customers have developed a desire to have what they want, when they want it—even when the distribution center holding that item is across the country.

What used to be considered a last-minute purchase has now become the norm, with many customers waiting to place an order until the last minute rather than planning ahead. These last-minute orders can put high stress on warehouses, as shipping windows and cutoff times become increasingly important.

With these new expectations, many companies find themselves facing tough decisions. Do you hire more workers? Increase overtime? Or do you pass the cost onto the customer themselves? Luckily, voice technology is able to address many of the problems created by rising expectations, while adding benefits that positively impact the operation as a whole.



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About voice

Voice technology for use in the distribution center was created with one purpose in mind: maximizing operational efficiency in the warehouse.

Traditional warehouse technologies, like paper and RF scanning, require workers to transfer their attention from the task at hand to a piece of paper or screen and back, taking time and increasing the likelihood of error.

With voice, workers are hands-free and eyes-free, with the voice system feeding instructions from your WMS to your worker through a headset. This allows them to work quickly and efficiently, increasing productivity and accuracy throughout your warehouse.

Voice is typically used to support tasks such as order selection, put-away, replenishment and cycle counting within the warehouse, but it can be deployed into many other areas as well. Industries with a high degree

of human touch, such as Grocery and Food and Beverage, were early to embrace voice technology. However, the technology has made significant gains in other industry segments, including automotive service parts, retail, 3PL, eCommerce, manufacturing, wholesale and distribution.



Voice boasts benefits like improved productivity, accuracy, training time, and safety, with many companies reaching an ROI in less than 12 months.



Last-minute purchases

Although a purchase may be made last minute, the expectations customers have rarely change.

Failing to deliver the right product within the window your customers' desire will result in lost business, and potentially drive your customers to the competition for future purchases.

Luckily, voice can ease the stress that caused by these last-minute purchases. Operations that equip their workers with voice tend to see a 10–30% increase in productivity, making hitting those small shipping windows an easy target. These increases often lead to a decrease in overtime and other operational expenses, as your current workers can produce more than they could even with those extra hours.



With companies like Amazon, Walmart, Best Buy and more offering free two-day shipping, short shipping windows are becoming a standard for many industries.



Live inventory updates

With the rise of eCommerce, many businesses have had to transform their warehouses to handle online orders in addition to the regularly scheduled inventory shipments.



This means warehouses need more information than ever before to ensure they can meet customers' needs.

The voice software enables live updates into your WMS or ERP system, so you will always have up to date information on inventory changes. This allows you to be fully informed when making decisions or promises, and even allows you to reroute workers mid-pick.

The live updates have an additional benefit of keeping your online customers up to date, as they can see when your stock changes or when items are on back stock.

Accurate orders



When an order arrives that is short an item, or has the wrong item included in place of what they order, customers tend to see that error as a reflection of the company, rather than the picker.

For many people, the arrival of an accurate order is the most important factor when dealing with a company.

With voice, your pickers will be hands and eyes free, allowing them to stay focused on the task at hand as they navigate through the warehouse. There is no need to look down to check an RF screen or mark off an item on a piece of paper, so the chance of a mispick can be reduced by up to 50%.

Value-added processes

Value-added processes incur within many kinds of manufacturing companies, especially when a level of customization is offered. These processes often come with a considerable price tag, and considerable expectations from the customer.

While voice is mostly known for picking, it has found a strong application case for repetitive value added processes. Rather than having a sheet of paper that gets passed from line worker to line worker, and then stored away should there ever be an issue, voice provides the information through a headset. This information ensures that each worker is following a standard process, and logs their information into the system rather than onto a sheet of paper.



Not only is this more environmentally friendly, but it also provides an efficient way to store pertinent information like who inspected the item and when it was completed.

CONCLUSION

While customers are the lifeblood of your organization, they shouldn't be the one running it. If you feel like customer expectations are beginning to wreak havoc on your operation, it may be worthwhile to consider voice. It not only will ease many of the issues you are facing, but also provide a host of other benefits as well.

For more information

To learn more about voice solutions:

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