

Vocollect Case Study

Signature Brands

Making every day special®



Voice Results

Objectives

- Increase accuracy
- Improve productivity
- Reduce training time
- Reduce operating costs
- Increase customer satisfaction tracked through vendor scorecard

Application

- Order selection

Installation

- Vocollect Voice seamlessly integrated with Signature Brand's SAP ERP
- Vocollect SR-20 Headsets™
- Vocollect Talkman® T5 Mobile Computing Devices

Results

- Inventory accuracy improved by 75%
- Reduced labor hours year-to-date by 24%
- Improved pick and ship rates from 150 cases per hour to 400 to 500 cases per hour
- Reduced training time from two weeks to two days

ROI

- Achieved ROI in seven months ahead of an 18 month plan

Leveraging Vocollect's Seamless Integration with SAP to Improve Accuracy and Efficiency

Signature Brands, LLC manufactures a variety of dessert decorating products that are sold under the Cake Mate and Betty Crocker brand names. In addition, the company manufactures PAAS Easter egg decorating products and Pumpkin Masters pumpkin carving products. Signature Brands' history dates back to 1951, when The Pioneer Decorating Company was founded in Ocala, Fla. Since that time, the company has undergone several acquisitions and today is a wholly owned subsidiary of Switzerland-based Hero Group.

Today the company operates an 80,000 square-foot Ocala distribution center (DC) where 30 workers pick more than 53,000 cases per week – or approximately 2.75 million cases of product per year. When the company implemented a new SAP enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, one of its goals was to improve the inventory accuracy and efficiency of core picking processes to better address seasonal demands. The company, working together with partner Psion Teklogix, selected Vocollect to help meet this need.

The Challenge Implementing SAP and Vocollect Voice In Tandem

"The implementation team members in both the SAP-integration role and the hardware/server-support role from Psion Teklogix and Vocollect were outstanding," says IT Director Donna Dodson. They worked well with our DC team and SAP consultants, and provided a deep understanding of our business and how Vocollect could best be implemented in conjunction with SAP."

Says Dodson, "The implementation of Vocollect Voice in tandem with SAP has allowed us to improve the accuracy and picking efficiency in our DC, without losing the ability to maintain SAP batch determination rules for our food products."

"Originally, we thought that employees would be unhappy with our ability to track their work and hold them accountable, but we've found the opposite to be true. People are working harder to support our collective goals, and they're taking more ownership of their work," she says.

"Even before we had finished quantifying the cost savings obtained from improved accuracy results, we heard from distribution management about their absolute certainty that customer complaints had been greatly reduced. In my mind, that benefit alone is priceless."

Gary Stenzel
Senior Vice President of
Operations
Signature Brands

The Solution

Picking the 'Perfect Pallet'

Workers assembling pallets in a distribution center are like artists. They must learn to put together just the right mix – size and weight – of products. Place too many large, heavy boxes toward the top of the pallet and the creation will topple. Put the smaller, lighter products on the bottom and they could be crushed. To achieve perfection, the pallet must contain exactly what the customer ordered – no missing or incorrect products allowed.

Learning to perfect this art takes time. Of course, for manufacturing companies like Signature Brands, time is money. Shortening the picking learning curve can save both time and money. For several years, the distribution management team at Signature Brands worked with the company's upper management to educate them on the value of voice. They saw voice technology as the ticket to improving efficiency and accuracy at the Ocala warehousing facility. The implementation of a new ERP system from SAP offered the perfect opportunity to put the technology to the test.

"A high percentage of our customer orders require product to be picked and shipped very quickly - many the same day as the orders are received. This means responsiveness and accuracy are absolutely critical to our success." according to Senior Vice President of Operations Gary Stenzel.

Says Warehouse Supervisor Larry Power, "Before Vocollect, Signature Brands' pickers were armed with a paper pick list and a pencil, which was quite cumbersome." Workers needed to put a clipboard up and down between each case pick. When workers received a ticket order, they would sit down with their full pick list for a good 10-15 minutes to create a picking logic to build their pallet, based on the size and weight of the products. This really slowed down the distribution process.

"Vocollect has allowed us to add customized features to our picking applications, including some new words like "skip" which gives our worker the decision-making ability to skip over a lighter or smaller case to place one that's

larger or heavier toward the bottom of the pallet. This allows them to build pallets more efficiently and much faster", says Power.

Also, because of the seasonal focus of many of Signature Brands' products, the company experiences various peaks in shipping volume requirements. To meet these needs, says Shipping Manager Gene Martin, "The company relies on a cross-training system that allows managers to pull workers from other functional areas – including manufacturing."

Often, other areas would send their most inexperienced workers to the warehouse. Inexperienced workers, coupled with a paper-based system that lacked checks or balances, meant errors were commonplace. Training with Vocollect Voice is so easy that, "Even if people haven't worked with voice in months, they are immediately operational," Martin says.

Giving Mobile Workers a Voice

Today Signature Brands uses voice technology for its core picking processes. The new system has greatly reduced the need for workers to devise their own picking strategy for each pallet, and clipboards and paper lists are a relic of the past. Instead, the SAP system generates orders with on instructions for how to best orchestrate the building of each pallet, and Vocollect Voice talks the worker through the contents of the order. A number of customized features gives workers added control to override the system, if needed, to build the perfect pallet. They also have the ability to pass over a lighter or smaller box and move to one that is better to place on the bottom or middle of a pallet.

Vocollect Voice has made life easier for Signature Brands' warehouse workers, as well as its managers. Vocollect management software helps managers track people's workloads, so they can assign the best person to handle unplanned tasks. It allows them to put in a request for help the night before a shift – even for someone working in manufacturing – so they arrive at the DC in the morning rather than the plant.

Concludes Stenzel, "Vocollect and Psion Teklogix have been great partners with us on this project. We've really come to trust their knowledge and expertise as consultants throughout the process."



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