

Vocollect Case Study

Giant Eagle

Serving communities the freshest foods
at everyday low prices.



Voice Results

Objectives

- Improve accuracy
- Improve productivity

Application

- Case lot picking in a refrigerated environment

Installation

- Vocollect Voice seamlessly integrated with Retalix TRICEPS® WMS
- Vocollect Talkman® T2 Mobile Computing Devices

Results

- Accuracy level increased by 80%
- 'Shorted' cases reduced by 79%
- Mis-picks reduced by 88%

ROI

- Payback in less than 12 months

How Vocollect Voice Helps Giant Eagle Make Every Day Taste Better

For more than 65 years, Giant Eagle has introduced unique merchandising programs, exciting new product offerings and a full range of in-store services to fit changing lifestyles and a changing world.

Such innovations have been a hallmark for the company through three generations, as it has grown into one of the top 20 supermarket businesses in the nation. And as a leader in its industry, Giant Eagle put another kind of innovation to work, beginning at its Butler, Pa, distribution center - voice-enabling their distribution center (DC).

The Challenge

Beef up Accuracy, Productivity & ROI

Giant Eagle depends upon Butler Refrigerated Meats (BRM), an 85,000 square foot facility, to ship fresh meats to all 200 of its stores throughout Western Pennsylvania, Eastern Ohio and Northern West Virginia. With that level of demand, BRM keeps 30-50 selectors working seven days a week, picking tens of thousands of cases of meat and meat products. In a year, workers will handle more than 10 million cases weighing up to 80 pounds each. That's 800 million pounds of meat in and out the door!

And with every single case, accuracy is crucial - there's no room for shorts and/or mis-picks if BRM is to meet its store calls and Giant Eagle, its commitments to customers. Nor can there be a decrease in productivity if the company is to guarantee low prices every day and still succeed as a business.

Giant Eagle saw an opportunity for significant savings at BRM by capturing the exact weight of each case, rather than relying on "average" weights. But catch weights had to be quick and easy; having workers stop what they're doing hundreds of times a day to write down case weights was not a solution. For Giant Eagle, the real answer was voice-enabling their DC with Vocollect, based on Vocollect's track record for boosting accuracy and productivity, while delivering quickly on ROI. Looking ahead, Larry Baldauf, Senior Vice President of Distribution and Logistics, noted: "By adding Vocollect Voice and the Vocollect Talkman T2 to our operations, we expect payback in less than a year and ongoing savings in distribution costs over the long haul."

"This is a home run for us, not just a single, a home run. The Vocollect solution is making a huge impact on the way we do business."

Larry Baldauf
Senior Vice President
Distribution & Logistics
Giant Eagle

The Solution

Talkman on Ice

To put voice to work, Giant Eagle selected Vocollect, a company that has been a pioneer in voice technology since 1987. Vocollect's Talkman features an advanced speaker-dependent recognizer and a host of design improvements.

Vocollect already had a proven interface to the facility's Retailx TRICEPS warehouse management system (WMS), a real-time system that enables paperless automation via distribution control and labor management features plus fork interleaved RF technology.

Vocollect phased in the installation just over three weeks, creating voice templates and introducing the system to the entire labor pool at the facility, approximately 75 people. Among the features that quickly proved their value, the Talkman system's use of check digits, randomly assigned digits that identify each picking slot. Pickers are required to read these digits to verify that they are at the correct location; only then will it send the pick command. The result: near-perfect accuracy.

Talkman computers also solved the catch weight issue; now workers simply read off the weight that's written on the side of each case. This records the weight and reports a completed pick, all in one step. And, because the system was designed for two digits after the decimal point, all weights are now accurate to a hundredth of a pound.

Yet another success, allaying workers' concerns about losing "sight" of the load they're building. The Talkman system sets up each load with a summary description, noting through voice: "You have several base picks. Would you like to hear them?" This base-picking option makes it easy, even for inexperienced pickers, to build a solid load.

The Results

Let's Talk Success

Talkman is hard at work at the BRM facility. In fact, all picking has been done by voice since the end of the third full week of the installation. Thanks to BlueStreak™, Vocollect's speaker dependent recognizer, a Talkman computer understands every worker who's on pick duty any given shift.

User acceptance is high, helped along by the fact that a Talkman T2 weighs less than one pound and that wearing it frees hands for the tough job of pulling hefty cases of meat. As expected, the wearable, mobile computer is working well in the 34°F environment; even freezer-room temperatures are not a issue.

And, when it comes to accuracy, the numbers speak for themselves: shorted cases down by 79% and mis-picked cases down by 88%. As for incidences of cases shorted, only one in 1,250, nearly five times better than before; incidences of cases mis-picked are less than one in 9,000 - nearly seven times better than their results before voice-enabling their DC.

So impressive and quick were these and other key results at BRM that Giant Eagle accelerated its plans to implement Talkman at its Bedford Heights, Ohio, facility. Three additional distribution centers, not far behind, will continue Giant Eagle's move to voice-directed systems.



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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