

Vocollect Case Study

Brady

Direct interface to SAP® WM streamlines voice directed picking integration for Brady



Brady is a leading supplier of workplace safety identification solutions that improve safety, security and performance for tens of thousands of customers throughout Australia, with a product range totalling more than 40,000 SKUs. The company is part of the Brady Corporation which is headquartered in Milwaukee, U.S.A. and serves more than 500,000 customers worldwide in electronics, telecommunications, manufacturing, electrical, construction, education, medical and a variety of other industries.

Following years of local business expansion in Australia, Brady relocated to a new larger national distribution centre (DC) at Greystanes in Sydney's western suburbs in 2012. The move to the new DC was made to allow for future business expansion and to ensure that a newer, more advanced voice enabled technology framework was in place to deliver greater business efficiencies.

With customers demanding quicker, more accurate deliveries and a wider economic environment that is looking to rationalise costs, savvy businesses with large DC facilities are looking to advance voice enabled innovations to create a more efficient warehouse environment that extends to the actual delivery supply chain. In an industry where time is money, this translates to the need for slicker, faster and more accurate service supply coming out of the DC.

Moving day blues

Moving business sites is never an easy task, much less for a busy DC which houses countless pieces of equipment and goods. It is all too easy for goods or key equipment to go missing in the transitional process, which can slow the actual integration into the new site.

To help ensure that normal business operations were not lost during the transition, Brady identified a key slower business window around the annual summer holiday in Australia when to make the move.

As a result Brady worked at peak capacity during the 2012 Christmas and New Year holiday period, relocating more than 14,000 stock keeping units (SKUs) from two outdated warehouses in Regents Park to its newly completed 13,000sqm DC, all the space of 13 days. The relocation involved a team of

120 personnel and required the transport of more than 20,000 pallets between the two sites.

"For the best part of two weeks we had three trucks carrying stock from Regents Park arriving at the new DC every hour over two shifts," said Brady's Operations Manager, Simon Harris. "And, of course, once the stock arrived, it had to be put-away to its correct location."

Key partners in the relocation were Dematic Real Time Logistics and SAP specialist Icon Integration. Dematic was responsible for setting up the new DC's wireless infrastructure and commissioning its RF terminals and Vocollect voice-directed picking system, while Icon's role included integrating the paperless picking technologies to Brady's warehouse management system, SAP WM.

Australia's first direct interface of voice picking to SAP WM

As an advanced DC operator, Brady had long ago discovered the benefits of using voice technology within the warehouse. However, key management also realised that with the DC move, there was also a unique opportunity to move towards more advanced systems that could offer even greater levels of return.

In busy DC environments, for repetitive high-volume tasks, such as applying labels or reading stored products manufacturing details, saving just a few seconds per operation can translate into meaningful efficiency gains. Advanced voice solutions, such as those being used by Brady, guide workers through their tasks using spoken instructions. With hands and vision remaining free, they can concentrate much better on the essentials, and work more quickly and more precisely. For each voice input - and thus without appreciable loss of efficiency - workers can also continuously send control and status information, meaning any misunderstandings can be corrected immediately and error rates can be lowered further. Furthermore, real-time communications with the central control software enable management to gain an overview of the situation and to initiate any replenishing or other processes early.

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Simon Harris
Operations Manager
Brady

An innovative feature of the new technological framework within Brady's new DC was the first application in Australia of VoiceDirect® ERP for SAP® (VDERP) from Vocollect, the manufacturer of the voice-directed picking technology.

"We have been using voice picking technology for over seven years, however, it has required the use of middleware to enable SAP WM to communicate with the Vocollect system," said Mr. Harris. "While there was nothing wrong with this set-up from a functional perspective, the middleware had not been upgraded for several years and was beginning to impact the reliability of our integrated IT systems."

"When it came time to relocate to our new DC we faced the dilemma of significantly upgrading the middleware, or finding an alternative way of making our voice picking system communicate directly with SAP WM," explained Mr. Harris.

"Dematic's Real Time Logistics division and our SAP partner Icon researched the options available and recommended Vocollect's recently developed VDERP interface, which facilitates the direct integration of voice picking to SAP WM," he said.

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Partners deliver integrated IT systems solution

Working closely, Dematic and Icon configured Vocollect's VDERP to optimise operational layouts, systems and order fulfilment processes at the new DC.

Icon's Director of SAP Logistics Solutions and Project Manager for the Brady implementation, Jason Nalewabau, said: "As soon as the layout of the DC was confirmed and all of the storage systems installed, we began mapping all of the new locations and started work immediately on configuring SAP WM, defining the voice work flows, and deploying the VDERP solution."

"Together, Icon and Dematic have the techniques, SAP add-ons and pre-built work flows, foundational technology and experience to optimise a customer's investment in SAP, and increase their accuracy, productivity, order processing capacity and IT systems performance," added Mr. Nalewabau.

Dematic Real Time Logistics Project Engineer, Seth van Dijk, said: "In addition to helping Brady find the optimum systems integration solution for voice picking, we also designed and implemented the new DC's wireless network, which includes a CISCO backbone providing sub-second response for the facility's RF and voice terminals."

"This specific SAP solution provided a seamless process, which helped make sure every single item could be traced at every stage of the relocation, and ensured our inventory data was as close to 100% as possible when we commenced distribution," said Mr. Harris.

Supporting multiple business units with one integrated solution

Brady's new DC supports the operation of multiple business units including Seton, Accidental First Aid, Trafalgar, Carroll and ID Warehouse. Mr Harris explained that, "Across our different businesses we have some products that are common to all. A feature of our new order fulfilment system is we are able to service all of the different businesses' needs for a common SKU from a single location, optimising space efficiency and stockholdings."

As part of the new DC technology framework, Vocollect voice-directed picking trolleys enable up to 15 orders to be picked concurrently across various zones within the warehouse and optimise the picking route for order assembly, reducing travel distance and the time taken to pick orders, and maximising productivity and throughput. Orders requiring goods from different parts of the DC are consolidated prior to packing and despatch – all of which drives key operational efficiencies for Brady now and into the future.

"The DC not only gives us the ability to improve distribution performance today, it is designed to provide sufficient capacity to accommodate growth over the next decade. We have a future-proof IT systems solution that will continue to drive our distribution performance for many years to come," said Mr. Harris.



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About Vocollect

Vocollect is the leading provider of innovative voice technology solutions that help companies with mobile workers run a better business. Together with a global team of over 2,000 Vocollect Certified Professionals, Vocollect enables companies to save more than \$20 billion annually through further optimization of operations, improving business decision capabilities, and delivering the industry's premier worker experience in challenging industrial environments to nearly one million mobile workers who move in excess of \$5 billion of products every day.

Vocollect integrates with all major WMS and ERP systems and supports the industry's leading handheld computing devices. Visit us at www.vocollectvoice.com.