

# Vocollect Case Study

## Associated Grocers of New England

### Voice Results

#### Objectives

- Achieve better warehouse management
- Achieve near perfect order accuracy
- Improve productivity
- Improve customer satisfaction

#### Application

- Order Selection

#### Installation

- Vocollect Talkman® T2 mobile computing devices
- Vocollect SR Series™ Headsets

#### Results

- Increased productivity and throughput by 25% within six months
- Reduced training time by 50%

#### ROI

- Payback achieved in less than 6 months

### Associated Grocers and Vocollect - Streamlined for Success

AG New England was founded in 1946 by a small, enterprising group of independent grocers drawn together to combine their buying power. Over the past 60-plus years, Associated Grocers of New England, Inc., has grown to become a formidable resource, providing the products, programs, services, technologies and innovative solutions Independent Retailers need to best assure their future success.

AGNE, which is based in Manchester, N.H., is a privately held grocery wholesaler serving six New England states and parts of New York — a total of more than 450 stores. Each day AGNE ships over 50,000 full or partial cases. A high degree of accuracy and responsiveness are essential for serving AGNE's customers, who depend on rapid, correct order shipments to keep their stores stocked properly.

#### The Challenge

##### Finding a Solution to Adapt To and Support Future Growth

In 2004, AGNE was housed in an aging facility and facing a steady increase in business, AGNE found it increasingly difficult to meet customers' service demands. The co-op/wholesaler needed to update IT systems to boost accuracy, improve productivity, and increase throughput. Equally important, it needed a solution that could adapt to and support their future growth.

Improving operations was a strategic initiative for AGNE, which commits to same- or next-day delivery to customers that range from small mom-and-pop markets to supermarkets. Any solution being considered to improve AGNE's operational performance would need to adapt to changing business requirements, including scaling to larger-volume operations, in order to ensure long-term protection for AGNE's IT investment.

AGNE thoroughly investigated a variety of technology options and identified a wireless voice-directed distribution solution as the best for improving warehouse performance.



*"Paper, keyboards, and RF scanners don't generally fit with the physical nature of a DC worker's job. That's why we replaced them with Vocollect Voice."*

**Drew Bordas**  
Director of Warehouse Systems  
Ingram Book Group

## The Solution

### An Integrated 'Hands-Free, Eyes-Free' Solution

AGNE selected the Vocollect voice system, which features a direct interface to its existing warehouse management system (WMS), IDS Power Warehouse™. The WMS is produced by Integrated Distribution Solutions, L.L.C. (IDS), a Vocollect partner. AGNE converted to picking all orders with voice technology in just 3 months. The integrated solution includes IDS Power Voice™, a direct interface with the Vocollect voice-directed distribution system, and provides split- and full-case order selection in the warehouse. The IDS/Vocollect solution takes order data from IDS Power Enterprise™ and IDS Power Warehouse systems and uploads it to the wireless Vocollect Talkman® mobile computers on the floor, providing step-by-step instructions to workers through voice prompts. The result is "hands-free, eyes-free™" order picking and other activities conducted by 60 or more workers per shift who work in the dry goods, refrigerated and frozen sections of AGNE's distribution center.

## The Results

### Achieved Near-Perfect Order Accuracy

Within the constraints of having to co-mingle as many as 25 products in a single slot, Ingram's workers are now directed by voice to the pick location, where they are told what book to select – and they then confirm the selection by speaking digits from the product code. With its innovative, 'selection by description' solution in place, Ingram has far exceeded its goal to increase productivity. The initial project return on investment was based on a 10% improvement. A 13.2% improvement was budgeted for 2007 and Ingram is currently at 25% improvement.

This dramatic increase in productivity has been achieved while improving service to Ingram's customers. In fact, Ingram is filling orders to booksellers faster, enabling publishers to more efficiently reach a wider, increasingly diverse customer base. And Ingram's already excellent order accuracy remained consistent as it increased productivity.

Vocollect Voice has also provided important safety benefits, as workers are less distracted with equipment and paperwork. An additional bonus is its ability to provide simple, step-by-step instructions for the ultimate on-the-job training experience so new workers learn independently and are productive on their very first day. As such, training time has been cut in half.

"Our order selectors have historically been seen as entry-level," said Bordas. "But for the first time ever, we've had people from other departments who want to work in order selection. This is due to Vocollect Voice – it's cutting-edge and our employees think it's cool. In fact, when we take people on tours, you'd think we had 'Star Wars' out there. It's amazing to see the reactions. Worker satisfaction has skyrocketed."



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](http://www.vocollect.com)