



Henry's Foods Replaces Voice Pick with Scan Pick; Improves Accuracy and Productivity

HENRY'S
FOODS, INC.

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Brian Eidsvold, 4th generation Owner and VP of Operations at Henry's Foods

Challenge

Since its beginnings in 1929, Henry's Foods has expanded and diversified from candy and tobacco products into a full line of food service, paper and wholesale groceries throughout Minnesota and parts of four bordering states, including Eastern North Dakota, South Dakota, parts of Wisconsin and Iowa. The company operates out of a 165,000 square foot modern warehouse with over 600,000 cubic feet of freezer space in Alexandria, MN. It is now in its fourth generation of ownership, having moved from a one-man operation to over 175 employees. Henry's Foods needed to find a technology to replace their aging Voice Picking System.

Solution

No stranger to advanced technology, Henry's Foods has been utilizing voice picking in its warehouse for the past 12 years. Recently, in a move to improve picking accuracy while maintaining high levels of employee labor productivity, the company began replacing its voice picking system with a new multi-modal system. The new system is an event-driven, hands free picking solution, involving a wrist worn Motorola touchscreen computer, ring scanner, and mobile printer for real-time label printing.

"The new solution comes from ProCat, a turnkey integrated solutions provider that utilizes touchscreen Wireless Multi Modal (WMM) wrist units from Motorola Solutions. We're in the process of converting our entire picking workforce of 48 order selectors over to the new system. The conversion has been surprisingly simple," said Brian Eidsvold, 4th generation Owner and VP of Operations at Henry's Foods.

Old Process and Changes under New Turnkey Solution

The actual picking process was not changed significantly across the various pick areas, but what is different is the accuracy of the one-to-one case and item scanning and validation on the 10,000 products. Every item gets scanned and computer validated as it is picked. In the old legacy voice process, all picking activities were confirmed via voice using check digits

and were subject to miss-picks. The new wireless multi-modal (WMM) devices direct the worker to each pick location via the display screen and/or a voice prompt. Each pick is validated by scanning the item barcode. This process of one-to-one pick and scan verification has led to a much higher level of accuracy.

"Our aging voice system always had an accuracy challenge. We learned about our new picking solution from a company that we share ideas with. After we saw PickRight and understood the high accuracy that it produced we wanted it for our operation. We wanted to go to a turnkey solution that would maintain our labor productivity while reducing miss-picks and error rates. Scanning real-time is providing the one-to-one validation that we needed," said the VP in justifying the new system.

"While the new multi-modal devices are voice capable, our pickers have found the display screens to be easier to use and faster than the voice prompts. Our pickers choose not to use the system's voice feature, says Eidsvold.

With 10,000 total items and over 60,000 individual picks a night, orders are picked in sequence across numerous picking zones. The company ships about 35 truck routes each day and a typical route has 12 to 15 stops or orders. For each stop there are a variety of zones and the process varies somewhat depending on the pick areas.

Real-time Order Processing and Workforce Tracking System

The new turnkey integrated picking solution provider supplies the multi-modal wrist units and the wireless label printers along with the servers and wireless infrastructure to communicate between the on floor activities and the legacy warehouse order management (WMS/OMS) and ERP systems.

At Henry's Foods the legacy WMS/OMS system aggregates the orders from the independent stores and puts them into the 35 multi-stop truck routes. When all of the picking for a store order has been completed, a file with the relevant information including item, quantity picked, picker ID, and container ID is transferred from the new picking system server back to the legacy WMS/OMS system for invoicing. Because the multi-modal units and printers are bidirectional and fully interactive, as orders are completed and labels are applied real-time information about each order is maintained by the system.

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The application can send messages and alerts to individual devices or workers by zone and there are a wide number of dashboards and reporting capabilities including individual employee productivity metrics that are accessible. Having this information allows for real-time balancing of workers across zones throughout the day or during a given picking cycle.

“The dynamic real-time information that we collect not only ensures that there is a one-to-one validation of each item picked but also gives us detailed individual employee progress and productivity reports. Once we have fully converted our picking operations we intend to move to an incentive-based pay program facilitated by the system. Not only will picking be tied to a goal by zone but individual actual worker productivity will be there in the future”, said the VP in describing the future plans.

Results and Benefits

The new picking solution has given the company the ability to improve picker productivity, make their workforce more flexible and achieve near perfect picking accuracy along with the benefit of real-time reporting. Benefits and key takeaways from the new picking and labor management solution include:

- **Improved Hardware & Software Reliability** - eliminated the issues with software limitations and hardware device obsolescence. The proprietary legacy hardware was very expensive to replace or upgrade. The Motorola multi-modal wrist devices used in the new solution are standard equipment from the well-known manufacturer.
- **Continuous Quality Assurance Program** - the program increases picking accuracy to the 99% level or above by providing one-to-one scan verification of each and every pick.
- **Workforce Scheduling and Reporting** - the new process' real-time bidirectional tracking of employee progress and productivity is useful for balancing workers across zones and functions.
- **Expansion Plans - Individual Incentive Pay Program** - the planned incentive pay program has received preliminary buy-in from tenured and new employees and will be an ongoing key factor driving productivity.
- **Financial Benefits and ROI** - the new turnkey system eliminates miss-ships and quality issues and has increased picker productivity. 100% ROI is expected in less than 12 months.

“We are pleased with the results of our transformation to the turnkey picking and labor management solution at our facility. Without a close partnership between our management team, our employees and our solutions provider, our goal to improve picking accuracy could not have taken place. We are now baselining labor to new productivity levels to support the implementation of an individual incentive program. Employee reaction has been good and benefits to date have inspired a win-win attitude of continuous improvement in our operations,” summarized the VP.



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