

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

- Seamless integration with existing warehouse management system (WMS) IDS Power Warehouse™
- Vocollect Talkman® T2 mobile computing devices
- Vocollect SR Series Headsets

Results

- Selection errors reduced by 60%
- Reduced training time by 50%

ROI

- Achieved payback on integrated system in less than 18 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.

"Mis-picks have decreased by more than 60% and we're pushing more pieces out the door with the same number of people. Training is also much easier since employees are very comfortable with voice technology."

Arthur Heathcote
Director of IT, Customer Service,
Retail Systems
AGNE

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 computing devices 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

Exceeding Expectations

AGNE's integrated voice system exceeded expectations, and paid for itself in less than 18 months, setting the stage to provide significant ROI for years to come.

The integrated IDS/Vocollect voice-directed system makes it nearly impossible to select the wrong item. As a result, selection errors decreased by more than 60%. Also, the costs previously associated with correcting errors decreased as well. By eliminating the need to audit pallets for accuracy before shipping allowed AGNE to realize additional savings and re-deploy those resources to other functions.

In addition, the seamless integration between the IDS Power Warehouse WMS and Vocollect voice system provides greater ability to monitor and manage worker performance—supporting quality assurance, customer service and other initiatives.

AGNE workers embraced the system, finding voice-directed order selection a more natural, intuitive alternative to paper-based processes, and more adaptable to worker accents and voice inflections. In fact, training time dropped by 50%, helping new hires move productively into the workforce as rapidly as possible.



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About Vocollect by Honeywell

Vocollect by Honeywell 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.