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# VOICE TECHNOLOGY SPEAKS TO WORKERS

*Pet Supermarket installs a voice-directed picking solution to create a best in show distribution center.*

**P**et Supermarket is a growing pet retailer with 120 stores across the southeastern United States. With new store openings and increased sales at existing locations, the company's distribution center in Sunrise, Fla., was facing rising shipping volumes and workloads.

The DC was growing beyond the capacity of a paper-based picking process that restricted efficiency and generated more than 1,500 sheets of paper a day. The process also generated clerical work for three full-time associates, and made it difficult for supervisors to manage daily production.

"We couldn't keep producing this mountain of paper, and using paper and clipboards slowed us down," says Mac Whetsel, vice president of operations. "In the 'dog pound' (a pallet rack section

where large sacks of dog food and similar products are picked), guys are slinging 40-pound bags of dog food, so they'd have to put their clipboard down every time they needed to grab something."

Growth also caused financial challenges. If the DC's picking volume exceeded 45,000 a day, overtime pay kicked in. Pet Supermarket wanted a solution to handle its growing demands without paper and without adding to staff and payroll.

The company selected a hands-free, voice-directed picking solution (Lucas Systems, [lucasware.com](http://lucasware.com)) that includes productivity, management and speech recognition platforms. The speech platform was particularly important, since Pet Supermarket's DC employs people from more than 30 countries. The productivity module gives



managers a handle on individual and area-by-area productivity rates in real time. The systems also provide immediate picking status so workers can be moved from one pick area to another to ensure picking efficiency in all areas.

The dog pound, which was the first area to start pro-

duction picking with voice, was up and running flawlessly within days. "In less than two weeks we had the whole warehouse running on voice," says Whetsel.

Since moving to voice, the same number of pickers can pick one-third more pieces, more than 60,000 pieces per day without overtime.

# GREEN ORDER PICKING IN THE GREEN MOUNTAIN STATE

*Vermont's Burlington Drug Company turned to a voice solution to create a greener picking process and save some green on its bottom line.*

The Green Mountain State takes its "green" state motto very seriously, and so does the Burlington Drug Company. Based in Milton, Vt., Burlington Drug was founded in the late 1800s and has evolved from a small manufacturer to a wholesale pharmaceutical business that ships pharmaceuticals and convenience store goods to more than 1,000 locations in eight states.

The company had been using a paper-based picking process to fill orders, but that was expensive and created an excessive amount of documents each year. The process was also inefficient because it took about two to three hours to sort through paperwork before products could be moved out of its 170,000-square-foot warehouse. So, the company wanted to find a system that would improve pick accuracy and productivity while also honoring the company's commitment to eco-friendly environmental practices.

It chose a voice-directed picking solution (Voxware, [voxware.com](http://voxware.com)) that provides all of the features that

Burlington Drug required, including environmental benefits that shrink its carbon footprint and efficiencies that cut its operational expenses.

"We decided to go with voice not only for the increased order accuracy and production that we would get out of it, but for the cost savings on paper as well," says Jay Mitiguy, Burlington Drug's assistant vice president.

The company has saved more than one million pages each year, savings about \$100,000. The new system has also reduced costs and created productivity-driven labor savings. Burlington Drug's productivity is up 20% and it's picking at 99.95% accuracy.

Mitiguy says the company knew quickly that this was a good decision. Not only has the company experienced increased order accuracy and increased production levels, the system's software allows the company to implement internal business process changes quickly and efficiently.



# VOICE TECHNOLOGY IMPROVES PICKING SOUTH OF THE BORDER

*Mexican supermarket chain installs voice technology to ensure timely and accurate delivery of grocery orders.*

**T**iendas Comercial Mexicana is the third-largest supermarket chain in Mexico, with stores in more than 50 cities. Founded in 1930, the company has built a strong public reputation for community support, quality stores and product selection.

Inside its four distribution centers, however, Tiendas Comercial Mexicana was struggling with inefficient picking operations. A paper picking system in its dry goods DC and a RF scanning pick-

ing system in its perishables DC were contributing to incomplete and inaccurate orders. While picking orders, operators often fumbled with the RF device or paper, which made it difficult to follow established picking processes.

When the company established a new perishables facility in 2009, it also took a fresh look at technology for its existing DCs. The company chose a voice-directed, hands-free solution (Vocollect, [vocollect.com](http://vocollect.com)) to help the performance of its picking operations across the board.

"The most important goal for us is to continuously improve our service levels to our 200 stores. So we needed to become as efficient as possible in throughput, velocity and product cost," says Carlos Ramos, corporate logistics director.

The solution helps associates ensure timely, correct orders by eliminating paper and scanning devices. The voice system also proved effective in recording the weight of items like meat and frozen products. Rather than reading and typing in the weight, workers dictate the information directly into the system. The simplified catchweight capture process has realized more than 50% in improvements over manual processes.

Workers reached full operational capacity in just two days and helped the company exceed its productivity and accuracy goals. Picking productivity is up by 25% over RF scanning in the perishables DC and by more than 50% over paper in the dry goods DC. And, order accuracy has increased from 98% in the dry goods facility to 99.6%

"The customers have definitely noticed our faster and more accurate response times to meet their needs," says Ramos, "which has helped us grow and maintain our competitiveness during challenging economic times." □

