

CASE STUDY

Voice technology drives operational productivity

RS Components: Global electronics distributor saw major gains with Infios Voice—26% more productivity, higher accuracy and real-time visibility



Global electronics distributor achieves significant productivity gains with Infios's voice solution.

RS Components is the leading high-service distributor of electronics, automation and control components, tools and consumables, serving over 1 million customers globally.

With operations across 32 countries and a network of distribution centers worldwide, it offers more than 500,000 products through the internet, catalogs and at trade counters, shipping more than 44,000 parcels a day

The company's 600,000 sq ft Distribution Centre (DC) in Nuneaton, UK, which supports RS Components' global supply chain, was using an automated conveyor system combined with a paper-based picking process.

Andrea Wing, operations manager at RS Components, said: "We wanted to enhance our customer experience by ensuring that our customers consistently receive the correct product and quantity within short delivery windows."

"As part of our ongoing strategic vision for operational excellence, we looked to introduce voice technology for picking tasks. We recognized the productivity and accuracy gains that Infios's Voice solutions could deliver through eyes and hands-free working."

At a glance

Project goals

- Introduce any new process without disrupting order fulfillment schedules.
- Ensure the voice solution would work seamlessly with RS Components' existing conveyor, SAP ERP and DAI WCS systems.

Solution

- Infios Voice Solution
- Infios Warehouse Execution System (WES)
- K.Sight Data Analysis

Features and benefits

- 0.3% improvement on accuracy
- 26% productivity gains
- Real-time visibility of performance and order exceptions
- Seamless integration with WMS
- High user acceptance

The challenge

Distributing thousands of products daily, and with its DC operating on a multi-shift basis, it was critical that any new process could be introduced without disrupting order fulfillment schedules.

In addition, Infios had to ensure that its voice solution would work seamlessly with RS Components' existing conveyor, SAP ERP and DAI WCS systems.

Wing explained, "It was imperative that the voice technology could integrate easily with our complex systems. We needed to retain the processes already in place and protect the huge investments already made in those systems."

The business also wanted to provide managers and supervisors with greater visibility of operations, allowing them more control over processes and supporting the pro-active management of work-in-progress.

Wing continued, "We need to know what is happening in our DC at any point in time to ensure high levels of service, and that product dispatch targets are being achieved."

The solution

Infios worked closely with RS Components' Operational Excellence Program team that was set up to manage the voice project.

Using Infios's Warehouse Execution System (WES) and business intelligence suite K.Sight Data Analysis, the new solution was successfully developed and integrated into RS Components' systems.

Now operatives in forward pick face zones, receive a tote on the conveyor and through an – A730 belt-worn voice unit and SRX2 headset – hear a spoken command of which item to pick and the quantity.

Chris Jennings, from RS Components completed the first live pick on 'go-live' day and said: "I was pleased to complete the initial pick. Voice will be a big improvement to the business; it's extremely simple to use."

Within a short time-frame the company increased its accuracy rating at Nuneaton from 99.6% to 99.9% and realized efficiency gains of 26%.

The results

Wing added, "The implementation of voice marked a significant milestone for the company. Infios delivered a solution that worked well with our operation and had the expertise to deliver such a huge project in a matter of months."

"The visibility and control that the K.Sight Data Analysis has provided means we have been able to improve our management of staff and adjust meet our customers' delivery needs; the flexibility we now have is second to none,"



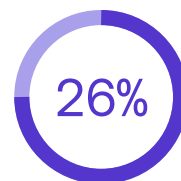
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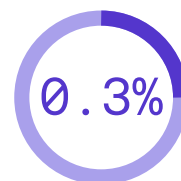
Operations Manager, RS Components

Wing concluded. "We've been blown away by the results and user uptake, now we're looking to implement single-order line picking using voice to reduce the use of totes on the conveyor and to further enhance productivity."

The BI suite has provided the company with high-level dashboards that offer insights and analysis which are reviewed remotely by managers to track pick rates, order progress and exceptions as well as associate performance.



Productivity gains



Accuracy rating improved from 99.6% to 99.9%