

A look at GENCO's Voice-Tasking Technology solutions

Sound decisions help increase DC productivity and accuracy

For DC managers there is nothing more important than productivity and accuracy, especially when it comes to order picking.

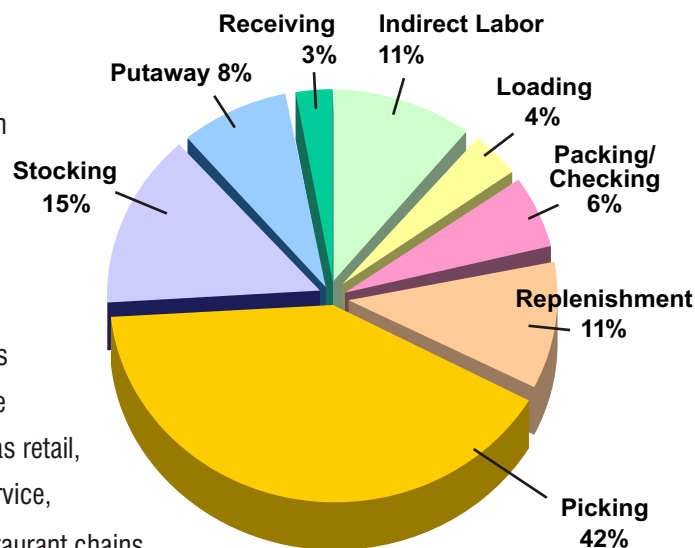
Time is money. While inventory accuracy, optimum stock levels and the swift movement of goods are the keys to an efficiently run distribution center, picking is the most labor intensive and by far the most costly aspect. It accounts for up to forty-two percent of labor costs and is an area where companies can focus on for savings. Unfortunately, many companies continue to operate with paper and scan systems.

Voice technology front and center

Voice technology has been around for some time. It is now at the point of functionality where it has been embraced by many manufacturers, distributors and retailers across a wide range of industries, such as retail, consumer goods, food service, grocery, cold storage, restaurant chains, convenience stores, auto parts,

and healthcare and pharmaceutical. "Voice technology is well established and proven to yield positive results," says Don Ziegler, GENCO's Vice President of Strategic Initiatives and Six Sigma Master Black Belt. "And order picking is the 'sweet spot' for voice." Voice tasking serves as an umbrella for a range of associated activities. Voice recognition software allows workers to communicate through headset microphones with a central warehouse management system to confirm and clarify requests.

Warehouse labor costs



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Taking performance to the next level

Voice technology also allows workers to monitor their own performance goals. The productivity feedback can be shared with team members, as well as management via a console, which GENCO calls a "workload dashboard," a computer screen through which users can interact with the system and obtain information, as well as enter new commands and controls. It compares actual operational performance with specific operational or business objectives and gives management control by using the real-time data that is in the system. It is also used to dispatch work directly to the teammates on the facility floor via their voice units.



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WORKLOAD DASHBOARD MANAGEMENT CONSOLE

- Releases work directly to the voice units
- Provides real-time visibility into supply chain operations
- Manages key performance indicators or summarized operational data
- Receives information from multiple systems into one dashboard
- Enables management to respond to bottlenecks before they can impact productivity

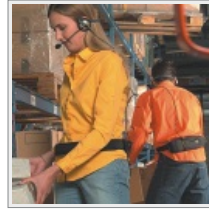
"Eliminating errors and speeding up the overall process helps reduce costs and ensures product is where and when it needs to be," Ziegler states.

"Voice technology is a big part of achieving those objectives.

The voice users interface with the Warehouse Management System (WMS) allows two-way communications for operators so that they can work with their hands and eyes free. It really speeds up the process."

"What do I say?" and it tells them what is expected. Installation is easy, workers quickly adapt to the new technology in only a few days because the hardware is easy to use.

Hands-free operation



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Location confirmation



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"Voice Terminal can be worn on a belt. Designed specifically for hands and eyes free warehouse operations. Multi-language, multi-functional systems: real-time switching between English and Spanish and other languages on any terminal; can handle multiple applications on a single terminal."

Voice technology allows companies to: streamline operations; improve productivity; optimize workflow; realize near 100 percent accuracy levels; achieve increased two-way flow of data in real-time; train end users and optimize the use of a wide range of voice dialogs and applications. The technology typically interfaces with WMS because the operation in a warehouse is guided by the WMS. It interfaces with and supplies data to labor management systems—WMS or ERP systems—for quick deployment and can be standalone or as a complement to the functionality of a WMS. Voice solutions also can be implemented across a diverse workforce enabling workers to use their own languages. The technology provides another plus: significantly reduced training time for operators. When trainees have questions, it coaches them through the steps. All they have to do is ask,

GENCO can employ Voice-Tasking Technology for the following applications:

- Picking, receiving, returns
- Re-warehousing/putaway
- Replenishment, cycle counting
- QA, order merge and loading.

It is also used for equipment inspection: each time forklift operators begin using a piece of equipment, they have to go through a checklist. The voice system lets them do it faster and easier. And the process is OSHA-compliant. Because GENCO handles a significant amount of returns for clients, it has linked up voice technology to the company's proprietary R-Log® returns system. Application of the technology has significantly improved productivity and accuracy for customers in re-warehousing, Bill of Lading picking, forklift trip routing and utilization, QA inspections and other functions.

WHY USE VOICE?

- Higher productivity with hands and eyes free with no distractions
 - Increased focus on the task at hand
- Greater accuracy with verbal confirmations
- Less training:
 - Anyone can use any terminal in their own language and accent
 - Minimal system training requirement
- Easier to recruit and staff to handle seasonal peaks
- Improved management control and data
 - Obtain real-time information
 - System control through management console
 - Real-time communications with teammates via voice

"At GENCO, we first identify the customer's needs and what's best for a particular application."

*Don Ziegler
VP Strategic Initiatives and
Six Sigma Master Black Belt*

ACTUAL RESULTS OBTAINED BY GENCO, OUR VOICE PARTNERS AND CUSTOMERS INCLUDE:

- 39 percent improvement in case picking rates
- 60-90 percent increase in productivity
- 99.98 percent sustained accuracy rates
- 50 percent reduction in training time
- Let-down rates improved
- 52-72 percent decrease in miss-picks
- Reduction of shorts on trucks
- 50 percent reduction in late picks
- 80 percent decrease in damaged goods
- 83 percent decrease in overtime hours, while overall volume of orders increased by 10 percent
- Real-time data and accuracy
- Decreased replenishment time
- Accuracy improvements help eliminate order checking

The right stuff

However, selecting the right voice technology requires experience. "Each solution is going to be a little different for each customer," Ziegler points out. "At GENCO, we first identify the customer's needs and what's best for a particular application." Using the application development tools, GENCO builds the application or the software that drives the system. GENCO doesn't have to go to outside vendors because applications can be developed in-house. This gives GENCO flexibility and helps customers in the event system changes are required. GENCO's development process is completely turnkey: everything from the site visit, interviews and needs analysis through determining the best use of voice technology and finalization of the proposal. GENCO calculates the economics, obtains metrics, develops the ROI, builds the application, conducts the testing, training and implementation. "It is all designed to fit our customers' business and logistics needs," Ziegler says. "We provide full service. Our customers have only to deal with one company: GENCO. We represent a number of voice technology vendors, so we can select the best voice technology for each customer's requirements."

"Voice is well established and proven technology and order picking is where voice tasking can provide one of the biggest benefits."

*Don Ziegler
VP Strategic Initiatives and
Six Sigma Master Black Belt*



Voice Terminal can be jacket or belt mounted. Designed specifically for hands and eye free warehouse operations. Multiple applications on a single terminal.

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24/7 support

GENCO has 24/7, first line support for all of our systems. GENCO and our voice partner relationships with leading WMS providers means that customers get the best of the best. "Because we work with different companies, our customers really benefit," Ziegler adds. "GENCO also uses its own proprietary WMS (D-Log®, D-Log Plus® and Foxware®)." Companies are seeking to maximize logistics management capabilities to move product even faster through their warehouses, which means use of value-added voice technology in just about all of their material handling applications. Dramatic ROI improvement, increased product availability, enhanced inventory control, improved customer response and better utilization of their workforces are some of the results. Future solutions are just around the corner, as voice links with a variety of other technologies to create robust new systems, including software that

functions with multimodal data devices, such as mobile computers, handheld PCs and scanners. GENCO is exploring the use of voice and RFID, so that the combined software can direct both task-oriented and data capture functions.

Innovations

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