WITH PICKING ERRORS DOWN AND PRODUCTIVITY UP—BEN E. KEITH IS SEEING A BRIGHTER FUTURE

HANDS-FREE, WEARABLE SOLUTION REDUCES PICKING ERRORS

CUSTOMER PROFILE

Customer
• Ben E. Keith

Industry
• Food Services Distribution

Solution
• Motorola WT4090
• Motorola RS409 Ring Scanner
• SAE Selector Pro Software

Solution Features
• Product-level traceability via barcode scanning from pick slot to customer location
• Hands-free, wearable, with voice guidance options for picking at maximum productivity
• Voice guidance to next pick; text preview of upcoming picks

SITUATION

In business for over 100 years and responsible for distributing hundreds-of-thousands of perishable and non-perishable food items daily, Ben E. Keith was looking for a better and faster way to service its customers.

The current system—paper-based order fulfillment—lacked the efficiency needed to meet growing demands. In order to stay in the forefront of the food distribution industry, Ben E. Keith needed a solution to increase its overall picking accuracy.

"Servicing the customer is the number one thing we do here, and the picking accuracy is a huge component of that," says Michael January, Director of Process Improvement at Ben E. Keith. The paper-based system was vulnerable to human error, allowing mistakes to be made during order fulfillment. Shane Holloway, Night Warehouse Manager at Ben E. Keith, explains the plateau effect, "We always maintained about a 1:1,000 error ratio, which is the industry standard, but we always wanted better for our customers."

SOLUTION

A hands-free, wearable solution consisting of Motorola WT4090 hardware, RS409 Ring Scanner and SAE Selector Pro software. With this combination, Ben E. Keith now has the added confidence and speed to ensure that all orders are filled correctly before being delivered to customers.

Following the evaluation of other options in the market, Michael January touches on the decision-making process. "We looked at a voice-selection technology and a scanning-based selection technology. After an extensive evaluation, we decided on a scan-based solution using the Motorola 4090 and SAE Selector Pro software to help increase our accuracy." This combination gave Ben E. Keith's pickers a wearable, screen-directed, scan-verified solution to tackle all orders at hand. Greg Braun, Senior Associate of Systems Application Engineering, Inc. (SAE) explains, "The Motorola WT4090 is a perfect fit for the Selector Pro software—it's non-intrusive, it's hands-free operation—it's a perfect device for warehouse picking." The flexibility of the hands-free system gives pickers the freedom to scan and move packages with ease, simplifying the overall process. Jeremy Doyle, Night Warehouse Selector, puts the usability in plain words, "The Motorola wearable really makes the job idiot-proof. You walk up to the case you need, scan it, pick it up, your label prints, you hit enter and it tells you where to go for your next spot, and you're done."

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Michael January, Director of Process Improvement, Ben E. Keith

RESULT

Ben E. Keith has increased overall warehouse productivity and—due to the improved accuracy—almost completely eliminated picking mistakes.

"With the Motorola and SAE Solution, we were able to maintain a 1:16,000 error ratio versus a 1:1,500 error ratio," says Holloway. The increased level of efficiency has given Ben E. Keith more time to focus on other important factors like traceability and material flow—resulting in higher customer satisfaction. January explains the enhancements, "I think the solution has proven itself, our accuracy rate is much improved, our returns are much lower than they were in the past, and it allows us to do some tracking with regards to government regulations. The Motorola hardware and SAE software combined cuts cost and helps us run a good business."

ACCURACY DELIVERED

When consumer safety is the top priority in food distribution—accuracy is a must.

Government regulations are continuously evolving to make sure all food available to the public is free of contamination. With scan verification technology, Ben E. Keith acquires traceable data to monitor all packages leaving the warehouse. In the event of a food recall, Ben E. Keith can rely on stored data from the Motorola and SAE solution to pinpoint the source of the problem before removing it entirely from the market. Perishable items—like produce and dairy—also depend on accuracy and speed to ensure freshness upon delivery. The traceable data collected by the Motorola and SAE solution gives Ben E. Keith the power to cut back on expired inventory—further reducing operational costs.

SIMPLICITY IN THE WAREHOUSE

Simplifying the process of warehouse picking was the primary focus of this solution, Braun explains. "The system is very easy for selectors to use. It typically takes about 10 minutes to give them training on the device and how to use the software, and it's very intuitive to operate. The process works by the selector electronically receiving an assignment, it directs them to the location, they pick the product, and they stage it on the pallet." The effortless operation ensures that mistakes are reduced and customer satisfaction is met.

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>
> Greg Braun, Senior Associate, SAE

CONFIDENCE ON THE FLOOR

Ben E. Keith's warehousing operation relies on accuracy to properly service its customer base—and accuracy begins on the warehouse floor. With the Motorola and SAE solution, the warehouse floor is blanketed with real-time critical information such as pick assignment management, inventory status and traceability records to ensure the correct packages are being pulled and tracked by the day and night shifts. The scan-based system instills confidence by taking the guessing game out of daily operations. According to January, "When we scan the product it lets us know we're at the correct location."

IMPROVED PRODUCTIVITY

Transitioning from the previous paper-based system to the Motorola and SAE combination has increased order accuracy to 99.994%, making a world of difference in Ben E. Keith's warehouse operations. The picking process is now a streamlined operation built around speed and accuracy, giving a major boost to the overall productivity. Holloway explains the accelerated productivity since joining Ben E. Keith. "When I first started with this company we moved about 6,000 cases a night—now we're moving about 47,000 to 50,000 cases a night. It's unbelievable that we went from the dinosaur age to new age technology using the SAE and Motorola system." Improvements were also seen on the individual level. According to Doyle, "Most of us can pull 250 cases an hour with this product; it makes it just that easy."

AN INVESTMENT FOR TODAY AND TOMORROW

In today's budget-conscious world, getting more "bang for your buck" is a staple that companies live by. "In going through due diligence and trying to generate an ROI we were able to get our full payback within six months," says January. The immediate improvements in warehouse operations saved money by reducing labor costs while simultaneously increasing productivity. Due to the enhancements, Ben E. Keith is now able to shift its attention to servicing its growing customer base instead of searching for more ways to improve cost-cutting efforts.

A GUIDING VOICE FOR GROWTH

"SAE just released an exciting new upgrade to our Selector Pro product—it's called Voice Guidance. The difference between Voice Guidance and voice recognition is that the selector doesn't have to talk to the unit. The Voice Guidance system gives selectors an advantage of not having to look at the display for their instruction," explains Braun. The Voice Guidance technology, along with Motorola's WT4090 and RS409 Ring Scanner solution, further eliminates errors at the pick slot by allowing selectors to scan and tally packages with ease.

ABOUT OUR PARTNER

Systems Application Engineering, Inc. (SAE) is a privately held systems engineering and consulting firm, which provides comprehensive services, turnkey applications, advanced information technology and mobile equipment. Since its founding in 1971, SAE has established a record of sustained growth and sound financial performance. The reason for this success is that SAE has consistently provided its customers with superior technical services and deliverables in an open and honest, win-win business relationship. Many of its customers have been customers for over 20 years. They have found that they can depend on SAE to provide them with quality products and services at a competitive price.

SAE developed the industry's first GS1-compliant picking system for item-level traceability and have numerous U.S. patents covering the technology of combined voice, scanning, text display and real-time case label printing. SAE was recently awarded additional patents covering the technology included in our Selector Pro Hybrid Voice Guidance Solution thereby enabling faster, more accurate picking than conventional voice-only or text-only solutions. The technology's hybrid design allows each selector to use the combined voice, text display, barcode scanning and real-time printing technologies in a way that works best for them.

SAE's hardware expertise is second to none. SAE is a Motorola Premier Solution Partner. The professional relationship developed between Motorola and SAE will ensure that our customers' projects will be delivered on time and successfully.

For more information on Motorola's hands-free solutions, please visit us on the web at www.motorolasolutions.com/manufacturing

For more information on SAE, please visit http://www.saesystems.com

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