

Lydia™
VOICE

BLANCO SWITCHES VOICE SYSTEM WITHOUT HALTING OPERATIONS

Enhancing performance step by step with LYDIA™ Voice



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BLANCO

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BLANCO, a company that specialises in exquisitely designed systems for kitchen water hubs in private households, has been working with pick-by-voice in its warehouse operations for around 13 years. With **LYDIA Voice**, the company is now banking on a new complete package of both software and hardware, along with AI-supported voice recognition, that is integrated directly into its existing SAP system. **BLANCO** is pursuing a “smooth migration” strategy entailing a gradual changeover from the old voice system to **LYDIA Voice** and the step-by-step replacement of old devices. Both solutions are currently running in parallel. The result: maximum system availability, fewer picking errors and a voice system changeover without any interruptions to operations. What is more, **BLANCO** staff working with **LYDIA Voice** are now free to choose which new hardware they would like to use, providing yet another major boost to employee satisfaction.



Whether it's the classic stainless steel models or the elegant Silgranit varieties – **BLANCO** sinks are in great demand among people looking to buy luxury kitchens due to their striking design and high quality. In order to optimally fulfil the wishes of its customers, the manufacturer offers a successful range of holistic system solutions for the water hub. These **BLANCO UNIT** systems can include all the main components – from faucet, innovative “drink.systems” and sink to waste disposal system – and thus work in perfect harmony. Founded over 90 years ago, the company is today one of the world's leading sink and faucet manufacturers.

ROUND-THE-CLOCK DELIVERY



The hub of BLANCO's global distribution operation is the logistics centre in Bruchsal, Germany. Spanning an area of around 8,760 m², the site is home to a high-bay warehouse with room to store around 18,000 pallets. All products relating to the kitchen water hub – such as the sinks produced at the plants in Sulzfeld and Sinsheim, Germany, and Most in the Czech Republic – are stored here in an automatic high-bay warehouse until they are delivered to customers. In addition, quality inspections are performed at the logistics centre before the products are put into sets for each individual customer. The replacement parts warehouse can now also be found on the logistics centre premises. Processes therefore need to be highly flexible and in perfect alignment. BLANCO stocks a wide range of products to ensure swift and seamless deliveries to its customers. While an automatic retrieval conveyor belt system ensures that replenished stocks arrive from the high-bay warehouse, orders are put together manually with the aid of industrial trucks and a pick-by-voice system for paperless picking.

“From the project development phase and operational launch to the aftersales service – EPG delivered everything swiftly and to our satisfaction. A highlight for us was the way the old and new systems worked in harmony.”

Thomas Ritter,
Senior Manager and Head of Order Fulfillment at BLANCO

NOT ALL VOICE SOLUTIONS ARE CREATED EQUAL

BLANCO has been utilising voice recognition in the warehouse for around 13 years and is therefore extremely familiar with the technology. However, the system it was previously using reached its limits, in part because customers are demanding ever greater flexibility when compiling orders. BLANCO then set out to find an alternative. Following an initial discussion with the Ehrhardt Partner Group (EPG) about its experiences, the company was impressed by LYDIA Voice and how simple it is to implement. With no time-consuming voice training required, staff can work productively from the very start. In addition, the software is available with a wide range of ergonomic hardware. With LYDIA Voice able to be directly integrated into BLANCO's existing SAP system, the solution also ensures rapid response times and enhanced process efficiency.

"We opted to go with LYDIA Voice for a number of reasons," explains Thomas Ritter, Senior Manager and Head of Order Fulfillment at BLANCO. "Switching to a speaker-independent system saves us time with staff training, which therefore gives us even greater flexibility to adjust our capacities in line with demand. The old system often asked staff to repeat their commands, which of course costs time. LYDIA Voice offers much more reliable voice recognition." The latest version of LYDIA Voice – which is also now in operation at BLANCO – works on the basis of neural networks and deep learning technology. This provides a substantial boost to voice recognition reliability and ensures a recognition rate of 99.9%, even when staff speak in a strong dialect or accent. Service and support also plays an important role for BLANCO. During the first 12 months after LYDIA Voice went into parallel operation, there was only one service request – and it was resolved on the very same day.



*Thomas Ritter, Senior Manager and
Head of Order Fulfillment at BLANCO*

DIRECT INTEGRATION OF LYDIA VOICE SAVES TIME



Michael Pazur, Sales Manager Voice Solutions at EPG, worked on the project from day one and knows just how important it is to assess the current situation and provide advice. “Every project involves a great deal of process consulting work. As BLANCO was already using a pick-by-voice solution, we were able to build on this process and the existing voice dialogues in SAP. By directly integrating LYDIA Voice into the existing SAP infrastructure via a pre-defined interface, our customers save time and can independently add or modify processes and dialogues at any time. We only needed 16 project days for the whole system changeover at BLANCO, and that included training the SAP developers and putting the system into operation on site.” Thanks to this smooth integration with parallel support for the old and new systems, operations were kept running at all times.

STAFF PRODUCTIVITY FROM THE GET GO

Order picking staff were able to start working with the new system following a brief introduction and did not require any voice training. The majority of the dialogues were taken over from the old system. The pleasant voice used by the LYDIA system and the enhanced voice recognition reliability it offers ensured a high level of acceptance among users. “Compared with our old system, the new hardware terminals are a lot easier and nicer to use. Our



staff also have the flexibility to decide which headset is best for them,” says Ritter. In addition to the headset and the VOXTER mobile voice computer, BLANCO also opted for the LYDIA VoiceWear order picking vest. All voice components are already integrated into the innovative and ergonomic vest. “I was a little sceptical at first as to how well the pick-by-voice vests would go down,” explains Ritter. “But communication works, even with forklifts running in the background. And even on hot summer days, they’re more comfortable to wear than headsets.”



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HAPPY STAFF THANKS TO LYDIA

After using the system for around a year and having expanded it, both the company and its staff are extremely happy. “The cooperation between the two companies really has been top class – from the project development phase and operational launch to the aftersales service. EPG delivered everything swiftly and to our satisfaction. A highlight for us was the way the old and new systems worked in harmony. Thanks to LYDIA Voice’s improved ergonomics and efficiency, employees can now pick more orders and handle greater volumes, giving us much greater flexibility in dealing with fluctuations in orders compared with our old voice system”, says Ritter.

CONTACT

EPG – Ehrhardt Partner Group

topsystem GmbH

Krefelder Straße 201 | 52070 Aachen | Germany

Phone: (+49) 2 41-5682 62-0 | Fax: (+49) 2 41-5682 62-10

info@epg.com | www.epg.com | www.LYDIA-voice.com

