



TECHNICAL PAPER

PICK-BY-VOICE AS GAME CHANGER IN FRESH AND FROZEN FOOD LOGISTICS

Ergonomic and cost-efficient



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PICK-BY-VOICE AS GAME CHANGER IN FRESH AND FROZEN FOOD LOGISTICS

Internal logistics processes need to be completed increasingly faster and more flexibly, yet still be as cost-efficient as possible. This is due to the pressure to optimise having intensified for years and, what's more, across all sectors.

Clients are imposing increasingly stricter requirements for both frozen food and fresh food logistics, especially regarding delivery times. It is precisely in these segments that the current rises in energy costs are clearly evident, forcing companies to take further optimisation measures. There is another factor that holds significant importance, particularly within the frozen food segment: temperatures down to -23°C subject people and technical equipment to great physical stress. Consequently, the considerable expense and the tough working environment mean that companies must provide their employees with technologies that, firstly, they will enjoy working with and

will assist them efficiently from an ergonomic viewpoint. Secondly, these systems must bring improvements to process efficiency and mitigate the rise in total costs. This is why voice solutions have proven their worth in such challenging environments.

Fresh and frozen food logistics are subject to special requirements: suitable goods storage generally requires, for example, temperatures between -18°C and -23°C in the frozen food segment and between 3°C and 8°C in the fresh food segment. Permanent refrigeration is an enormous cost factor for companies and now has an even greater impact due to the enormous increase in energy prices. Within internal logistics, picking is still the area that accounts for 50 per cent of total costs. This means work processes must be particularly efficient in picking. This is also the area which has the greatest optimisation potential.



TOUGH WORKING ENVIRONMENT REQUIRES USER-FRIENDLY TECHNOLOGIES

The conditions in the frozen and fresh food sector present a particular challenge to picking staff as they go about their daily work. They need to wear a cap, gloves and warm clothes to protect themselves from the cold during their shifts. Operations can be difficult while wearing gloves if they need to use lists on paper or portable data terminals, for example. As a result, mistakes are made and employees may become frustrated.

Last but not least, logistics is experiencing a shortage of manpower, especially in picking. Jobs in logistics are physically strenuous. It is even more challenging to find and retain good staff precisely because of the tough conditions. The solution is often to use temporary workers, who will need to be trained within a short time, an additional cost factor for companies. In such cases, the use of modern, user-friendly technologies is an approach which can be used to attract employees and, above all, retain them for the long term.



FASTER, MORE PUNCTUAL, MORE FLEXIBLE WITH VOICE SOLUTIONS



Considering the need for efficiency and in the face of pressure caused by rising energy costs and the lack of manpower, it is crucial to design easy-to-understand processes and motivate employees in their work — specifically picking in this case. Bar code technology has been established on the market for picking for many years and has become an enduring element in logistics. Newer solutions, such as track-and-trace, are also based on barcodes and help with identification and traceability of items. However, voice technology is the sole solution if the aim is to create greater efficiency, greater quality and greater process ergonomics. The right voice system can quickly achieve improvements and increase employee satisfaction, especially under the harsh conditions in fresh

and frozen food logistics. The question of costs also plays a part in decision-making. Process efficiency optimisations are demonstrably implemented very quickly, which leads to a fast ROI, often within a year.

With pick-by-voice systems, the picker is guided through the process by clear spoken commands. The employee must respond to confirm they have understood the individual commands. As a result, the number of mistakes are plainly minimised and order processing precision is improved. Pick-by-voice also provides optimised multi-pick order structures. This is especially important to ensure route efficiency with full pallets and picked pallets provided in the right order for swift truck dispatch in food retail logistics. Direct optimisation potential is also evident in the continuing trend away from full pallet handling towards mixed pallets of packs and individual products. Using a headset also poses no problem for employees, who need to wear a cap while working in a deep-freeze or cold storage warehouse, as the volume of spoken instructions can be adjusted as desired. Nonetheless, a successful increase in efficiency provided by a voice solution ultimately hinges on choosing the right system. That is why it is essential to define your requirements and incorporate various criteria during the selection process before deciding on a system.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE FRESH AND FROZEN FOOD SECTOR



Increases in efficiency:

Increasing cost pressure is countered with a pick-by-voice solution which offers quickly achievable gains in efficiency. All work steps are controlled by voice, meaning the technology can be operated intuitively and processes are subsequently completed faster and more efficiently. Voice solutions can achieve an increase in picking performance of 20 per cent or more within a very short time. Improvements in process efficiency are produced very quickly with a voice system, which will then generate a fast ROI, often taking less than a year.



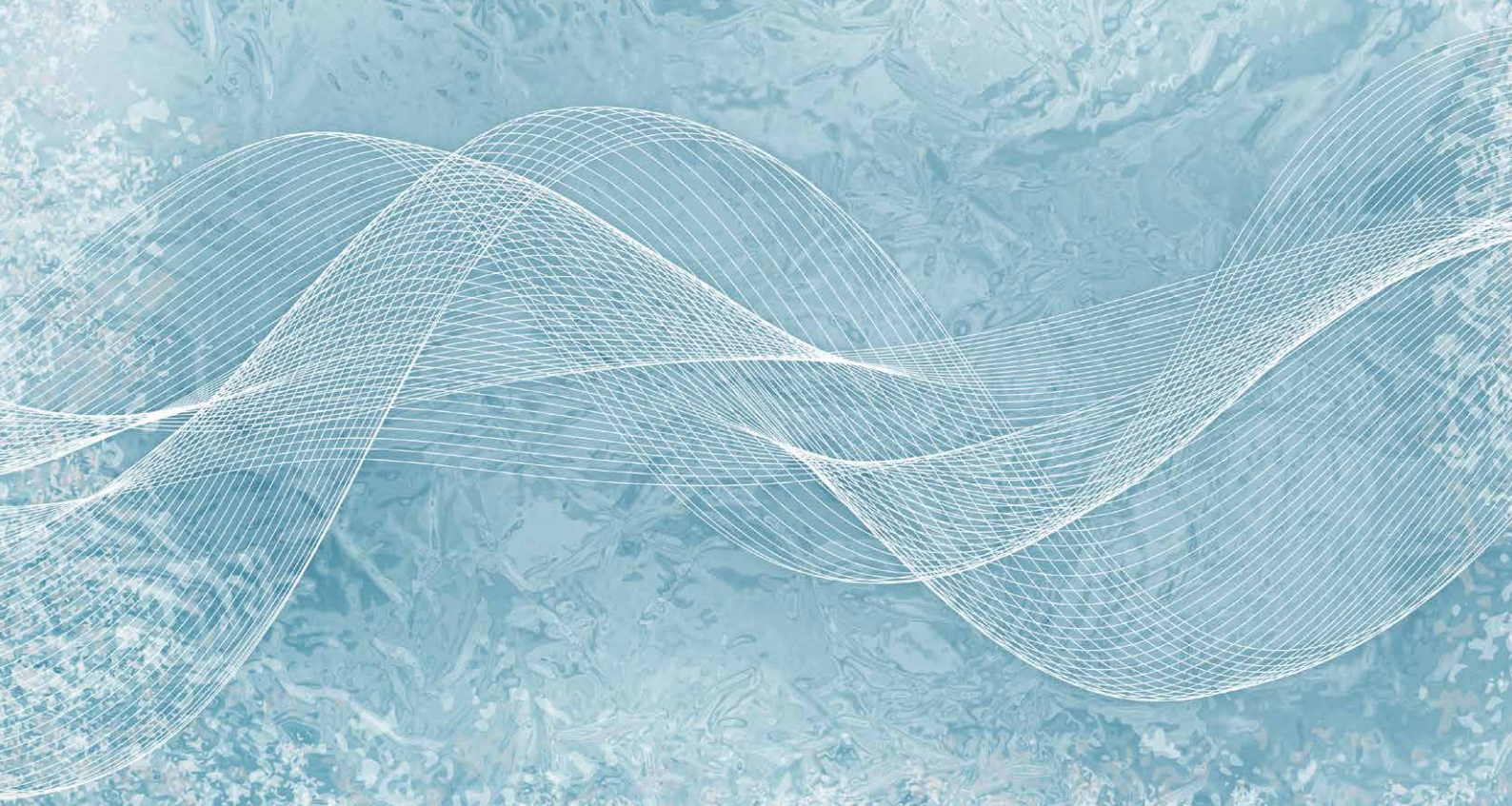
Usability:

As a general rule, working with voice systems is significantly more ergonomic than operating PDTs, for example. This aspect plays a crucial role in fresh and frozen food logistics. Wearing clothing such as gloves makes it difficult to operate a PDT without making any mistakes. Modern voice systems can be completely controlled by speech. Besides the actual picking process, these systems include volume settings on the terminal and speed control for the spoken instructions. Pick-by-voice is thus the system of choice even when the employee is wearing gloves as they do not need to hold the device in their hands to control the process.



Changes in staff and employees who speak another language:

When it comes to choosing a provider, the trend is increasingly towards speaker-independent solutions. Flexible voice systems are the answer, especially in sectors such as fresh and frozen food logistics, where staff change frequently or seasonal workers are used. Systems that do not require voice-template training show their advantages here since employees can work productively immediately. Since companies are employing staff who speak other languages more often, voice systems offer support that is available in all common languages thanks to their well-engineered technological basis. State-of-the-art systems are now even capable of recognising several languages at the same time. This is a clear advantage, especially when working together in multinational teams or teams which fluctuate on a seasonal basis since staff can easily respond in their respective language.



Inventory security:

Paper lists cannot be used to record inventory. Current stock can be tracked transparently at any time with a voice solution that is connected to the higher-level WMS or ERP system. Individual items can also be traced if necessary. Easy handling plays a role again here: if employees wear gloves during picking in the frozen or fresh food section, it is difficult to manage paper lists whatever the case.



Flexibility:

Logisticians are faced with the challenge of consistently delivering top performance, even in uncertain times. Flexible voice systems can help and can be adapted to changing requirements whenever needed. In times of high energy prices or unpredictable supply chains, pick-by-voice creates the flexibility that companies need to take a targeted approach and adapt their picking services to current conditions accordingly, swiftly and without great effort.

VOICE AS A **GAME CHANGER** IN THE FRESH AND FROZEN FOOD SEGMENT

The use of pick-by-voice in the frozen food and fresh produce sector significantly improves employees' working conditions. Employee motivation and commitment is increased by providing them with an ergonomic system that is controlled exclusively by voice. The system is easy to operate and assists pickers with their work instead of hindering them.

The future of temperature-controlled internal logistics belongs to voice-controlled systems since voice solutions are the only way if the aim is to create greater efficiency, greater quality and greater process ergonomics. Ultimately, it's all about one thing: reliable order fulfilment and satisfied customers.

A **WHITEPAPER** on **ON SELECTING THE RIGHT VOICE SOLUTION**, including a comprehensive checklist, is available for download at www.lydia-voice.com



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