Elevating operational accuracy and productivity

Lifeway Christian Resources: Rewriting the company journey

Founded in 1891 to create and distribute bible study resources to local churches, LifeWay Christian Resources has become one of the world's leading providers of biblical materials.

LifeWay provides 160 countries everything from bibles and biographies to journals and CDs, all distributed out of one 350,000 square-foot distribution center in Tennessee. It handles nearly 15,000 unique SKUs, and 3,000 orders, each day.
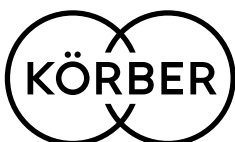
At a glance

Project goals
- Improve accuracy
- Increase productivity
- Reduce training times
- Improve inventory control

Solution
- Voice activated workflow

Benefits
- 79.2% reduction in carton errors
- 69.8% reduction in line errors
- 83% decrease in training time
- 6.5% increase in productivity

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LifeWay

Challenge

Despite accuracy of 91.17%, LifeWay was keen to update its existing paper method for multi-pick and multi-put workflows, to improve accuracy and efficiency.

After ruling out costly RF scanning, a user-directed voice solution was the most viable option.

As well as the accuracy benefits, they wanted to give their team a hands-free solution helping them focus on the task at hand.

Solution

We implemented a voice system complete with multi-pick and multi-put capabilities to match Lifeway's existing cart-picking processes.

We worked with them to make sure each new process was mapped into the warehouse's software, and that all stakeholders were kept up to date.

Once the groundwork had been laid, they focused on change management, working with pickers so this new way of working would be well received. By involving the users, from experienced pickers to new staff in the testing, they mitigated all apprehension from their team.

"We are much more accurate, much faster, and we're able to utilize our workers to do more. Overall, Voice was a great decision for LifeWay."

Justin Sullivan
Manager of Supply Chain and Systems, LifeWay.

Results

The project has proven to be a huge success across the board, delivering improvements in accuracy, productivity and inventory control. Though, for Justin Sullivan, Manager of Supply Chain and Systems, accuracy was the biggest win:

"We could see accuracy improvements within the first few days. We didn't expect to see that kind of accuracy improvement so quickly."
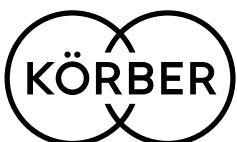
The positive results continued throughout the first year, allowing them to reduce their carton pick error rate from 8.83% to 1.84%, and line pick error rate from 1.29% to 0.39%.

As well as improving overall productivity by 6.5%, voice also cut training time for new pickers from three full shifts to only four hours. It has also helped them stay on top of inventory control.

The most surprising outcome was the system's ability to handle any language, accent or dialect.

"Just to test the system, I trained all of my number responses for a test template in Spanish. I thought if it could recognize a different language, it could probably handle a strong Tennessee accent."

By finding a solution to meet our client's specific needs, we were able to transform LifeWay's distribution processes, across all metrics, helping to future-proof the business for years to come.