

Körber Supply Chain

Voice beyond picking

A comprehensive look at the utility of voice technology



Several decades ago, voice technology got its beginnings in the warehouse as a way to increase productivity and accuracy in the picking process. The basic premise of the technology was that it allowed the workers to move through the warehouse without anything to distract them or tie up their hands- a stark difference from the traditional picking styles of RF scanners and paper. Once warehouses began to realize the benefits of voice they began to expand their use beyond picking, and then beyond the warehouse altogether.

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About voice picking

The voice system connects to the mission critical systems running your warehouse (whether that be a WMS, ERP, or something else), and translates the orders through a headset. The workers hear the orders and respond with commands recognized by the voice software, which are then pushed back into your system.

This process made picking a natural fit, as the call and response format was very simple. The process looks like this:

1. The voice system directs the picker to a specific location
2. The picker reads off a set of check digits specific to that location to confirm they are picking from the correct place
3. The voice system provides the quantity of the item to be picks
4. The picker picks, then confirms that quantity
5. The voice system directs the picker to the new location

When implementing the voice system into the picking process, it is typical to see increases in productivity ranging from 10-35%, increases in accuracy up to 85%, and decreases in training time by 70% or more, all while delivering an ROI in an average of 9-12 months.



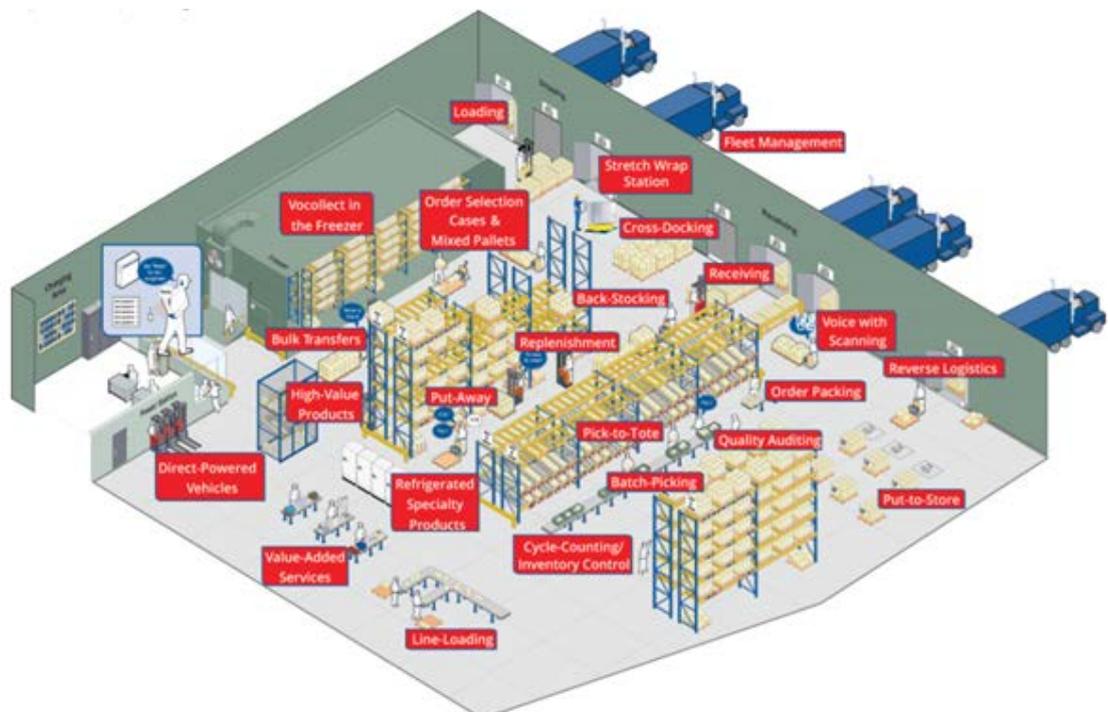
Expanding the use of voice in the warehouse

After seeing such strong results using voice for picking, many operations began to consider the potential of expanding voice into other workflows that follow repetitive processes, like replenishment, cycle counting, and put-away. Today, voice is commonly used for 24 different workflows in the warehouse, which you can see in the graphic below.

The interaction between the worker and the voice software works the same with these applications, operating with a call and response style. By integrating the voice software into multiple workflows, you can choose to further leverage your workers, or increase efficiencies between the different warehouse processes.

For example, by implementing voice into cycle counting, you can have pickers doing on the spot cycle counts when your system requires an updated inventory count. Should this number be off, or below a threshold for replenishment, the voice system could then trigger a member of your voice-enabled replenishment team to go to the location and address the inventory.

These workflows have the same benefits to gain from voice, and since the voice software is already integrated into the warehouse, and many of the workers have already been trained to use the solution, the ROI on the extension into other workflows is often less than 3 months.



Expanding voice beyond the warehouse

The newest applications for voice lie outside the warehouse completely, and are aimed to help companies that may not have a warehouse at all. The first is for companies that complete repetitive inspection procedures, like on cars, custom built materials, industrial use machinery, and more. Voice for inspection is meant to remove the paper and pencil from the process completely, allowing technicians to log findings verbally into the voice system.

Not only does this increase the speed of the process by removing the need to stop and write down the findings and record them into the computer later, but it also removes the need for you to store paper copies of inspection sheets. The voice system will automatically log information

like the date of inspection and the person who completes the inspection, so if you need to pull that information at a later date it will be easier to locate. Additionally, the voice system will ensure compliance in the process, as the technicians will have to follow the step by step voice instructions.

The second application is voice for maintenance, which is being used by automotive and aerospace technicians across the globe. The voice system will walk the technicians through your maintenance procedures step by step, making sure that any issue that needs to be fixed is addressed, and each maintenance technician is following the same process. Operations often find that not only are their technicians faster, but their repairs are completed correctly and rarely are any issues missed.

Final thoughts

While voice may have gotten its start as a picking technology, it has now expanded far beyond that. With benefits like productivity and accuracy increases, and decreasing ROIs, there are huge benefits to be had by choosing voice for your operation.

Could Körber's versatile voice solutions be right the right fit for your operation?

Contact us to find out:

<https://www.koerber-supplychain.com/supply-chain-solutions/supply-chain-voice-solutions>

