

Horseware Reins in Warehousing Operations with WMS and Voice Solution from BEC



Founded in 1985, Horseware Ireland is one of the world's leading designers and manufacturers of riding, leisure and equestrian products. Selling to a global customer base, the company turns over approximately €40 million and employs 600 people. Business operations are located across North America and Ireland, with a 175,000² ft European warehouse in Ireland and outsourced manufacturing based in Asia.

Business Issue

Continuous business expansion had resulted in Horseware outgrowing its legacy, manual supply chain processes. Good news for the management team but the warehouse just couldn't keep up with all the admin generated by ever increasing sales orders. Paper dockets had historically been used to record the movement of goods upon arrival into the warehouse and then through the distribution process. This was creating issues with order picking, order accuracy and stock replenishment, which in turn, was resulting in customer service and time management issues.

Aware that a new and improved warehouse management solution was needed to cope with new levels of demand, Horseware set out to deploy a fully automated solution within its warehouse facility. After a market review, the company decided to implement a new 'Goods In to Goods Out' voice solution from BEC.

Since implementing BEC eSmart Voice, Horseware has improved overall warehouse efficiency, inventory control and order processing rates. The number of units shipped each day has increased by 23% without the need to employ extra staff in the warehouse.

David Minto, Warehouse & Retail Manager at Horseware, commented, "It was clear that an automated data capture solution was needed within our warehouse which would integrate seamlessly with our existing Movex ERP system. After looking at a number of suppliers, we selected BEC to initially complete a data capture audit of Horseware's operational processes and then make solution recommendations.

Having already seen voice solutions in operation inside other apparel warehouses, Horseware knew it was important to find a supplier with the right industry sector experience.



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Warehouse & Retail Manager
at Horseware

In addition to having worked with other apparel clients, BEC was also able to demonstrate previous experience of integrating its solutions with Movex ERP systems. "We had every confidence that BEC was the right company for the job," adds David Minto.

The Solution

After completing its process review, BEC recommended Horseware implement eSmart® Warehouse with its eSmart Voice software solution. Conceptually, voice-directed technology is very similar to traditional RF scanning, but instructions are provided verbally, which means operatives can work hands and eyes free. This has a significant impact on productivity levels, with the potential to see gains of up to 35%, whilst also reducing errors by up to 50%.

BEC's eSmart Warehouse with Voice solution has been developed with Vocollect voice technology at its core rather than as an add-on feature. This allows Horseware to realise the benefits of eSmart Voice technology throughout its warehousing facility and specifically within picking, put-away, stock replenishment, despatch and replenishment operations.

The technology selected by Horseware offers many features. For instance, it allows workers starting their shifts to quickly pair wireless headsets to their mobile devices in seconds. The solution also provides other time saving benefits to improve time management and eliminate any unnecessary delays when completing an order. Battery runtime remaining can easily be monitored, by allowing workers to ask the voice device when a battery change is likely to be needed.

David Minto continues, "With the old system, orders were being released for picking even if there wasn't enough stock on the shelf to fulfil them. With the new system, if there's insufficient stock, the order is automatically diverted to replenishment and the products are replenished by the forklift driver before the picker actually goes off to pick the order. Orders are only released to the pickers when all of the products are available."

This investment has saved Horseware a lot of time and avoids any confusion or unnecessary delays. The company previously required two people to pick an order – one for picking and one for packing – but now a single operator is able to complete both tasks much more quickly.

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The Results

Horseware has seen outstanding improvements since implementing BEC eSmart Warehouse with Voice. Within a short period of time. The company has measured a 7% increase to sales targets without requiring additional staff and recorded a 23% increase in units shipped.

Horseware has also improved order traceability levels because BEC's solution allows the company to quickly establish who picked and packed an order, the date it was shipped and which courier it was sent with. All this information is fully available to the customer service team at any time, so queries can be dealt with in a timely manner.

Staff performance visibility has also improved, which has resulted in the introduction of a bonus scheme to increase job satisfaction levels.

"In terms of our operational processes, we are experiencing increased efficiencies and a tangible reduction in errors. The new solution 'just works.' As far as BEC is concerned, they have been fantastic to work with. We feel that as a business, thanks to the new BEC solution, we have future-proofed ourselves for the next ten years and will be able to continue to grow and become more profitable - the sky's the limit for us now," concludes David Minto.

In summary: BEC's Added Value

- ▶ Seamless integration with Movex ERP solution
- ▶ Conducted full process and data capture audit
- ▶ Experience of apparel industry benefited warehouse operations team
- ▶ Improved customer service operations with real time data.