

Smooth voice implementation for butter specialist IDB cuts costs and boosts worker safety

IDB Deutschland GmbH (IDB) is a butter formation specialist, shaping novelty creations from Kerrygold butter for the Central European hospitality industry. Business is booming and IDB ships between 70-120 tonnes of butter a day across Germany, Austria and Poland.

When the 75 year old company decided to build a new factory, it presented an opportunity to maximise efficiency, productivity and data accuracy across all operations, thereby capitalising upon future business potential. In particular, construction of a new site in Germany provided a means to significantly reduce the cost of finished goods handling by bringing these activities in-house. IDB had vision, but with no prior experience in this area, they needed experts to guide and advise them along the way.

Determined to find the best way to complete pick and replenishment operations, IDB evaluated the latest advancements in data capture, selecting Voice-Directed technology due to its high pick efficiency, accuracy and superior safety features. Particularly suited to fast moving pick environments, Voice-Directed technology offered increases of 10-15% efficiency compared with barcode scanning. Integration into IDB's existing Movex ERP system would provide real-time stock updates and allow data accuracy levels in excess of 99.9% to be achieved.

"The eSmart Voice system provided by BEC is absolutely perfect. We are saving time, have reduced our picking errors and our workforce feels safer using the Voice Terminals," says Heike Tiemann, IT Manager at IDB Deutschland.

The additional occupational health benefits offered by Voice-Directed working made the technology even more appealing to IDB. Designed for use with both hands and eyes-free, the eSmart Voice terminals are ideal for intensive manual handling tasks and vehicular operations. In addition, the hardware is constructed with breakaway components and devices are usable in extreme temperatures ranging from -40 to 50o C. IDB needed a versatile, easy to use system that required minimal training and eSmart Voice was a perfect solution.



"We used to outsource warehousing and distribution to a third party and since bringing these activities in-house with eSmartVoice, we have made considerable cost savings."

Heike Tiemann

IT Manager at IDB Deutschland

Discovery

The Voice solution implemented by BEC utilises state of the art wearable computers and headsets. Voice functionality is provided for picking transactions and supporting replenishment activities. At the start of a shift, users download their personal voice profiles onto the terminals and real-time integration of the solution enables tasks to be assigned to each operator seamlessly as they complete their work.

Simulated speech issued via each headset directs the relevant operator to the correct pick location and the user confirms their arrival by reading back the check digit on the location barcode. When instructed how many items to pick, the user then states the quantity they have placed on the pallet. Quality is built into each transaction. If a shortage of stock means the operator cannot complete the task, a simple spoken command will trigger an automatic replenishment from the bulk stock location. All this is completed before the operator leaves the pick face, reducing delays and any need for items to be re-picked later on. BEC's software communicates the transaction data to Movex in real-time, which enables instant validation of picked items against the job and results in greater pick accuracy. If an error does occur, the system immediately notifies the user and requests a reason for the discrepancy.

Voice-Directed technology is extremely simple to use and IDB managed to reduce new starter training time by over 50%. There is no need for complicated multi-function keyboards and transactions can be completed using simple spoken commands and verbal responses. During training, operators create a unique user profile, which enables the system to identify and understand spoken responses delivered in a wide range of languages.

Results

Integration of Finished Goods at IDB proved a successful project and ensured IDB's new factory maximised productivity, efficiency and pick accuracy. BEC's eSmart solution integrated seamlessly into Movex and required no modifications to the host system. The real-time data capture capability ensures immediate updates and full visibility of all transactions. By enhancing their existing eSmart Warehouse solution with eSmart Voice functionality, new picking and replenishment transactions fully complemented IDB's existing business processes and reduced implementation costs.

Overall, using their own workforce to conduct picking and replenishment activities between tasks saved IDB from further costs associated with employing new warehouse operatives. As the devices are ideal for use during intensive manual handling and when operating moving vehicles, pick operators can concentrate on their tasks and remain aware of their environment. The voice terminals also operate successfully in IDB's Cold Storage Environment, where temperatures are as low as -25°C.

Heike Tiemann, IT Manager at IDB Deutschland commented, "We used to outsource warehousing and distribution to a third party and since bringing these activities in-house, we have made considerable cost savings. Implementing eSmart Voice has been a key contributor to achieving this."

In summary: BEC's Added Value

- Completed seamless integration with Movex ERP
- Provided user training and project management for smooth implementation
- Scalable solution extending the life of existing software investments
- Expert understanding of warehouse management in the food manufacturing sector

