

Raleigh gears up for e-commerce success with BEC's WMS software and eSmart Voice



Raleigh has been designing high quality bicycles for over 130 years and is the only bike manufacturer to have made the UK's Superbrands list. The company has experienced phenomenal growth and millions of pounds' worth of bikes and accessories are shipped all over the world from the company's Nottingham warehouses every year. Now as a result of lifestyle changes due to Covid, the business is even busier than ever.

Business Issue

Raleigh operates multiple warehouses for the different areas of its business, from finished bikes to spare parts and accessories. In recent years, e-commerce has become a more important sales channel and the company now sells direct to the consumer as well as via its traditional cycle retailer network.

Raleigh was using a paper-based system to record goods in, put-away, stock movements and stock counts, but due to the huge volumes involved, error rates were rising, particularly within stock management. Time was being wasted searching for products listed on pick lists only to find that they were stored in a different location or out of stock. This created customer service issues because stock data was inaccurate and the mistakes impacted on efficiency, causing unnecessary delays and costly, inefficient use of resources. It also meant that stock would frequently be misplaced, declared missing and then written off.

Raleigh needed to invest in warehouse technology to support the business in two key ways. Firstly software was required to accelerate pick rates, improve pick accuracy, plus improve control of product placement, stock control and picking procedures. Raleigh also needed to introduce further operational efficiencies to support its rapidly growing e-commerce business and cope with inherent seasonality in the bike industry.

After researching different suppliers, Raleigh selected BEC as their supply chain technology partner. Specialists in this industry, BEC's software works with all rugged mobile devices including wireless imagers, with a seamless ERP integration. It will fully automate product picking and stock movement processes across all warehouses to improve efficiency, productivity and reduce costs.

Steve Wigley, Distribution Manager at Raleigh commented, "BEC stood out from the other companies we considered. They are very experienced in data capture and we felt confident that their eSmart supply chain warehouse technology solutions would surpass our requirements."



"BEC's software has transformed our warehouse in a very short space of time. We are fully in control of procedures we had problems with using our previous paper-based system and we are working much more accurately."

Steve Wigley

Distribution Manager at Raleigh

The Solution

After completing a process and data capture audit of Raleigh's warehouse, BEC devised a warehouse management solution based on eSmart Warehouse. This automated warehouse operations whilst providing real-time validation of transaction data. It would also remove the previous problems Raleigh were experiencing related to visibility of stock numbers and stock locations. Due to their paper-based system, data was always a few hours behind actual product stock levels, so managing sales in real-time was impossible. This was compounded by the seasonality of the bicycle business. Raleigh employs extra workers during peak periods to keep pace with customer demand, however the paper based system made training more difficult and slowed down productivity.

Phase One focused on introducing higher levels of control into the receiving and picking side of the warehouse, eliminating stock management issues by ensuring that stock received was barcoded. Raleigh began using ruggedised scanners to check that everything was barcoded appropriately and that goods in data was correctly captured before products entered the storage and distribution process. Cordless Bluetooth scanners, ideal for scanning applications where freedom of movement is essential, were deployed for packing operations.

Phase Two included the implementation of voice directed working. This addressed the accuracy and productivity issues experienced in picking and replenishment and involved equipping warehouse staff with voice directed wearable computers running BEC's eSmart Voice solution. This uses a voice-activated scanner and belt-mounted mobile hardware, enabling operators to work 100% hands and eyes free, with wireless headsets allowing them to communicate directly with the warehouse management system.

The Results

The new eSmart Voice solution has enabled Raleigh to automatically capture and record data for critical warehouse applications like goods receiving, stock movements, replenishment and stock audits, helping to reduce inventory inaccuracies, improve efficiency, maximise throughput and streamline overall business processes.

Introducing voice-directed workflows has had an additional benefit for training seasonal workers, who can now be fully trained within a couple of days. Workers like the new voice system and have reported that the headsets are extremely comfortable.

These improvements have increased worker productivity, enabling Raleigh to pack and dispatch more quickly, accurately and effectively. Raleigh can also produce individual carton packing lists, which it couldn't do before. The company has a real-time view of available stock, whereas previously, it would have taken hours to update the system.

Management information has also been improved and Raleigh has access to more operational data, with the ability to evaluate picks, packs and other processes for improvements. An unlimited number of concurrent orders can be managed, which is essential for the future growth of its e-commerce business.

BEC's system has led to a redesign of the physical warehouse layout. Raleigh has created a flexible pick-face and quadrupled the number of pick locations without increasing the physical space.

Steve Wigley comments: "BEC's software has transformed warehouse applications. We are fully in control of procedures and are working much more accurately. The new solution has even enabled us to find missing and misplaced stock which was previously written off."

"As far as BEC is concerned, we could not have asked for more. Raleigh has many suppliers and BEC stands out for being very capable and personable. They get the job done, are quick to respond and have resolved any problems efficiently and professionally."

Key benefits of BEC eSmart Warehouse for Raleigh

- ▶ 99.9% stock accuracy levels, up from 96%
- ▶ Increased worker productivity by 20%
- ▶ Real-time stock control
- ▶ Creation of a flexible pick-face
- ▶ Faster training of new staff and seasonal workers.