



30% GREATER EFFICIENCY THANKS TO VOICE PICKING

Uvex Group – picking with LYDIA™ Voice
for over a decade



uvex group

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It all started with Uvex Sports back in 2010, when the manufacturer of sports eyewear and helmets decided to move away from paper-based picking in its central warehouse and switched to LYDIA™ Voice. This delivered a 30 percent increase in efficiency, enabling the company to ramp up warehouse throughput without extra staff. Other Uvex Group subsidiaries were also impressed and Ehrhardt Partner Group (EPG) was commissioned to implement the voice picking solution at eyewear manufacturer Filtral in 2017, followed by sports brand Alpina Sports in 2019. Since then, employees at all three central warehouses have been performing their picking duties with the aid of voice control while wearing a headset or the LYDIA™ VoiceWear vest. This has improved process quality while also dramatically reducing lead times and error rates.

Whether cycling, ski flying or tobogganing, professionals and amateurs alike place their trust in Uvex products when it comes to personal safety. Based in Fürth, Germany, the medium-sized family company manufactures high-quality helmets, eyewear and protective equipment for sports enthusiasts around the globe. Its portfolio also includes sun and reading glass as well as protective workwear. With 2,900 employees and 49 subsidiaries, Uvex Group generated revenues of €480 million in 2019/20. Seamless and efficient logistics processes are key to the company's success in all segments as a significant number of orders are handled each day: During seasonal peaks, around 1,900 orders and up to 18,000 items leave the Filtral warehouse alone on a daily basis. Uvex Sports' 12,500 m² central warehouse is not far behind, with 17,000 items. In addition, Alpina Sports in Laimering, near Munich, handles around 16,000 items a day during busy periods.

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Christian Kund,
Uvex Group Information Management SAP

Uvex Sports originally began searching for ways to boost picking efficiency back in 2010, with the company planning to double warehouse capacities in Fürth-Stadeln without hiring any extra staff. It quickly became clear that paper-based picking needed to be phased out: It was a cumbersome, time-consuming and error-prone way of working, with employees having to constantly switch back and forth between products and paper lists. The difference when using a pick-by-voice solution is that employees receive instructions by voice command via a headset or picking vest.

Confirmation and recognition that an item has been removed is also a voice-based process. As they no longer have the hassle of using lists, staff are able to focus more on their actual work, the error rate declines, and the number of steps in the picking process is reduced.

In LYDIA™ Voice, the company quickly found the solution it was looking for: “We were impressed by the extremely reliable voice recognition, with staff able to work productively with the system from the get go. That saves a lot of time, especially during busy periods, when we have to bolster our workforce by taking on temporary staff,” explains Christian Kund, who works in the Group Information Management SAP team at UVEX.



EFFICIENCY BOOST IN STADELN CENTRAL WAREHOUSE

It wasn't long before Uvex Sports noticed the benefits of voice-controlled picking, with greater productivity thanks to the "hands free, eyes free" concept, immediate recording of picking positions in SAP, and no time-consuming voice training for new members of staff. In the first year alone, process efficiency increased by 30 percent and lead times per order fell 20 to 25 percent on average. That gave the company the buffer it needed to boost warehouse capacities in Fürth-Stadeln from 5,500 to 12,500 m² – without increasing the number of order pickers from 12.

However, with order volumes continuing to rise, the company didn't want to rest on its laurels. "We continuously refined the system and gradually increased the efficiency of our internal processes," reports Kund. The introduction of multi-order picking, which enables multiple customer orders to be processed simultaneously, played a key role. It significantly reduced the distances that order pickers had to travel, providing an extra boost to efficiency of around six percent.



Process efficiency
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MULTI-ORDER-PICKING AT FILTRAL

Multi-order picking was also the key to enhancing process efficiency at Filtral. Eight employees pick up to 1,900 orders each day for the manufacturer of reading and sun glasses. Until three years ago, it was an entirely paper-based process. But after seeing how well its sister company Uvex Sports got on with the solution, the company also decided to put its faith in LYDIA™ Voice. EPG programmed the system to enable up to 16 orders to be picked in parallel. “We needed to ensure that the size of the boxes was calculated precisely for the individual orders,” explains Frank Schneider, Expert Project Manager Voice Solutions at EPG. “Although that was a complex task, we were able to implement the project in under four months.” The new picking solution led to a significant increase in efficiency, while the error rate was down to under one percent. This is a critical aspect for Filtral’s success as no final shipping checks are performed.



OVER A DECADE OF **EFFICIENT** **AND TRUSTING COLLABORATION**

“We are very pleased with the results we’ve seen from introducing LYDIA™ Voice across all our companies,” explains Kund. “We really value the trusting collaboration and pragmatic approach adopted by EPG,” he says, remembering when LYDIA™ Voice was introduced at Alpina Sports in 2018. The picking process requirements were comparable with those of Uvex Sports at the time as they had similar customer bases and products. The solution therefore only required minor modifications for Alpina, meaning that LYDIA™ Voice was ready to go into operation after just eight days. “EPG was open about the relatively minor amount of effort involved and calculated a fair price. That’s not something to be taken for granted,” emphasises Kund.

During the ten years of collaboration, the pick-by-voice solution also needed to be adapted to continually changing processes. For example, the company found itself faced with completely new requirements after gaining the largest online retailer as a customer: Its shipments often contained up to 90 pallets with several thousand products that needed to be delivered in a short space of time. These types of orders require much longer timeframes than individual orders. In addition, the pallets that are already filled with picked products need to be stored for a certain amount of time. Clear labelling is important so that warehouse staff can later tell which products, models and volumes are stored on each individual pallet by scanning the label. EPG achieved this feat through a system modification that enables picking to be performed in “handling units” (with goods, packaging and load carriers combined into a unit).



SOFTWARE AND DEVICES ALWAYS UP TO DATE



At Uvex, LYDIA™ Voice is used in combination with a headset and also the LYDIA™ VoiceWear picking vest. The latter option offers maximum freedom of movement as the microphone and speaker components are already integrated into the vest. The voice computers are highly durable and didn't need replacing for a long time at Uvex. The company only began to gradually replace the devices a few years ago when the operating system was changed. At present, only one or two devices a year are replaced with new versions, which ensures that Uvex is always up to date in the technology department. One of the benefits of LYDIA™ Voice is that old and new devices can be used side by side without any problems.

EPG also provides Uvex Group with software support through all releases. The latest version of LYDIA™ Voice is already in operation at all picking sites. It works on the basis of neural networks and deep learning. Used in connection with the latest voice computer Voxter Elite+, it delivers optimum voice recognition. However, if picking problems still arise, LYDIA™ Warehouse Intelligence (LWI) can lend a helping hand. The tool clearly displays process, user and device data in a dashboard, enabling the status of software and hardware in operation to be monitored in real time. Potential causes of errors, such as WiFi connection disruptions or too many server requests, can be swiftly identified and resolved with the tool. "We used to have to go through complicated log files. Now it's a whole lot easier to find the error. It's an additional component for enhancing efficiency that slots into the overall system perfectly," summarises Kund.

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