

From Voice to Voice – Strategic Shift at EDEKA Germany’s Largest Grocery Retailer Turns to LYDIA Voice

When Germany’s largest grocery retailer reevaluates its entire order-picking technology, it’s about more than just optimization — it’s about long-term strategic viability. EDEKA recognized early on that its existing pick-by-voice system could no longer meet the growing demands for efficiency, ergonomics, and cost-effectiveness. The requirements for a new system were clear: it needed to be more powerful, more flexible, and more economically attractive — all while integrating seamlessly into existing operations. Following a brief but intensive testing phase, the decision was clear: EPG (Ehrhardt Partner Group) won out across the board with LYDIA Voice. The solution not only met all technical and economic criteria, but also enabled a smooth, phased transition by allowing parallel operation with the legacy system. This approach allowed approximately 10,000 users across 33 locations to become familiar with the new technology without any loss in productivity. The rollout was carried out gradually across regional distribution centers.

From fresh fruits and vegetables to beverages and cosmetics, EDEKA offers an exclusive assortment of around 25,000 food and non-food items. This wide-ranging product selection meets the needs of a diverse and varied customer base. With approximately 11,100 stores, the EDEKA Group is one of the most powerful players in the German grocery retail sector and a reliable partner for independent retailers, suppliers, wholesale customers, and convenience store operators. A strong commitment to quality shapes every aspect of the company’s operations throughout the entire value chain. This is especially evident in logistics. EDEKA’s wholesale operations are managed by seven regional companies that ensure all products arrive fresh and on time at more than 7,000 EDEKA stores. Deliveries are made from a total of 38 logistics centers spread across Germany, ensuring a seamless and reliable supply chain.

A New Sound at EDEKA: A Systematic Shift in Voice Technology

Order picking is a critical component of EDEKA’s logistics operations, playing a key role in maintaining a smooth and efficient flow of goods. However, the limitations of the existing pick-by-voice system had become increasingly apparent: lack of flexibility, ergonomic issues, and growing complexity in collaboration with the provider made a system change inevitable. EDEKA set out

in search of a solution that not only delivered technologically but was also future-ready. That search led to LYDIA VoiceWear — the innovative picking vest developed by the voice recognition and logistics software experts at EPG. Already familiar to the team, LYDIA VoiceWear was put to the test under real-world conditions — and the results were convincing across the board. Malte Kruse, Head of IT Logistics Systems EDEKA Minden Hanover, summed up the decision clearly:

“LYDIA VoiceWear offers functionality that’s truly one of a kind — there’s nothing else like it on the market. What’s more, our employees can be productive right away, without any prior voice training. That’s a significant advantage. With our previous system, that wasn’t possible — and when it comes to seasonal workers, quick onboarding is absolutely critical to our operations.”

Switching to LYDIA Voice During Live Operations

EDEKA’s decentralized structure results in a highly diverse IT landscape — a factor that posed a significant challenge during the transition to the new pick-by-voice system.

“This was essentially open-heart surgery, as the switchover took place during ongoing operations,” explains Tim Just, CEO of Voice Solutions at EPG. “Despite the wide range of different systems and the autonomy of the regional companies, the rollout was smooth and uninterrupted. A key factor in this success was the strong commitment of EDEKA’s decision-makers and the openness of its employees.” It quickly became clear that LYDIA Voice was capable of managing the existing complexity and translating it into an efficient, unified system — even under real-time, live conditions.

Ergonomics That Work: Smart Vest Boosts Employee Satisfaction

The decision to adopt the LYDIA VoiceWear picking vest originated from an initiative by EDEKA Minden-Hannover. The system allows for maximum freedom of movement during pick-by-voice operations while meeting key requirements for ergonomics, speed, and flexibility in order fulfillment. Instead of using a separate headset, the microphone and speaker are integrated directly into the wearable system — providing not only greater comfort but also clear voice transmission. The built-in audio system also supports users who wear hearing aids — a significant advancement in inclusion and accessibility, since traditional headsets have often posed a barrier in this area. From a

technological standpoint, LYDIA VoiceWear is state-of-the-art: its digital audio transmission is robust and offers high bandwidth.

Another standout feature is the integrated beamforming technology, which significantly reduces background noise — even in high-noise warehouse environments. The microphone array, consisting of four high-performance microphones, creates a directional “funnel” effect for speech input. This ensures accurate voice recognition, even when multiple pickers are working close to each other. “All of our hardware and software components are developed with a strong focus on user-friendliness,” explains Tim Just. “That leads to significantly higher acceptance and noticeably greater user satisfaction — an effect that became immediately clear at EDEKA.”

Following the rollout in EDEKA Minden-Hannover, EDEKA Nordbayern also began implementation of LYDIA Voice and LYDIA VoiceWear. Today, more than 4,400 devices are in use across 33 logistics centers.

Multilingual. Human-Centered. Collaborative.

“There was quick consensus across the entire EDEKA Group that LYDIA Voice was the right system for us,” Kruse continues. “Our employees work with this tool every day, so ergonomics and ease of use are especially important to us. And the system also supports another crucial aspect: integrating international skilled workers. Thanks to LYDIA Voice’s multilingual capabilities, onboarding is significantly easier.”

LYDIA Voice is currently available in over 60 languages. Since no voice training is required, employees can begin working productively right away — regardless of their native language, accent, or dialect. To further support new team members, EDEKA also relies on the LYDIA Co-Pilot. This key-user tool simplifies onboarding and provides hands-on support throughout the training period. Supervisors or key users can connect to the language clients in use and assist employees directly during their tasks. One of the most valuable features is the system’s language flexibility: while employees may use their preferred language for input, the Co-Pilot’s output remains in German. This ensures smooth communication within multilingual teams. This seamless language-switching

capability has quickly become one of LYDIA Voice's standout features in daily EDEKA operations.

A System Transition Built on Partnership

“One thing that really stands out is the outstanding support from the LYDIA Voice team — and that’s been consistent at all times,” says Kruse. “From day one, the collaboration was on equal footing and truly partnership-based. That’s exactly what we were hoping for during this system transition.” Just also draws a positive conclusion: “Together, we succeeded in implementing this large-scale project. Despite its complexity, we managed to switch to LYDIA Voice with virtually no disruption. That speaks to how adaptable our system is — especially in such a diverse and demanding environment as EDEKA.”

1. Challenge

- Replacement of an outdated voice system
- Integration into a complex and decentralized IT landscape
- Improvement of ergonomics and user experience
- Fast, inclusive onboarding — even for temporary and international staff

2. Solution

- Implementation of LYDIA Voice and the ergonomic LYDIA VoiceWear vest
- Parallel system operation to ensure a smooth transition
- Efficient onboarding supported by the LYDIA Co-Pilot
- Multilingual usability with no voice training required

3. Results

- Immediate productivity, even among seasonal workers
- High user acceptance thanks to intuitive handling and wearing comfort
- Inclusive solution – suitable for employees with hearing aids
- Stable live operation across 33 logistics sites

About EDEKA

With approximately 11,100 stores and over 400,000 employees, the EDEKA Group is one of the leading grocery retailers in Germany. The company combines regionally organized cooperatives with a strong central organization, standing for quality, customer proximity, and freshness. Wholesale operations are supported by 38 high-performance logistics centers, ensuring reliable supply to more than 7,000 stores. Offering a range of around 25,000 food and non-food products, EDEKA leverages cutting-edge logistics and a clear forward-looking strategy to drive innovation, responsibility, and economic strength in the German retail market.