

Perkins Paper Cuts Errors With Jennifer Voice Picking, QC/Audit and Loading



Perkins Paper is New England's largest independent wholesale distributor of foodservice and sanitary maintenance supplies. The company was founded in 1915 and has grown through a number of acquisitions, as well as internal product category expansion.

Goals

Eliminate errors and improve customer service.

Application

Jennifer™ VoicePlus Voice Directed Picking, Truck Loading, QC/Audit

Key Results

- Reduced errors more than 50%, while increasing shipping volumes.
- Improved selection productivity 4-5 percent with voice.
- Truck loading application ensures orders are loaded correctly.
- System-generated load map improves delivery process for drivers and customers.

At Perkins Paper, the number one priority is shipping the right product, on time, every time. This commitment to service spurred managers at the broadline foodservice distributor to implement voice technology to improve order selection and delivery accuracy.

“Like other companies, we’re always trying to improve service to our customers,” says Walter Harrigan, Senior Vice President. “So our main goal for voice was to reduce shorts and wrongs, which improves customer service and also reduces our costs. If you don’t send the right item to a customer, you have to taxi it out to them, and that costs a lot, probably \$50-\$60 per error.”



Perkins installed the Jennifer™ VoicePlus picking, QC/Audit, and loading system from Lucas Systems to meet the goals. “We liked the natural voice of Jennifer, and we felt it offered the flexibility to adapt to unique aspects of our operations. We do some things differently than others, and Lucas was able to accommodate that.” In addition to traditional case picking to pallet, Perkins had unique requirements for small-item picking, and for picking slower-moving items in very narrow aisles (VNA).

To run the voice applications, Perkins selected the Motorola WT4090 mobile computer. “We really like the smaller, lighter footprint of this device,” says Harrigan. Perkins was the first user of Jennifer voice applications on the Motorola wearable computer.

Multiple Warehouse Areas and Unique Process Needs

Like other foodservice distributors, selectors at Perkins apply a delivery label to every case as they pick it from racks and place it on their pallets in freezer, cooler and dry areas of the warehouse. “We stayed with labels when we moved to voice, because you need the stickers for delivery and check in,” Harrigan explains. “Some of our routes have 15 stops on a truck and we average 44 pieces per order. So the labels are important to help our truckers find the right pieces at each stop on the route.”

While moving to voice using Jennifer, Perkins also began using double pallet jacks rather than single jacks, to allow selectors to pick more orders each pass through the warehouse. “We got a big productivity gain moving to double pallets, in addition to the 4-5% gains in productivity that were specific to the voice system.”





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- Walter Harrigan,
Perkins Paper

About Lucas

Lucas Systems has delivered more voice-directed warehouse applications on a wider variety of mobile computers than any other company.

For more information, call us at 724-940-7000 or online at www.lucasware.com

In addition to traditional case picking to pallet – including case picking in low-velocity very narrow aisle (VNA) areas – the Jennifer system also supports piece picking to totes, and a process for consolidating or merging small item totes, VNA picks, bulk items and other pre-picked items into pallets at the dock or staging areas. The voice-directed consolidation process helps ensure that the correct items get on the correct pallets prior to loading.

Downstream from picking, Perkins is using the Jennifer QC/Audit system to double-check the accuracy of picking. The QC/Audit system uses a touch screen tablet PC. It allows checkers to compare pallet contents to the actual voice-pick results, and to fill shorts and correct any errors prior to releasing the route for loading. Jennifer also directs loading of trucks to ensure all pallets destined for a given route are loaded, and then generates a load map of the contents of the truck.



“The truck loading application helps give our drivers information about where they will find the items for a particular stop. And it’s a good check that the right items are on the truck,” says Harrigan.

50 Percent Fewer Errors With Higher Shipping Volumes

Since implementing Jennifer, Perkins has seen reduced shipping errors every year while also increasing shipping volumes. “We eliminated 36 percent of our shorts and wrongs in 2009, compared to 2008, and for the first four months of this year we had a further 18 percent reduction, even though we shipped 350,000 more cases this year compared to last,” says Harrigan.

In addition to productivity gains in picking, the Jennifer system has reduced clerical time as selectors can now voice-enter catch weights (the actual weight of cases that are shipped to customers) and assignment information that was previously hand-written and entered into computer systems by clerical staff.

Associates have also taken well to Jennifer, according to Harrigan. “Younger selectors like it right away, but there is always some resistance to new technology. But the guys who were most resistant at the start are the guys who would be most upset if it was ever taken away.”