

# Voice picking drives fulfillment excellence worldwide for leading healthcare products company



The world's largest and most diversified global healthcare products company fills north of 100,000 orders per day for consumers, retailers, medical centers and pharmacies. But although the scale may be large, they face challenges that are very similar to other medical distributors, large and small, in the consumer and medical space. Those include rising costs, keeping up with ever-increasing customer and patient needs, and especially ensuring accuracy, quality and patient safety.

When the company sought to improve productivity, quality, and safety in their distribution center operations, they reached out to Lucas Systems, who has helped companies transform their DCs using voice and AI optimization technologies for more than 25 years.

# Across the world, productivity and accuracy show immediate gains

The motivation to switch to voice picking, from a previous RF-based system, stemmed mainly from the accuracy and verification it provides. Voice drives a consistent workflow and requires specific validation points at the point of pick, including checkstring or scanning validation. In addition, the eyes-free and hands-free capability of voice-direction allows the picker to stay focused on the work at hand.

The original engagement between the partners began in 2016 and included the implementation of voice picking in several United States distribution centers. The initial success of the voice implementation drove further opportunity for warehouse optimization, first in the United Kingdom to support the organization's vision care business and then to medical and surgical supplies in Australia, Hong Kong and Korea. The Lucas Warehouse Optimization Suite is now in use by hundreds of warehouse workers in 14 locations, over several million square feet of distribution space and utilizing seven different languages and dialects. The results have been dramatic:

# 122%



productivity  
improvement  
in vision care

# 35%



productivity  
improvement in  
consumer goods

# 50%



productivity  
improvement in  
medical devices

## Automating process to drive throughput

The goal of the vision care implementation was to support DC consolidation and dramatically increase throughput by automating manual picking process while doubling the number of active SKUs. To do that, the team reengineered the picking process for a a 10-order pick to trolley set up. The Lucas Warehouse Optimization Suite provided AI-based batching and pick path optimization, along with automated prioritization and work release, and additional reporting. In addition to the 122% productivity increase, the Lucas implementation also reduced re-work due to improved accuracy, allowed for efficient, real-time replenishment, live order status, target reporting, and error tracking.

*According to one operations manager in the UK, "The introduction of voice picking to our facility resulted in significant savings in terms of labor and rework activities, while also minimizing paper usage, saving 174 trees."*

# Standardizing best practices in picking

In the consumer goods DC site example, the goal was to automate pick processes to improve efficiency and quality, and create a standardized, best practices template for additional regional sites.

It also represented the first deployment with Lucas' next-generation speech engine - which needed no user voice training, significantly reducing ramp up time for workers. The engine included a Thai voice and text UI, configurable for other languages as well. The solution also featured scanning for batch/lot verification and created a single, standardized solution for all regional sites.

Implementation brought an immediate 35% productivity improvement, highlighted by no downtime and improved training. The availability of real-time labor and productivity data was a big factor in driving efficiencies and enhancing management responsiveness and effectiveness.



# Helping enhance patient care and safety

The success of the vision care implementation spurred the opportunity to apply optimization and learnings to a new business unit with added complexity - the medical device segment in Australia. The goal here was to optimize and standardize processes across product types and zones using voice and scan, eliminate administrative tasks and improve efficiency and quality. The unique aspects of this implementation included advanced cartonization to account for a wide variety of product sizes, batch and expiration validation by scan, enhanced ability to expedite urgent orders and post-pick statistical QC/audit.

The Australia project proved the viability of applying a single solution across multiple BUs, with expanded system flexibility by bringing a 57% productivity gain and improved reporting for labor and productivity.

# Growing value by continually optimizing picking

Focusing on optimizing the picking aspect of DC operations is a leading objective for this customer and many other healthcare suppliers and providers, as it is the key lever in maximizing productivity, accuracy and service. This example of utilizing voice directed processes as a way to jumpstart productivity and especially for accuracy in the healthcare distribution space illustrates that this is a strategy that has seen great success in driving efficiency, but more importantly ensuring the accuracy so vital to enhanced patient and customer care.

Conventional warehouse wisdom generally holds that RF using scanning is the most accurate technology for hands-on picking and is necessary for serial number and batch capture. In fact, voice directed solutions have these features and many others that help pickers to reach an even higher level of correctness.



Lucas Systems helps companies transform their distribution center operations and continuously adapt to changing market dynamics. We dramatically increase worker productivity, operational agility, and customer satisfaction. Our solutions are built on 25+ years of deep process expertise and smart software using AI and voice technologies. Our solutions feature Jennifer™, the brain, voice, and orchestration engine that drives performance improvement gains. Make the smartest moves at the lowest cost with Jennifer™.

