Sophisticated and User-friendly Supply Chain Solutions

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Logistics Technologies
Warehouse & Supply Chain Optimisation
3PL · Distribution · Wholesale · Manufacturing · Retail

DALE FARM

ProWMS Deployed for High-volume Picking at Dale Farm Central Distribution Centre

Dale Farm Cooperative is part of the United Dairy Farmers Group, a UK dairy farmer co-operative owned by over 1,200 dairy farmers that supplies it with fresh milk. Dale Farm manufactures and markets a wide range of dairy products spanning milk, cream, milk powders, cheese, butter, dairy spreads, yogurts, ice-cream and desserts. The company operates in the UK, Ireland and 45 other countries via its own Dale Farm, as well as the Dromona and Mullins, brands. The group's turnover is £728m and comprises manufacturing locations in Ireland, Scotland and England.

THE BUSINESS

- Northern Ireland's leading dairy company supplying retail, foodservice and ingredients markets

- Manufactures and markets leading brand milk, cream, cheese butter, yoghurt, spreads and more to over 45 countries

- Over 1,200 staff in manufacturing centres across Ireland, Scotland and England

THE CHALLENGE

Pick operatives were already using RF handheld terminals. The challenge was to improve individual picking rates and ensure a payback, while assuring all traceability requirements were covered.

Given the diverse nature of the products being picked – liquid milk, cheese, chill desserts and yogurts – there were significant stacking requirements in terms of the pallet build to prevent crushing and damages.

There were pallet build rules per consignee: some requiring column stacking, some layered with spacers, and so forth. This wasted significant time by there being no optimised pickface layout walk sequence.

Efficiency needed improvement around the time operators were physically putting down their hand-held terminals to build pallets and then picking them up again to continue work – the repetitive nature of this process resulted in significant lost time across all operatives.

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RESULTS SUMMARY

- Over 28% uplift in operative pick rates achieved

- Pickface layout configured in ProWMS for real-time operator processing

- Operator presented with the optimised next line item almost 100% of the time

- ProWMS runs the same code as HHT's – the operator logs off voice and onto HHT so the order is picked-up where it was left off

- Original process time eliminated reducing operating expense

Vocollect PartnerNet
Host System Provider
—— PLATINUM LEVEL ——

NAV

Microsoft
Dynamics

In-house ERP:
full interfacing
with ProWMS

THE SOLUTION

As part of the ProWMS implementation Principal Logistics Technologies provided staff with headsets allowing work instructions to be voice enabled, leaving their hands free. The effect of the voice technology eliminated the time operatives spent reviewing the next line item to pick and the associated time they took to scroll up and down in deciding how to build the pallets. Prior to achieving this it took significant system analysis time in making changes to the physical pickface layout, and with replenishment activities.

Firstly, at consignee level within ProWMS, we set the parameters of pallet build, layered, column stacked etc. When the other changes were implemented, we let the pickers continue to pick via their HHT's as part of a trial implementation. However, we blanked the lines on the HHT's and if an operative wanted to see the next line they needed to press "S" (for skip). Throughout the shift we would ask operatives why they hit the "S" key to get their reasoning for not selecting the next line presented to them. After a short period, the level of "skips" reduced and we then migrated the operators to voice.

Some unique aspects of ProWMS:

- It is real time, and while many competitors sell voice systems, these are really batch-picking.

- It runs the same code as the HHT's so the user can literally logoff voice and onto a HHT and the order is picked-up where the operator left off.

Our approach enabled a smooth transition to voice and enabled us to ascertain why pickers often made valid decisions not to accept the next instruction. We could then configure ProWMS to adopt this and over time be presented with the optimised next line item almost 100% of the time.

We eradicated the time from physically putting down and picking up the HHT and wasted by operatives from reviewing the next line item to pick. The newly optimised pickface layouts resulted in a 28%+ uplift in operative pick rates. Pick rate statistics are often presented as best guesses, but in this instance, we had the luxury of comparative rates pre and post the voice implementation for accurate comparison.

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"The time eliminated by the operator physically putting down and picking up the HHT, and then reviewing the next line item to pick, was eliminated. The newly optimised pickface layout resulted in a 28%+ uplift in operative pick rates. This reduced Dale Farm's OpEx, contributing towards increased revenue."

Joe O'Shea. Principal Logistics Technologies

About Principal Logistics Technologies

For over 30 years, Principal Logistics Technologies has been a leader in the design and delivery of innovative warehouse management software (WMS) and enterprise resource planning (ERP) software. Our technology and services optimise operational performance, reduce OpEx, and increase revenue for 3PL, distribution, wholesale, manufacturing, and retail warehouse businesses.

The company supports enterprise-level and multinational businesses with complex single and multisite operations spanning 3PL, chemicals & hazardous goods, hard & soft commodities, chill picking, cold storage, cross docking, eCommerce, FMCG, pharmaceuticals & healthcare and more. We operate from offices in Dublin in Ireland and Manchester and Birmingham in the UK.